

# COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE

## MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2016  
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

<b>Present:</b>	Mrs Emma Little Pengelly MLA	(Chairperson)
	Mrs Claire Hanna MLA	(Deputy Chairperson)
	Mr Jim Allister MLA	
	Mr Jonathan Bell MLA	
	Mr Paul Girvan MLA	
	Mr John O'Dowd MLA	
	Ms Caitriona Ruane MLA	
	Mr Philip Smith MLA	
	Mr Jim Wells MLA	
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Mr Jim McManus	(Assembly Clerk)
	Mr Phil Pateman	(Assistant Assembly Clerk)
	Mr Joe Westland	(Clerical Supervisor)
	Miss Heather Graham	(Clerical Officer)
<b>Apologies:</b>	Mr Ross Hussey MLA	
	Mr Gerry Mullan MLA	

*The meeting commenced at 2:08 pm in public session.*

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

### 1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

## **2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 12 October 2016**

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

*Jonathan Bell joined the meeting at 2:10 pm*

## **3. Matters Arising**

### DoF Response – Budget

Members noted a response from the Department to the issues highlighted by the Committee following the evidence with departmental officials on 28 September and an updated indicative timetable for the Budget.

Members were advised that the response will be considered more substantively next week alongside a research briefing on the budget.

*Agreed:* to ask the Department for consideration and response on what additional time could be built into the timetable in order to afford the Assembly adequate time, through its Committees to scrutinise departmental spending proposals before being voted upon by the Assembly.

*Agreed:* to receive a written briefing from the Department on the structure of Supply Division and how, following changes to the bidding process in monitoring rounds they engage with departments in order to ascertain their financial pressures. The written briefing will be used to inform an oral evidence session at a future meeting.

### DoF Response – NAMA Report

Members noted a response received from the Department arising from the Committee's previous request which seeks a detailed response to each of the conclusions/recommendations to the former Committee's progress report on NAMA.

### Response to Mr Neil Adair

Members were referred to the response to Mr Neil Adair which was amended following the Committee's consideration last week.

*Agreed:* to issue the response as amended to Mr Neil Adair.

### 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.

*Agreed:* to receive a written response from the Department on the Minister's strategic priorities and an envisaged timetable for each of these for the current mandate.

#### **4. Issues relating to Corporation Tax in Northern Ireland – Evidence from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC).**

The Committee heard oral evidence from the following representatives from HMRC.

- Jon Sherman, Director of Corporation Tax, International and Stamps at HMRC
- Sarah Walker, Head of HMRC's Central Policy Devolution Team

*Caitríona Ruane left the meeting at 2:57 pm*

*This session was recorded by Hansard.*

#### **5. Corporation Tax Negotiations and the Fresh Start Agreement – Evidence from the Department of Finance.**

The Committee heard oral evidence from the following departmental officials.

- Dr Colin Sullivan, Director, Strategic Policy and Reform, Department of Finance
- Aidan McMahon, Principal Economist, Department of Finance

*Paul Girvan joined the meeting at 3:12 pm*

*Claire Hanna joined the meeting at 3:25 pm*

*Caitríona Ruane returned to the meeting at 3:25 pm*

*Agreed:* to establish from the Department what work it has undertaken in order to identify any issues which could improve the overall impact of the devolution of Corporation Tax.

*Agreed:* to receive details from the Department of the timeframe for negotiations, the Minister's negotiating position and whether the Minister is content to provide a briefing to the Committee on the matter.

*This session was recorded by Hansard*

#### **6. Correspondence**

The Committee noted the following correspondence:

- Committee for the Economy - Copy of letter to Minister regarding Credit Unions and Rates.

*Agreed:* to receive a copy from DoF of its response to the Committee.

- The Cabinet Office - Reply to Committee's correspondence on What Works Centres.

*Agreed:* to obtain the Department's assessment of what scope there may be for a 'What Works Centre' in Northern Ireland and its view of who responsibility for progressing such a project would fall to.

- Committee for Infrastructure - Response to Committee correspondence on Budget Scrutiny.
- Committee on Procedures - Review of Public Petitions Procedures.
- Hospitality Ulster - Non Domestic Rates.

## **7. Committee Work Programme**

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

### Ministerial Statement on October Monitoring Round.

Members were informed that the Minister is likely to make a statement to the Assembly on the outcome of the October Monitoring Round.

*Agreed:* given the likelihood of a Ministerial Statement on the outcome of the October Monitoring Round to postpone the planned NISRA evidence session in order to facilitate oral evidence from departmental officials.

### PAC Inquiry – Voluntary Exit Schemes

Members noted correspondence from the Clerk to Public Accounts Committee stating that the Committee has agreed to undertake an inquiry arising from the Northern Ireland Audit Office report on the 'Northern Ireland Public Sector Voluntary Exit Schemes' and highlight the primacy provisions relating to NIAO reports.

*Agreed:* to write to the Department to ascertain the impact upon Section 75 groups arising from the Voluntary Exit Schemes, what consideration will be given to targeting specific grades in future schemes and to establish whether there are any future plans for any general recruitment within the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

### Monthly Forecast Data

Members were informed that the Department had previously provided the Committee with departmental monthly public expenditure outturn and forecast outturn information.

*Agreed:* to ask the Department to provide this to the Committee on an ongoing basis.

## Non Domestic Rates

Members were informed that responses from stakeholders are due by 31 October, which is during recess.

*Agreed:* that any requests seeking an extension to the response date will be considered on a case by case basis in order to ensure that there is an evidence base in advance of any imminent policy proposals being brought forward by the Minister.

Members suggested that as part of its work on Non-Domestic Rates that there may be merit in conducting external engagements to support this work.

The Clerk undertook to highlight proposed options on a way forward for consideration by members at a future meeting.

### **8. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

### **9. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance Committee will be held on Wednesday, 26 October 2016 at 2:00 pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 4:30 pm.*

**Mrs Emma Little Pengelly MLA**  
**Chairperson**  
**Committee for Finance**  
**26 October 2016**