

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2016
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

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

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

Apologies: There were no apologies

The meeting commenced at 2:05 pm in public session.

Agreed: that agenda items 5 & 6 are covered by Hansard and the Official Report published on the Assembly's website.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 05 October 2016

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

3. Matters Arising

Correspondence from Mr Neil Adair

The Committee considered a draft letter to Mr Adair in relation to his nomination to the NAMA advisory Board.

Agreed: to revise the draft letter for consideration at its meeting next week.

Agreed: to ask the Department to provide a copy of its response to Mr Adair.

Correspondence from the Commissioner for Standards – Reply to J Allister

Members noted an email acknowledgement from The Commissioner for Standards in response correspondence copied to the Committee by Mr Jim Allister in respect of the Commissioner's investigation into the conduct of the Chairperson of the former Committee for Finance and Personnel.

Freedom of Information request

Members were informed of a Clerk's note and two items of correspondence that will be released as a result of a Freedom of Information request arising from the recent allegations in respect of the conduct of the former Chairperson of the Committee for Finance and Personnel during its NAMA Review.

NAMA Inquiry

Members noted previous procedural advice provided for information, arising from the discussion at last week's meeting on the scope for the Committee's NAMA inquiry.

Summary of Requests to DoF

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

4. Non-Domestic Rating System – Research Papers

The Committee noted for information two previous Research papers on 'Non-Domestic rating in the UK' and 'Rating Online Retailers in N.I'.

5. Non-Domestic Rating System – Evidence from the Federation of Small Businesses.

The Committee heard oral evidence on the Non-Domestic Rating System from the following representatives from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB).

- Mr Roger Pollen, Head of External Affairs, FSB; and
- Ms Carolyn Brown, Policy Manager, FSB; and
- Ms Mairaid McMahon, Development Manager, FSB.

This session was recorded by Hansard

Ross Hussey left the meeting at 2:19 pm

Jim Wells joined the meeting at 2:24 pm

Paul Girvan joined the meeting at 2:25 pm

Agreed: to ask FSB for further information arising from the evidence session.

The Committee agreed to consider the following agenda items next: Correspondence; Forward Work Programme; Any Other Business; Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting.

7. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following correspondence:

- Department of Finance - Committee's requests for information on 'rates' issues.
- Department of Finance - Response to a number of questions in order to inform members' consideration once the Budget is formally introduced.
- Committee for Standards and Privileges - Referral to the Commissioner for Standards.
- Committee for The Executive Office - UK Exit from EU and Non-EU UK Treaty Obligations.

Agreed: to forward research commissioned by the Committee on Brexit.

- Mr Jamie Bryson - Correspondence regarding Committee meeting of 5 October.
- Committee for Communities - Copy of Correspondence sent to the Minister of Finance re Decision by HMRC not to renew the Concentrix tax credit contract.

8. Committee Work Programme

The Committee noted the work programme which will be published on the Committee's webpage.

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

10. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance Committee will be held on Wednesday, 19 October 2016 at 2:00 pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

Emma Little Pengelly left the meeting at 3:54 pm.

The Deputy Chair took the Chair at 3:54 pm for the remainder of the meeting.

6. Non-Domestic Rating System – Evidence from the Northern Ireland Independent Retail Traders Association (NIIRTA) and Hospitality Ulster.

The Committee heard oral evidence on the Non-Domestic Rating System from the following representatives from NIIRTA and Hospitality Ulster.

- Mr Glyn Roberts, Chief Executive, NIIRTA; and
- Mr Colin Neill, Chief Executive, Hospitality Ulster.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

Agreed: to ask the Department for its views on two proposals put forward by NIIRTA, details on the Rates Hardship Fund, including number of applications, percentage of successful applications and the criteria applied.

John O'Dowd left the meeting at 4:10 pm

Jim Allister left the meeting at 4:25 pm

Gerry Mullan left the meeting at 4:45 pm

The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 4:50 pm.

Mrs Emma Little Pengelly MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance
19 October 2016