



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Finance

Minutes of Proceedings

8 October 2025

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Matthew O'Toole MLA (Chairperson)

Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Brian Kingston MLA

Eoin Tennyson MLA

Apologies: Steve Aiken MLA

Harry Harvey MLA

Virtual: Gerry Carroll MLA

Jemma Dolan MLA

Deirdre Hargey MLA

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 2:06pm in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 Minister of Finance – Written Statement on Treasury Funding 2026-2029/30

The Committee noted a written statement made by the Minister of Finance on 3rd October concerning Treasury Funding for 2026-2029/30.

3.2 Baby Loss Awareness Week

The Committee noted events to take place during Baby Loss Awareness Week, including a Sands Ribbon Display Ceremony hosted by Jemma Dolan on Thursday 9th October and a Committee Event on Tuesday 14th October 2025. The Committee considered a draft Press Release on the Committee Event.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the press release would be issued as drafted.

Jemma Dolan joined the meeting at 2:10pm.

3.3 Written Assembly Question – Casement Park

The Committee considered a response given by the Finance Minister, to an Assembly Written Question asked by the Chairperson regarding Casement Park.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider a related item in Matters Arising.

5.7 House of Lords Question – Casement Park Funding

The Committee considered a response from to a House of Lords Written Question regarding Casement Park Funding.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request some follow-up information from the Department of Finance in relation to the meeting between the Finance and Communities Minister on 29th September, clarity on the term “equity stake” and what accounting treatment might apply.

Eoin Tennyson joined the meeting at 2:17pm.

4. Draft Minutes of Proceedings

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Minutes of Proceedings from the meeting of the 1 October 2025.

5. Matters Arising

5.1. Department of Finance – Response to Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill and 5.2 Notification of Amendments

The Committee noted a response from the Department of Finance to its Report on the Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill and notification of amendments tabled for Consideration Stage of the Bill. Members noted the following confirmed dates for the next legislative stages for the Bill:

Consideration Stage: Tuesday 21 October

Further Consideration: Tuesday 11 November

Final Stage: Monday 24 November

5.3. Department of Finance – Aligning Budget to Programme for Government

The Committee considered a report from the Department of Finance assessing the extent to which departmental spending supports the various Programme for Government priorities.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to circulate the report to other Statutory Committees and the Assembly Audit Committee for their information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Finance if the report will act as a “live dashboard” which is updated as the Budget Cycle progresses and if there would be any role for the Fiscal Council either to contribute to the report or to assess the report’s outputs. The Committee also agreed to send a copy of the report to the Fiscal Council for a view.

5.4. Department of Finance – India Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)

The Committee considered an update from the Department of Finance in relation to the CETA.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Finance for clarification on whether there was any differentiation between GB and Northern Ireland with regard to the Agreement.

5.5. DALO Readout Extract 17 September 2025

The Committee noted an extract from the DALO Readout following the meeting on 17 September 2025.

5.6. DALO Readout Response – Secondary Legislation Schedule

The Committee considered an indicative schedule of Secondary Legislation from the Department of Finance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add these items to the Committee Forward Work Programme.

5.8. Correspondence – Protective Mothers NI

The Committee noted copy correspondence from Protective Mothers NI to the Committee for Health regarding safeguarding issues.

5.9. 46th Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules

The Committee noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had formally reported on SR 2025/150 The Coronavirus Act 2020 (Registration of Deaths and Still-Births) (Extension) (No.2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025 and that the Rule did not require to be drawn to the special attention of the Assembly.

5.10. Minister of Finance – Performance Appraisal Process for the Head of the Civil Service (HOCS)

The Committee considered a response from the Minister of Finance regarding the appraisal process for the role of the Head of the Civil Service.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek further information and clarity from the Department of Finance on a number of related issues.

5.11 Minister of Finance – Update on Whitehall Local Growth Fund

The Committee considered an update from the Minister of Finance on the Whitehall Local Growth Fund.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an oral briefing on this issue when the Forward Work Programme permits.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Secretary of State for NI in support of the Minister's position on the Local Growth Fund and associated request for a trilateral meeting involving the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Secretary of State.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an update from the Department of Finance on funding available as a result of the Pathways to Work Green Paper.

6. NI Fiscal Council Bill – Committee Deliberations

Agreed: Members agreed to move into closed session to receive legal advice on the Bill.

The Committee moved into closed session at 2:37pm.

The Committee considered legal advice received on the Delegated Powers within the NI Fiscal Council Bill.

The Committee returned to open session at 2:51pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek clarification from the Department of Finance on the scope of the functions that could be conferred or removed as a result of Clause 5 of the Bill. The Committee also agreed to seek the views of the Department of Finance in relation to paragraph 5(3) of Schedule 1 to the Bill, noting that this was not included in the Delegated Powers Memorandum. The Committee also agreed to seek clarification from the Department of Finance about the need for flexibility to change numbers by regulation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to its oral briefing with the Scottish Fiscal Council.

7. NI Fiscal Council Bill – Oral Briefing with the Scottish Fiscal Council

Agreed: Members agreed that the oral briefing should be reported by Hansard.

Members noted a number of relevant background papers including a RalSe paper on the Roles and Remits of Independent Fiscal Institutions, a Framework Document between the Scottish Fiscal Council and the Scottish Government and a series of Memorandums of Understanding between the Scottish Fiscal Commission and relevant bodies.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2:54pm:

Professor Graeme Roy, Chair, Scottish Fiscal Commission; and

John Ireland, Chief Executive, Scottish Fiscal Commission.

The witnesses provided the Committee with oral evidence on the Scottish Fiscal Council. The briefing was followed by a question and answer session. A number of issues were discussed including resources, governance, appointments and independence.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance, and the witnesses left the meeting at 4:08pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the legal advice on the Delegated Powers within the Bill with the Bill Clerk.

Members noted that the OECD Submission to the Committee's Call for Evidence on the Bill would now be forwarded to the Department for formal response.

The Committee noted a Hansard Transcript of an oral briefing with Department of Finance officials on the principles of the Bill which took place on 24th September 2025.

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance to a submission from the UUEPC to the Committee's Call for Evidence on the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to send the Department of Finance's response to Gareth Hetherington in the UUEPC in advance his oral evidence session with the Committee which was scheduled for 3rd December 2025.

8. Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill – Committee Deliberations

The Committee noted a Hansard transcript of a Department of Finance oral briefing on the principles of the Bill which took place on 24th September 2025.

Diane Forsthye declared an interest as a current Member of the Assembly Audit Committee.

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance to an Assembly Research paper on the Bill specifically to Clause 20 of the Bill. Members noted that the Department was still to provide a response in relation to Clause 1 and 18 which has direct relevance to the Department of Finance's remit.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the Department of Finance's comments on Clause 20 of the Bill with the Assembly's Audit Committee.

9. Strategic Asset Management Unit (SAMU) – Written Briefing from the Department of Finance

The Committee considered a written briefing from the Department of Finance on the Strategic Asset Management Unit (SAMU).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek a further progress update from the Department of Finance and to visit Lanyon Plaza when the Committee's Forward Work Programme permits.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Finance how SAMU interacts with the NICS Estates Strategy.

The Committee considered an update from the Department of Finance on the listing of Marlborough House, Craigavon.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that it is kept informed of developments in relation to Marlborough House.

10. End of Session Report

The Committee considered its draft End of Session Report for 2024-25.

The Committee considered the Title Page, Contents Page, Remit, Powers and Membership Section as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Title page, Contents Page, Remit, Powers and Membership Section stand part of the Report

Key Activities.

The Committee considered the Key Activities, Outputs and Achievements Section as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Key Activities, Outputs and Achievements Section stand part of the Report.

Appendices.

The Committee considered the Appendices section; Appendix 1 and 2 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Appendices section stand part of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Committee for Finance End of Session Report 2024-25 be the 7th Report of the Committee for Finance.

11. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered copy correspondence from Advice NI and Marie Curie to the Minister of Finance regarding Death Reporting process in NI;

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an update on the meeting between the Finance and Communities Minister to discuss cross-departmental work in this regard.

- ii. The Committee noted an update from the Youth Assembly.

12. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

The Committee Clerk updated Members on the current position with the Public Office (Accountability) Bill – LCM.

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

13. Any Other Business

None.

14. Date and Time of next meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 15 October 2025 at 2.00pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:31pm.

Matthew O'Toole

Chairperson, Committee for Finance

15 October 2025