

## Committee for Finance

### Department of Finance: 2022-25 Draft Budget Allocation

#### Introduction

1. Department of Finance officials attended the Committee for Finance meeting on 9 February 2022 in order to provide an oral briefing on the 2021-22 Estimates Memorandum and on the Department's draft budget allocation for 2022-25.
2. The Department of Finance has a limited resource and capital budget. It receives income in respect of inter-departmental services including HR and accounting support. Other sources of income including rates revenue, though substantial do not appear in the Estimates or the budget allocation as they are immediately distributed for other departments to spend.

#### Headline Issues

3. The draft 2022-25 Budget leaves the Department of Finance with a largely unchanged Resource DEL budget of around £168.5m pa and capital budget of around £35m pa. There is a variation in staff costs in Land and Property Services as this body will no longer have to support covid schemes but will have to support Reval 2023. and NISRA as the bulk of the Census 2021 work will have concluded early in the 2022-25 period.
4. The Department identified currently unfunded pressures during 2022-25 include for Reval 2023 which amount to £4.9m/£5.3m/£1.6m. The Department indicated that pressures will be managed through in-year vacancy management and the roll-out of the employee relations programme which will allow line managers in all departments more authority to make decisions and thus reduce the need for centrally provided HR services.
5. The Department also referred to a number of capital projects including the new LPS Nova system; Integr8 which is a replacement for Account NI and HR Connect; NI Digital Contact Centre which will replace NIDirect; and NICS estate management changes. The Department clarified that estate management programme will involve a degree of consolidation of the estate taking into account changing working patterns and the need to manage leasing costs.
6. The draft budget for 2022-25 includes no provision at this time for further covid supports for business – with the exception of the business rates holiday for the first 3 months of 2022-23. Any additional covid support programmes may represent a further pressure in respect of grants that may have to be paid and also in terms of staffing in LPS in order to deliver such supports.

#### Conclusion

7. The Committee was generally satisfied with the 2022-25 budget plan for the Department of Finance although Members expressed some concerns as to how pressures might be met if further covid support schemes were required.