

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2016
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: 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 Gerry Mullan MLA
Ms Caitríona Ruane MLA
Mr Philip Smith MLA

In Attendance: Mr Jim McManus (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Kate McCullough (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Piotr Palys (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Ross Hussey MLA, Mr Jim Wells MLA, Mr John O'Dowd MLA

The meeting commenced at 2:10pm in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Draft Amended Minutes of Proceedings of 23 November 2016 and Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 30 November 2016

Agreed: that the amended minutes of 23 November and minutes of 30 November 2016 will be published on the Assembly website.

3. Matters Arising

University of Ulster Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC)

Agreed: to ask UUEPC to reconsider its decision not to provide evidence to the Committee on its SBRR Evaluation given the importance of the matter, the UUEPC's influence of the proposals and the Committee's high level of interest in the area of work.

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.

2:15pm: Officials joined the meeting

4. Reform of Property Management – Management of the NICS Estate: Reform of Property Management – Oral Evidence from the Department of Finance

The Committee received oral evidence on the 'Management of the NICS Estate: Reform of Property Management' from the following departmental officials:

- Mr Paul Wickens, Chief Executive, Enterprise Shared Services (ESS), Department of Finance
- Mr Desi McDonnell, Director of Properties Division, Department of Finance
- Mr Jim McCreesh, Head of Office Estates, Properties Division, Department of Finance

2:50pm: Mr Jonathan Bell joined the meeting

Agreed: To receive from the Department clarification if the decision to move LPS to Lanyon Plaza was a Ministerial decision.

3:15pm: Ms Claire Hanna left the meeting

3:20pm: Mr Jim Allister left the meeting

Agreed: To receive the business case for the move of LPS to Lanyon Plaza.

3:25pm: Officials left the meeting

Agreed: to ask the Department if it is the case that, when government land/property goes up for sale, the owner of any adjoining land is given the option to purchase before the land/property is put on the open market.

3:25pm: Officials joined the meeting

5. Programme for Government – PfG: Oral Evidence from the Department of Finance

The Committee received oral evidence on the Programme for Government from the following departmental officials:

- Mr Paul Wickens – Chief Executive, Enterprise Shared Services (ESS), Department of Finance
- Ms Brigitte Worth, Finance Director, CSG, DFP, Department of Finance
- Ms Seanin Ferguson, Finance Division, Department of Finance

3:35pm: Ms Claire Hanna returned to the meeting

Agreed: to receive a list of digital projects and in priority from the Department.

Agreed: to receive the annual figures of uptake by the public of the digital training programme from the Department.

4:10pm: Officials left the meeting

Agreed: to receive details from the Department on how the three indicators from Outcome 11 will be linked; why these three indicators were chosen; and how the Permanent Secretary will manage the SROs who are in other departments in order to achieve the outcome objectives.

6. Rating – Review of Non-Domestic Rating System in Northern Ireland: Consideration of the Draft Terms of Reference and Inquiry Plan.

Members considered the papers provided by the Clerk relating to the Review of Non-Domestic Rating System in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a number of actions including deciding venues, dates and witnesses.

4:11pm: Mr Jim Allister returned to the meeting

7. Budget – Consideration of Departmental Responses

The Committee considered responses by Departments to the relevant Committees.

Agreed: To receive an outline of the capital and resources total opening positions.

8. Correspondence

4:55pm:- Caitríona Ruane left the meeting

The Committee noted the following correspondence.

Reports provided by NESTA on A What Works Centre for Northern Ireland.

Agreed: to note and consider the contents of the reports alongside the substantive response by the Department once received.

The Department of Finance clarification in relation to the extent of Treasury guarantees over EU projects following the outcome of the EU referendum.

The Committee for Education's detail on its inquiry into educational underachievement.

The Department of Finance analysis of forecasting performance for the month of September 2016.

The Department of Finance analysis of forecasting performance for the month of August 2016.

The Department of Finance response which summarises its priorities arising from the EU Commission work plan 2017.

9. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee noted the work programme which will be updated and published on the Committee's webpage.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Committee for Finance will be held on Wednesday, 11 January 2017 at 2:00 pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings

The Committee agreed to move into closed session at 5:00pm for the remainder of the meeting.

12. Inquiry into the Sale of the NAMA Loan Portfolio in Northern Ireland

Members considered papers in relation to the Committee Inquiry.

5:02pm Jonathan Bell left the meeting

Agreed: to receive information from the Department on the MTS and Mark Cunningham.

Agreed: to seek clarification from the then Minister, Mr Sammy Wilson and his then Private Secretary of a meeting scheduled for September 2010.

Agreed: to check if the scheduled meeting of September 2010 had been referred to during the Minister's evidence to the Committee for Finance & Personnel during its NAMA review.

Agreed: to receive legal advice in relation to how a request to receive oral evidence from the former First Minister and current deputy First Minister would fit within the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry.

Agreed: to write to identified witnesses, including the Law Society, to provide oral evidence to the Inquiry.

5:22pm: - Jonathan Bell returned to the meeting

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 5:25pm.

Mrs Emma Little Pengelly MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance
11 January 2017