

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 22 JUNE 2016
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mrs Emma Little Pengelly (Chairperson)
Ms Claire Hanna (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Jonathan Bell MLA
Mr Ross Hussey MLA
Mr Gerry Mullan MLA
Mr John O'Dowd MLA
Ms Caitríona Ruane MLA
Mr Philip Smith MLA

In Attendance: Mr Jim McManus (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Kate McCullough (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Phil Pateman (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Joe Westland (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Paul Girvan MLA
Mr Jim Wells MLA

The meeting commenced at 2:04pm in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 15 June 2016

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

Jonathan Bell joined the meeting at 2:06pm

3. Matters Arising

Memorandum of Understanding

The Committee considered the correspondence received from the Department of Finance on its views of the Memorandum of Understanding.

Agreed: secretariat staff and departmental officials to meet to discuss the next steps.

John O'Dowd declared an interest as Chair of the Audit Committee.

Members considered correspondence from the Department and from the Audit Committee in relation to the Memorandum of Understanding.

Agreed: to forward the Department's response to the Audit Committee and to inform it of next steps.

Committee Budget Scrutiny

The Committee considered a paper outlining the role of the Committee for Finance in the Budget process.

Agreed: to receive a briefing from Assembly Research and Information Services (RaISe).

Agreed: to include in the forward work programme the Department's budget process and to continue to seek the Department's agreement for a revised budget timetable.

Agreed: to write to statutory committees on the role of the Committee for Finance in the budget process.

Agreed: to receive Restructured Baseline prints from the Department when they are being issued to departments.

Agreed: the Department to outline how the budget will integrate with the Programme for Government at departmental level.

Informal meeting with NCA

At the meeting of 1 June it was agreed to hold an informal meeting with the National Crime Agency for an update on its investigation in respect of NAMA.

Agreed: to schedule a meeting for the 11 July 2016 and circulate confirmation email to Members.

Tabled Papers

Agreed: Secretariat staff to provide paper copies of tabled papers to members if requested.

Memo on uploading Committee Proceedings to website

Members noted the process for uploading the Committee proceeding to the website.

Table of Requests for Information from DoF

Members were informed that papers relating to the sale of the NAMA loan portfolio in Northern Ireland will be made available to Members at next week's meeting.

Members noted the summary table of requests for information from the DoF which provides an update on any matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

4. Overview of the work of the Rating Policy Division – Oral evidence from Department of Finance.

A Departmental official joined the meeting at 2:26pm.

The Committee received evidence from the Head of Rating Policy, on the work of the Division

- Brian McClure, Head of Rating Policy, Department of Finance.

Issues discussed included: small businesses rate relief, support for urban village projects and charitable rates.

Ross Hussey left the meeting at 3:05pm

Caitríona Ruane left the meeting at 3:10pm

Jonathan Bell left the meeting at 3:24pm

Claire Hanna left the meeting at 3:24pm

Departmental officials left the meeting at 3.24pm

This session was recorded by Hansard.

Agreed: to commission Research on Small Business Rates Relief, and on how equivalents to the SBRR scheme operate in other jurisdictions.

Agreed: to commission Research on other models for rate collection to generate income in other legislatures and identify groups to give evidence on the issue.

5. Overview Outcome of June Monitoring Round Oral evidence from Department of Finance.

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 3:27pm for the following session.

Caitriona Ruane rejoined the meeting at 3:25pm

Jonathan Bell rejoined the meeting at 3.35pm

The Committee received evidence on the outcome of the June monitoring round from the following departmental officials:

- Joanne McBurney – Head Of Central Expenditure Division, Department of Finance
- Karen Weir – Central Expenditure Division, Department of Finance; and
- Stephen Barrett – Central Expenditure Division, Department of Finance.

Issues discussed included: Council borrowing, the Scottish Borrowing model and the National Loans Fund (NLF).

Departmental officials left the meeting at 4.57pm

Agreed: to receive a written briefing from the Department setting out the proposed governance arrangements in respect of the Invest Fund between the Department and the European Investment Bank (EIB).

Agreed: to receive further detail from the Department on specific changes by departments in respect of the monitoring round to include reclassifications or transfers.

Agreed: to receive information from the Department on the current level of borrowing against the National Loans Fund (NLF) and a breakdown of how this borrowing is apportioned across the public sector including local government and detail on the specific components or projects

Agreed: to receive an overview from the Department on the range of sources that local government can use for borrowing purposes.

Agreed: to a summary from the Department of the figures and its relationship to the monitoring round as quoted during the evidence.

6. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following correspondence:

- Commissioner for Older People NI – Letters to Chair and Deputy Chair

7. Committee Work Programme

Agreed: to commission Research on potential overarching areas of interest that relate to public finance in general and to the budget.

Agreed: the Committee agreed the work programme which will be published on the Committee's website.

8. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

9. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday, 29 June 2016 at 2:00pm, Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 4:01pm.

Mrs Emma Little Pengelly MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance
29 June 2016