

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 9 DECEMBER 2015
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr Daithí McKay MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Dominic Bradley MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Leslie Cree MBE, MLA
Mr Gordon Lyons MLA
Mr John McCallister MLA
Mr Ian McCrea MLA
Mr Gary Middleton MLA
Mr Máirtín Ó Muilleoir 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 Joe Westland (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mrs Michaela Boyle MLA
Mrs Judith Cochrane MLA

The meeting commenced at 10:09am in public session.

Agreed: that items 7, 8 and 9 are covered by Hansard.

Agreed: that the oral evidence from Mr Richard Bullick and Dr Dara O'Hagan in relation to agenda items 8 & 9 is taken in open session, in line with the Committee's previously agreed approach for taking further oral evidence for the Review of the Sale of National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) assets in Northern Ireland.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 2 and 3 December 2015

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

3. Matters Arising

Declarations of Interests – NAMA Review

Mr Ó Muilleoir made a statement in response to comments made by Mr Sammy Wilson MP during his oral evidence at last week's Committee meeting, in which Mr Wilson referred to Sean Graham's bookmakers taking weekly advertisements in Belfast Media Group (BMG) publications. Mr Ó Muilleoir indicated that his interests in respect of BMG are recorded in the members' Register of Interests and that, as he would not have knowledge of every advertisement sold in BMG publications, he had made follow up enquiries. Mr Ó Muilleoir stated that his enquiries had established that Sean Graham's bookmakers took an advertisement costing £110.05 and that other witnesses and individuals mentioned during the NAMA review have been customers of BMG, including Mr Paddy Kearney, Tughans, the Law Society and its associate firms, Bank of Ireland, the Lagan Group, and Mr Brendan McGinn. Mr Ó Muilleoir also stated that Mr Gareth Robinson was an honoree at BMG's '40 under 40' event and that Mr Frank Cushnahan had donated £500 to Arts and Business at an event which Mr Ó Muilleoir had convened.

Members noted that all declarations of interests by Committee members in respect of the NAMA review will be provided at the next Committee meeting on 13 January 2016 following a review of the relevant records.

Ian McCrea joined the meeting at 10:11am

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 matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

4. Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill – Final consideration of draft report

Members considered the final draft Report on the Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill.

Agreed: that paragraphs 1 - 6 stand part of the Report;

Agreed: that paragraphs 7 - 12 stand part of the Report;

Agreed: that paragraphs 13 - 21 stand part of the Report;

Agreed: that paragraphs 22 - 31 stand part of the Report;

Agreed: that paragraphs 32 - 41 stand part of the Report;

Agreed: that paragraphs 42 - 48 stand part of the Report; and

Agreed: that paragraphs 49 - 112 stand part of the Report.

Agreed: that the draft Executive Summary stands part of the Report.

Agreed: that appendices 1 - 5 stand part of the Report.

Agreed: that the 'Table of Issues' summarising the evidence taken by the Committee is published on the Committee website.

Agreed: that the Committee report on the Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill be the 16th report of the Committee for Finance and Personnel to the Assembly 2011-16.

Agreed: that the Committee report on the Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill is published on-line.

Members noted that staff would proof the report and that finalised copies would issue to DFP and the Assembly Business Office as soon as possible.

Members also noted that the Committee amendment to Clause 50 would be laid in the Business Office before Christmas recess.

5. SL1 The Public Service (Civil Servants and Others) Pensions (Consequential Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

Agreed: that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under SL1 – The Public Service (Civil Servants and Others) Pensions (Consequential Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

6. Correspondence

Members noted the following correspondence:

- DFP – Legislative Consent Motion (LCM): Proposed Cap on Public Sector Exit Payments – with reference to the correspondence from the Education Authority;
- Committee for the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister – Departments Bill and Transfer of Functions Order;
- Committee for Education – OECD Review;
- Committee for Education – LCM: Proposed Cap on Public Sector Exit Payments and NILGOSC letter;
- EU Matters; and
- Member of Public – dissatisfaction with Land and Property Services.

7. Rates (Amendment) Bill: Briefing from DFP

Members received a short briefing on the Rates (Amendment) Bill from the following departmental official to clarify issues raised in recent evidence to the Committee on the Bill:

- Brian McClure, Head of Rating Policy, DFP

The session was recorded by Hansard.

Agreed: to forward correspondence received from Edenmore Golf and Country Club to DFP for a response to the issues raised.

Ian McCrea left the meeting at 10:35am

John McCallister joined the meeting at 10:39am

8. Review of the sale of NAMA assets in Northern Ireland – briefing by Richard Bullick, Special Adviser to the First Minister

Members received oral evidence from the following witness in relation to the Review of the sale of NAMA assets in Northern Ireland:

- Richard Bullick, Special Adviser to the First Minister

The session was recorded by Hansard.

John McCallister left the meeting at 11:36am

John McCallister rejoined the meeting at 11:40am

Dominic Bradley left the meeting at 12:02pm

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir left the meeting at 12:06pm

Agreed: that Mr Bullick will provide follow up clarification on who represented PIMCO at the meeting on 22 May 2013 which was discussed during the session.

Agreed: that the Committee will write to NAMA to follow up on issues which arose during the session.

9. Review of the sale of NAMA assets in Northern Ireland – briefing by Dr Dara O'Hagan, former Special Adviser to the deputy First Minister

Members received oral evidence from the following witness in relation to the Review of the sale of NAMA assets in Northern Ireland:

- Dr Dara O'Hagan, former Special Adviser to the deputy First Minister

The session was recorded by Hansard

Agreed: to publish the updated Assembly Research paper on the NAMA timeline, subject to the amendments and additions highlighted during the previous evidence sessions.

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir rejoined the meeting at 12:08pm

Gary Middleton left the meeting at 12:35pm

Gary Middleton rejoined the meeting at 12:48pm

Agreed: that due to time constraints today, the advice from Assembly Legal Services will be rescheduled to a later date.

10. Committee Work Programme

Draft Executive Budget 2016-17

Agreed: to write to DFP asking that it provides a written briefing as soon as possible after Executive agreement of the Draft Budget 2016-17. Members further *agreed* that this will then be circulated both to members in advance of the scheduled evidence sessions on 13 January 2016 and to the other statutory committees in advance of any briefings that are scheduled with their respective departmental officials.

Members noted the updated work programme which will be published on the Committee's website.

11. Any other business

Committee input on Freedom of Information (FoI) matters during Christmas recess

Members noted that it is 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.

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir left the meeting at 12:59pm.

12. Date, time and Place of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be on Wednesday 13 January 2016 at 10:00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 13:00pm.

Mr Daithí McKay MLA

Chairperson

Committee for Finance and Personnel

13 January 2016