

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2015
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Dominic Bradley MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Michaela Boyle MLA
Mr Gordon Lyons MLA
Mr John McCallister MLA
Mr Ian McCrea MLA
Ms Emma Pengelly MLA

In Attendance: Mr Shane McAteer (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Phil Pateman (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Clairita Frazer (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Nory Kaplan-Kelly (Legislative Studies Programme Student)
Mr Oliver Bellew (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Daithí McKay MLA (Chairperson)
Mrs Judith Cochrane MLA
Mr Leslie Cree MBE, MLA
Mr Jim Wells MLA

The meeting commenced at 10:24am in public session.

Agreed: that agenda items 4 and 5 are covered by Hansard and the Official Report published on the Assembly's website.

Emma Pengelly declared an interest as having been called to the Inn of Court of Northern Ireland and, although a non-practising Barrister, still being subject to the disciplinary scope of the Bar Council of Northern Ireland.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 14 October 2015

Agreed: that the minutes will be published on the Assembly website.

3. Matters Arising

Table of requests for information from the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP)

The Committee noted the summary table of requests for information from DFP which provided an update on any matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

Electronic Committee Packs & Tabled Papers

Members noted that, following the discussion at last week's meeting in relation to tabled papers, the Clerk had been advised that merging the two weekly Committee packs together would be a significant IT project which will not be undertaken in the short term. In the meantime, the tabled packs will be provided again in hard copy and the Committee secretariat will endeavour to keep the tabled pack to a minimum and will request that stakeholders who deliver late papers also bring hard copies to meetings for member's convenience.

4. Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill – Briefing from the Scottish Legal Complaints Commission (SLCC).

The Committee received a briefing on the Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill from the following representative from the SLCC:

- David Buchanan-Cook, Head of Oversight & Communications.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

Agreed: to write to the SLCC seeking a follow-up response to any issues not covered during the session.

Michaela Boyle joined the meeting at 10:32am

Emma Pengelly left the meeting at 11:05am

5. Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill – Briefing from the Bar Council of Northern Ireland (BCNI).

The Committee received a briefing on the Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill from the following representatives from BCNI:

- David Mulholland, Chief Executive, BCNI;
- Gerald McAlinden QC, Chairman, BCNI; and

- Gary Potter BL, Chairman of the Professional Conduct Committee.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

Agreed: to write to BCNI seeking a follow-up response to any issues not covered during the session.

Agreed: that the briefing papers are published on the Committee webpage and that DFP is asked to provide a written response to the issues raised in both evidence sessions.

Agreed: to commission Assembly Research to provide a research paper on the arrangements within other professions in terms of best practice on the role of lay persons and professional members of disciplinary or complaints committees, including how these compare to the provisions as proposed in the Bill.

Emma Pengelly rejoined the meeting at 11:10am

Ian McCrea left the meeting at 11:35am

Gordon Lyons left the meeting 11:50am

Ian McCrea rejoined the meeting at 11:55am

Gordon Lyons rejoined the meeting at 11:56am

6. Review of the sale of National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) assets in Northern Ireland – Correspondence and next steps

Correspondence from PIMCO

Agreed: that the Committee will decide if it has further questions for PIMCO when the evidence gathering process has progressed further.

Correspondence from Mr Brendan McGinn, Fortress

Agreed: to write to Mr McGinn to enquire whether he would be prepared to provide written answers to questions relevant to the terms of reference for the Committee's review.

Follow up papers received from the First Minister

Agreed: that, in line with the approach taken to date, the papers received from the First Minister in follow up to last week's evidence session are published on the Committee's webpage.

Members noted that further follow-up correspondence was expected from the First Minister.

Correspondence from former Finance Minister, Mr Sammy Wilson, MP

Members noted that Mr Wilson had been provided with the National Crime Agency contact details, as requested, and had been offered two alternative dates for an oral hearing. A response is pending.

Correspondence from former Finance Minister, Simon Hamilton MLA

Members noted that Mr Hamilton was offered two alternative dates to attend an oral hearing and he had confirmed his availability; however he had expressed a preference to attend before the December dates offered.

Agreed: to schedule this evidence session earlier, subject to agreeing a mutually convenient date and taking the Committee work programme into account.

Correspondence from David Watters

Agreed: to write to Mr Watters to enquire whether he would be prepared to provide written answers to questions relevant to the terms of reference for the Committee's review.

Updated table of responses pending to the Committee's requests

Members noted an updated table of responses pending to Committee requests for information and briefings in relation to the review.

Agreed: to publish the updated table on the Committee's webpage.

John McCallister left the meeting at 12:30 pm

John McCallister rejoined the meeting at 12:31 pm

7. Correspondence

Members noted the following correspondence:

- DFP – Central Procurement Directorate – follow up to earlier briefing;
- DFP – Response to member of the public in relation to dissatisfaction with Land and Property Services and further correspondence from the same member of the public in relation to the same issue.

Agreed: to note and forward the further correspondence to the Department for appropriate action.

- DFP – Net Fiscal Balance Report 2012/13 and 2013/14;
- Committee for the Environment – Building Control and Fire Prevention Panels;
- Committee for the Office of the First and deputy First Minister (COFMDFM) – Carnegie UK: Towards a Wellbeing Framework;

Agreed: to send a response to COFMDFM highlighting the evidence received on this issue to date and the extent of engagement between the Committee and the Carnegie Roundtable.

- Assembly & Executive Review Committee – call for evidence on the Assembly and Executive Reform (Assembly Opposition) Bill;

John McCallister declared an interest in relation to the above piece of correspondence as Bill sponsor.

Agreed: to prepare a draft Committee response to the Assembly & Executive Review Committee in relation to the proposed provision in the Bill for the establishment of a Budget Committee and reflecting the previous work undertaken by this Committee in this regard.

- Rt Hon Justice Gillen – Review of Civil and Family Law: Terms of Reference;

Agreed: to write to DFP seeking advice on the extent of its engagement with the review and potential impact on DFP related functions.

- Solace Northern Ireland – Representation from Local Government;

- Member of the Public – Questions for the First Minister;

- Member of the Public – Correspondence requesting investment;

Agreed: to forward the correspondence to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment for response.

- Invitation to a ‘Meet your MEP’ event on 30 October 2015;

- Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Economic Conference – Thursday 29 October 2015;

Agreed: that members wishing to attend this event would make arrangements directly.

- Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) in respect of a proposed cap on Public Sector Exit Payments;
Agreed: to schedule an oral briefing from DFP and to seek written briefings from the other relevant stakeholders, including the Trade Unions, in respect of the legislative proposals.
- Hospitality Ulster – Rates (Relief for Community Amateur Sports Clubs) Bill.

8. Committee Work Programme

Agreed: that the Work Programme is updated to reflect any agreements made today and published on the Committee's website.

9. Any Other Business

Committee input on FoI matters during recess

Members noted the normal practice for committees to delegate authority to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson during periods of recess to submit views on the releasing or withholding of information in any non-routine/contentious FoI requests received.

The Committee will be advised of any such requests, the views expressed by the Chairperson and/or Deputy Chairperson and the response issued by the FoI Unit, at the first available meeting following the recess period.

The Rates (Amendment) Bill.

Agreed: to write to DFP requesting an indication of progress with the Rates (Amendment) Bill, including the proposed timetable.

10. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday, 04 November 2015 at 10:00am, Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:40pm.

Mr Daithí McKay MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance and Personnel
04 November 2015