



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Finance

Minutes of Proceedings

16 September 2026

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Matthew O'Toole MLA (Chairperson)

Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Deirdre Hargey MLA

Harry Harvey MLA

Brian Kingston MLA

Eóin Tennyson MLA

Apologies: Dr Steve Aiken MBE MLA

Virtual: Gerry Carroll MLA

Áine Murphy MLA

In Attendance: Peter Hall Committee Clerk

Fiona Rooney Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk

Tom Armstrong Assistant Assembly Clerk

Clairita Frazer 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 House of Commons Library – Economic Indicators

The Committee noted the latest summary of Economic Indicators for Northern Ireland, published by the House of Commons Library.

The Chairperson reflected on the need to monitor the rising rate of inflation, in terms of spending.

3.2 Centre for Cross Border Cooperation's Research Priorities Seminar

The Committee noted a reminder about the above seminar.

Gerry Carroll joined the meeting at 2:10pm.

3.3 Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission – Launch of the Frontier Workers Case Studies Group

The Committee noted an invitation to the above launch.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share its report on the Inquiry into Northern Ireland Banking and Financial Services Landscape, with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.

3.4 New Chair of the Senedd Cymru Finance Committee

The Chairperson reflected on the establishment of the new Senedd Cymru Finance Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Chairperson, Sam Rowlands MS, welcoming both the establishment of the Committee and his appointment.

4. Draft Minutes of Proceedings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Minutes of Proceedings from the meeting of the 9th September 2026.

5. Matters Arising

5.1. Minister of Finance – Legislative Consent Motion (LCM): Cyber Security and Resilience (Network and Information Systems) Bill

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Finance on the above LCM, noting that Departmental officials were due to brief the Committee at next week's meeting.

5.2. House of Lords – Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee

The Committee considered copy correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the Treasury, seeking clarification on a number of issues relating to definitions, customs declarations and data elements related to the temporary EUR 3 customs duty on distance sales of imported goods in a consignment with an intrinsic value not exceeding €150.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the House of Lords Committee to add the Northern Ireland Assembly's Economy Committee to its distribution list for such correspondence.

Matthew O'Toole declared an interest as he was due to provide oral evidence to the House of Lords Committee, the next day, on a related matter.

5.3. Northern Ireland Affairs Committee – Economic growth in Northern Ireland: Final Report

The Committee noted a report published by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee on 8th September, reflecting on its conclusions and other reports examining economic growth and analysis.

5.4. Department of Finance – Northern Ireland Fiscal Council – Member recruitment

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding the proposed recruitment approach to making appointments to the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to source copies of the recruitment notices for member appointments.

5.5. DALO Readout Response – 6 May – Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance regarding remit within the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to copy the information provided to the Committee for Education's Call for Evidence.

5.6. DALO Readout Response – 6 May – Irish Medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance regarding remit within the Irish Medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to copy the information provided to the Committee for Education's Call for Evidence.

6. Public Office (Accountability) Bill – Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) – Oral Briefing from Department of Finance officials

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Hansard would report the session.

The Committee noted that this session was scheduled as an update briefing in advance of the anticipated Plenary debate on the LCM; the date for which was not yet confirmed. Members also noted recent Department of Finance correspondence along with a copy of the Committee Report on the LCM.

The following official joined the meeting at 2:23pm;

David Hughes	Director of Corporate Services Division, Department of Finance
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The official briefed the Committee on the latest position with respect to the LCM.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session and a number of issues were discussed including; timeframe for the plenary debate on the LCM, previous security and intelligence concerns around provisions within the Bill, guidance for public sector bodies and the timescale for commencement and Royal Assent for the Bill.

The Chairperson thanked the official for their attendance, and the official remained at Committee for the next agenda item.

Diane Forsthye left the meeting at 2:35pm.

Members discussed the preparation of an addendum to its report on the LCM.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider an addendum to its report on the LCM at a later date.

7. Department of Finance – Oral Briefing – Business Plan 2026/27

The Committee noted a Clerk's Memo providing background to the session. Members also noted previous Departmental correspondence which enclosed a copy of the Department's Business Plan for 2026/27.

The following official briefed the Committee on this agenda item at 2:37pm;

David Hughes Director of Corporate Services Division Department of Finance

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session and a number of issues were discussed including; the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) People Strategy, NICS Internal Promotion Boards, 5-year Departmental Plans and Citizen Contact Strategy.

The Chairperson thanked the official for their attendance, and the official left the meeting at 3:01pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek further detail from the Department of Finance on a number of issues discussed during the session, with a view to scheduling an oral briefing session with NICS HR. The Committee also agreed to ask the Department of Finance for an update on Departmental 5 year plans.

8. Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill – Committee Deliberations

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Hansard would report the session.

The Committee noted a NIL response from the Committee for the Executive Office to its Call for Evidence on the Bill, noting that this response would be added to the Committee report in due course.

The Chairperson reminded Members about anticipated oral briefings at next week's meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to start next week's meeting at the earlier time of 1pm to facilitate anticipated business.

9. Performance and Culture of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) – Committee Deliberations

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Hansard would report the session.

Áine Murphy joined the meeting at 3:05pm.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Finance enclosing the first Annual Progress Report on delivery of the NICS People Strategy 2025-2030.

Members discussed some feedback on the presentation and contents of the Progress Report, including the apparent lack of specific measurable metrics. The Committee indicated that officials would be expected to provide further detail in advance of an oral briefing at a future meeting.

10. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the 2025-26 Annual Report for the Financial Advisory Board.
- ii. The Committee noted the 2025-26 Annual Report for the Lay Observer for Northern Ireland. Members also noted that an oral briefing with the new Legal Oversight Commissioner was scheduled for 4th November.
- iii. The Committee noted copy correspondence from an individual to the Finance Minister enclosing a submission to the Shared Property Reform Team.
- iv. The Committee noted the 72th Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the individual.

11. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme and a number of upcoming briefings.

Members noted that the Committee Report on the Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill could be finalised ahead of its anticipated timetable.

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

12. Any Other Business

None.

13. Date and Time of next meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 23rd September 2026 at 1pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:16pm.

Matthew O'Toole

Chairperson, Committee for Finance

23rd September 2026