

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 17 FEBRUARY 2016
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Daithí McKay MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Claire Hanna 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
Mr Jim Wells MLA

In Attendance: Mr Shane McAteer (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Clairita Frazer (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Phil Pateman (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Joe Westland (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mrs Michaela Boyle MLA
Mrs Judith Cochrane MLA

The meeting commenced at 10:20am in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 10 February 2016

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

3. Matters Arising

Carryduff Shopping Centre

Arising from last week's briefing on rating issues, members noted an article from the *Belfast Telegraph* regarding Carryduff Shopping Centre, which Mr Ó Muilleoir had requested be tabled.

Agreed: to write to the current owner of the Carryduff Shopping Centre to enquire whether it has plans to regenerate site.

Former Deputy Chairperson, Dominic Bradley

Members noted the acknowledgement from the former Deputy Chairperson, Dominic Bradley, in response to the Committee's letter highlighting its appreciation for his work during his tenure as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee.

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 other matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

4. Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) People Strategy – Briefing from DFP

Members received a briefing on the NICS People Strategy from the following departmental officials:

- Grace Nesbitt, Head of Pensions Division, Corporate HR
- Debbie Sherlock, Project Manager of NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme

Agreed: to write to the Department seeking more detailed information on various issues discussed during the session.

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir left the meeting at 10:26am

Claire Hanna joined the meeting at 10:35am

Gary Middleton left the meeting at 10:52am

John McCallister left the meeting at 10:52am

5. DFP Response to Committee's Report on the Review of the Operation of the Barnett Formula – Briefing from DFP

Members received a briefing from the following departmental officials on DFP's response to the Committee's Report on the Review of the Operation of the Barnett Formula:

- Tony Simpson, Director, Strategic Policy Division
- Alan Ramsey, Strategic Policy Division

- Stephen Barrett, Central Expenditure Division

Agreed: that the Department will respond in writing regarding the possibilities of providing the Committee with the high level data on Barnett consequentials, which DFP receives from HM Treasury, and for this information to be published for transparency.

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir rejoined the meeting at 10:55am

Jim Wells joined the meeting at 11:17am

6. Update Briefing on Dormant Accounts – Briefing from DFP

Members received an update briefing on Dormant Accounts from the following departmental officials:

- Emer Morelli, Head of Supply
- Maryann Smith, Public Spending Directorate

Claire Hanna left the meeting at 11:40am

Agreed: that the departmental officials will give further consideration to: what scope there may be to facilitate faith-based groups in availing of funding through the scheme; and whether the scheme could be amended to permit individuals or bodies to provide loan finance to the fund, consistent with similar provisions in other countries.

7. Subordinate Legislation

The Committee considered three proposals for subordinate legislation ('SL1s') and a statutory rule (SR) as follows:

SL1 – The Public Services Pensions Revaluation (Prices) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

Agreed: that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under SL1 - The Public Services Pensions Revaluation (Prices) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

SL1 – The Public Service Pensions Revaluation (Earnings) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

Agreed: that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under SL1 - The Public Service Pensions Revaluation (Earnings) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

SL1 - The Rates (Automatic Telling Machines) (Designation of Rural Areas) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

Agreed: that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under SL1 - The Rates (Automatic Telling Machines) (Designation of Rural Areas) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

SR General Register Office (Fees) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

Members considered the departmental papers relating to this statutory rule. It was noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had confirmed that he has no points to raise by way of technical scrutiny in relation to the Rule.

Agreed: that the Committee has considered S.R - The General Register Office (Fees) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 and recommends that it be affirmed by the Assembly.

Claire Hanna rejoined the meeting at 11:45am

John McCallister rejoined the meeting at 11:50am

8. Correspondence

Members noted the following items of correspondence:

- DFP – Edenmore Golf and Country Club: Rates Issues;

Mr Wells stated that he knew the proprietor of Edenmore Golf and Country Club and was aware of the issues that impact privately-owned golf clubs.

Agreed: to forward a copy of the Department's correspondence to Edenmore Golf and Country Club for information.

Agreed: to invite representatives from privately-owned golf clubs to the Committee to give evidence on their concerns in respect of rating issues.

- DFP – Response to queries regarding Executive's Draft Budget 2016-17;

Agreed: to copy to Assembly Research and Library Service for information.

- DFP – EU Funding Programmes: PEACE IV and INTERREG VA;
- DFP – OECD Review and delay in report;
- DFP – Review of Civil and Family Justice: Meeting with Lord Chief Justice; and,
- Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment – Cerberus response to Bell & Company evidence;

Agreed: to publish the correspondence from Cerberus on the Committee's webpages given the relevance to the Review of the Sale of NAMA assets in Northern Ireland.

- Legislative Consent Motion: Northern Ireland (Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan) Bill

Agreed: to write to DFP seeking an urgent response to the issues relevant to its remit, in order to inform any Committee response to the OFMDFM Committee.

The Committee also noted routine correspondence which had been sent to members on 8 February 2016.

9. Committee Work Programme

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

10. Any Other Business

Announcement by Bombardier Aerospace

The Chairperson highlighted to members the announcement by Bombardier Aerospace in respect of its decision to reduce the size of its workforce at sites in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: to write to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment to highlight the Committee's concerns and to enquire into the background to the funding provided to Bombardier by the government in Quebec.

The Committee then moved into closed session at 12:00pm in line with normal protocol for consideration of draft reports.

11. Review of the Sale of NAMA Assets in Northern Ireland - Initial consideration of draft Progress Report

Members considered the first draft of a report on the progress of the Committee's Review of the Sale of NAMA Assets in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: that any additions or amendments which members may wish to propose to the draft report will be considered at next week's meeting.

The Committee returned to open session at 12:12pm for the remainder of the meeting.

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be on Wednesday 24 February 2016 at 10:00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:13pm.

**Mr Daithí McKay MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance and Personnel
24 February 2016**