



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Finance

Minutes of Proceedings

22 October 2025

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Matthew O'Toole MLA (Chairperson)

Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Steve Aiken MLA

Gerry Carroll MLA

Jemma Dolan MLA (until 4:22pm)

Deirdre Hargey MLA

Harry Harvey MLA

Brian Kingston MLA

Eoin Tennyson MLA

Apologies: None

Virtual: Jemma Dolan MLA (from 4:42pm)

In Attendance: Peter Hall Committee Clerk

Fiona Rooney Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk

Clairita Frazer Assistant Assembly Clerk

Tom Armstrong Assistant Assembly Clerk

Stephen Magee Clerical Supervisor

Heather Graham Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 2:07pm in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 Minister of the Economy – Written Statement – Invest NI Review of Investments

Steve Aiken declared an interest as he had corresponded with the Minister of the Economy regarding this issue.

The Committee discussed a written statement laid by the Minister of the Economy regarding an Invest NI Review of Investments. Members made a number of comments for the record.

3.2 Interparliamentary Forum – 28th November 2025

The Committee considered an invitation for the Chairperson to attend the 8th Interparliamentary Forum on 28 November 2025 in the Senedd, Cardiff Bay.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson would attend accompanied by the Committee Clerk.

3.3 Public Sector Transformation Board

The Chairperson considered information previously provided in relation to the Public Sector Transformation Board noting that whilst the Department of Finance no longer provides support to the Board, the Minister of Finance still makes recommendations to the Executive on funding proposals.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to explore the potential for a concurrent meeting with the Executive Office Committee on this matter.

Gerry Carroll joined the meeting at 2:13pm.

3.4. Reserve Claim – PSNI Data Breach

The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Finance regarding a Treasury decision on a Reserve Claim for PSNI Data Breach compensation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Finance for some follow-up information on this issue including information on its strategy for resolution and details on financial and legal implications going forward.

3.5. December Monitoring – Commissioning Note

The Committee noted that the Department of Finance had commissioned returns from Departments for a December Monitoring Round.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this update to other Statutory Committees and the Assembly Audit Committee.

3.6. Presbyterian Mutual Society Write-Off

The Committee considered a Department of Finance Write-Off Minute regarding the Presbyterian Mutual Society.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Finance for some follow-up briefing regarding the matter.

4. Draft Minutes of Proceedings

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Minutes of Proceedings from the meeting of the 15 October 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to the oral evidence session with the Examiner of Statutory Rules on the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill.

6. Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill – Committee Deliberations & Oral Briefing from the Examiner of Statutory Rules

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into closed session at 2:36pm to receive legal advice from the Examiner of Statutory Rules on the Delegated Powers within the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill.

The Examiner of Statutory Rules joined the meeting at 2:36pm to provide the advice.

The Chairperson thanked the Examiner for her advice and the Examiner left the meeting at 3:11pm.

The Committee suspended at 3:11pm.

Deirdre Hargey and Brian Kingston left the meeting at 3:11pm.

The Committee reconvened in closed session at 3:20pm to discuss the way forward in relation to the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill.

Deirdre Hargey rejoined the meeting at 3:25pm.

The Committee moved into open session at 3:29pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share a synopsis of the Examiner of Statutory Rule's Advice on the Delegated Powers within the Bill with relevant Statutory Committees. Members also agreed to commission legal advice on scope of the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to the oral evidence session with Department of Finance Officials on the Rate Collection Strategy

8. Rate Collection Strategy – Oral Briefing from the Department of Finance

Members noted a number of relevant background papers including the Rate Collection Strategy 2025-28, Terms of Reference for the Strategic Review of Rating, LPS Guide to Rates and a Hansard Transcript of a Rating Policy Briefing by the Department of Finance on 11 December 2024.

The following officials joined the meeting at 3:30pm:

Sharon Gallagher Deputy Secretary Land & Property Services; and

Chris Rooney Director of Revenue & Benefits

The officials provided the Committee with oral evidence on the Rate Collection Strategy for 2025-28. The briefing was followed by a question and answer session. A number of issues were discussed including implementation plan, collection targets, historical arrears recovery, due diligence of contracts and the move towards digital payments of rates.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance, and the officials left the meeting at 4:15pm.

9. September Outturn and Forecast Outturn Data – Written Briefing from the Department of Finance

The Committee considered a briefing paper from the Department of Finance on 2025-26 Public Expenditure Outturn and Forecast Outturn – September position.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the written briefing to other Statutory Committees and the NI Assembly Audit Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to Matters Arising.

5. Matters Arising

5.1. Minister for Finance – Horizon IT Systems Failures

The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Finance regarding the role of Fujitsu in the Horizon scandal.

5.2. Department of Finance – Administrative Officer Recruitment Pilot Summary

The Committee considered an update from the Department of Finance regarding a new pilot process for recruiting Administrative Officers in the NI Civil Service.

Jemma Dolan left the meeting at 4:22pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek further information from the Department of Finance on a number of issues related to the pilot. Members also agreed to schedule a written briefing on the pilot in January 2026.

5.3. Department of Finance – Shared Property Management – Publication of Scoping Study

The Committee considered an update from the Department of Finance in relation to work on the regulation of shared property management.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Finance for a timescale for associated legislative change.

5.4. Department of Finance – Legislative Programme for Autumn/Winter 2025/26

The Committee considered a written briefing from the Department of Finance on the Legislative Programme for Autumn/Winter 2025/26.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Finance for an indicative timetable for legislative stages for the Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill, assuming Executive approval is obtained in November 2025.

5.5. Department of Finance - Legislative Stages for Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill

The Committee noted the confirmed date for Consideration Stage of the Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill as 4 November 2025 and suggested dates for the remaining legislative stages.

5.6. Notice of Amendments for Consideration Stage of the Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill

The Committee noted a “Notice of Opposition” for Clause 8 of the Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill.

5.7. DALO Readout Extract 12 February 2025

The Committee noted an extract from the DALO Readout following the meeting on 12th February 2025, noting that the Department had previously agreed to provide quarterly updates on “Expenditure resting on the Sole Authority of the Budget Act”.

5.8. DALO Readout Response – Expenditure resting on Sole Authority of the Budget Act

The Committee noted the position as at 31 July 2025 (and an update at 31 October 2025) on Expenditure resting on Sole Authority of the Budget Act.

5.9. DALO Readout Extract 1 October 2025

The Committee noted the DALO extract issued following the meeting on 1 October, noting that responses regarding the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill, following the meeting on 24th September, remain outstanding.

5.10. DALO readout Response – Dilapidation Bill

The Committee noted a response from the Department of Finance regarding the financial impact of the Dilapidation Bill.

5.11. DALO Readout Response – Land Registration Legislation Project

The Committee considered an update from the Department of Finance on the Land Registration Legislation Project.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add a written update on the project to the Committee Forward Work Programme.

5.12. Tech Secure – Digital Infrastructure & Cybersecurity in NI's Community and Voluntary Sector

The Committee considered correspondence from Tech Secure offering to brief the Committee on Digital Infrastructure and Cybersecurity in NI's Community and Voluntary Sector.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Communities Committee.

5.13. Department of Finance – Public Office (Accountability) Bill – Legislative Consent

The Committee considered a Legislative Consent Memorandum laid by the Department of Finance concerning the Public Office (Accountability) Bill. The Clerk updated Members on discussions with Departmental Officials in this regard.

Gerry Carroll left the meeting at 4:40pm.

Jemma Dolan joined the meeting (via Zoom) at 4:42pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that Departmental Officials attend the meeting on 5th November 2020, to provide briefing on the Legislative Consent Memorandum.

5.14. Department of Finance – Reform of Building Regulations

The Committee noted a response to the Committee for Communities from the Department of Finance providing an update on the progress of Building Regulations Reform.

Steve Aiken left the meeting at 4:45pm.

5.15. Minister of the Economy – Response to Banking Inquiry

Recommendations

The Committee considered correspondence from the Economy Minister regarding work in the Economy Department relating to recommendations within the Banking and Financial Services Landscape Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department of Finance asking how it could weave the Economy Minister's response into the Department of Finance's substantial response to the Committee's Inquiry Report and Recommendations.

5.16. Committee for Infrastructure – Water, Sustainable Drainage and Flood Management Bill

The Committee considered a Call for Evidence from the Infrastructure Committee on the Water, Sustainable Drainage and Flood Management Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Finance if there is any policy locus for it within the Bill's provisions.

5.17. DALO Readout Extract – 8th October

The Committee noted an extract from the DALO Readout following the meeting on 8th October 2025, noting that two responses relating to the NI Fiscal Council Bill would be considered under that agenda item.

5.18 DALO Readout Response – Performance Appraisal for the Head of the Civil Service

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Finance regarding performance appraisal for the Head of the Civil Service role.

7. NI Fiscal Council Bill – Committee Deliberations

The Committee noted a Hansard transcript of the oral evidence session with the Scottish Fiscal Commission which took place on 8th October 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add this transcript to the evidence base for the Committee Stage of the Bill.

The Committee considered a formal response from the Department of Finance to the OECD Submission on the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to send this response to the OECD in advance of its oral evidence session on 5th November 2025.

The Committee considered a formal response from the Department of Finance to issues raised during the meeting on 8th October 2025, concerning Delegated Powers within the Bill. Members noted that a Delegated Power was missing from the original Delegated Powers Memorandum (DPM) submitted to the Committee and that a revised DPM had been provided by the Department of Finance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Examiner of Statutory Rules if she is satisfied with the revised Delegated Powers Memorandum for the Bill.

10. Civil Service Reform – Committee Inquiry

The Committee considered the actions from its Strategic Planning session held earlier that day.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that its Inquiry will have a people focus and that the Clerk would bring forward a refined “people core focus” proposal to the next meeting. Members could then make a decision in relation to commissioning research at that point.

11. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from the NI Assembly Business Office concerning a Department of the Economy Minute on a contingent liability;

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk would discuss this matter with the Clerk of the Public Accounts Committee and the Director of Finance in the Department of Finance to explore solutions to the issues raised.

- ii. The Committee noted the 48th Report from the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

12. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

The Committee Clerk updated Members on agenda items for the next Committee meeting which would be after the recess period.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Forward Work Programme should be published on the Committee webpages.

13. Any Other Business

Members noted that the meeting pack for the next Committee meeting would issue on Monday 3 November 2025.

14. Date and Time of next meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 5 November 2025 at 2.00pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10pm.

Matthew O'Toole

Chairperson, Committee for Finance

5 November 2025