



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Finance

Minutes of Proceedings

11 June 2025

Meeting Location: Studio Ulster, Belfast Harbour Estate

Present:	Matthew O'Toole MLA (Chairperson)
	Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
	Steve Aiken MLA
	Phillip Brett MLA
	Gerry Carroll MLA
	Paul Frew MLA
	Deirdre Hargey MLA
	Eoin Tennyson MLA
Apologies:	Jemma Dolan MLA
Virtual:	None
In Attendance:	Peter Hall Committee Clerk
	Clairita Frazer Assistant Assembly Clerk

Tom Armstrong Assistant Assembly Clerk

Stephen Magee Clerical Supervisor

Heather Graham Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 2:00pm in public session.

The Chairperson reflected on the value of holding the meeting in Studio Ulster to promote the technology and facilities offered and to reflect on the huge potential for Northern Ireland's future in terms of skills and jobs in a thriving industry.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1. Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR)

The Chairperson and Members discussed the live outcome of the CSR and noted that an oral briefing with officials was scheduled for next week's meeting, giving Members an opportunity to discuss this in greater detail.

3.2. Assembly Speaker – Data (Use and Access) Bill – Legislative Consent Motion (LCM).

The Committee noted correspondence from the Assembly Speaker regarding the handling of the Data (Use and Access) Bill LCM. Members also noted that this would

be considered further when responses from the Department of Finance were received.

The Chairperson also thanked the Committee team for facilitating the additional meeting which took place on Tuesday 10th June 2025.

3.3. Minister of Finance – Fiscal Council Bill

The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Finance enclosing the draft Fiscal Council Bill and associated documents. The Chairperson welcomed the forthcoming introduction of the Bill and noted that the Committee would have an opportunity to discuss this further in the coming weeks.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share a copy of the Bill and associated documents with RalSe in anticipation of the Committee's scrutiny of the Bill.

Members also noted that a draft Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill had also been provided by the Minister and would be considered at next week's meeting.

3.4. Minister of Finance – Urgent Written Ministerial Statement

The Committee noted a copy of the Written Ministerial Statement on a Public Procurement Policy Statement made on Friday 6th June 2025.

3.5. Department of Finance – Business Plan 2025-26

The Committee considered a copy of the Department of Finance's Business Plan for 2025-26..

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the Business Plan at a later date in the context of a future briefing on the Department of Finance's 5-year plan.

3.6. Informal meeting with Hospitality Ulster

The Committee considered a note of an informal meeting with Hospitality Ulster which took place on Wednesday 4th June 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the note of an informal meeting with Hospitality Ulster which took place on Wednesday 4th June 2025.

3.7. NI Fiscal Council – Sustainability Report 2025: special focus - Water

The Committee noted that the NI Fiscal Council had published a Sustainability Report with a special focus on water.

4. Draft Minutes of Proceedings

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Minutes of Proceedings from the meeting of the 4 June 2025.

5. Matters Arising

5.1. DALO Readout Extract – Meeting of 7th May 2025

The Committee noted an extract from the DALO Readout issued following the Committee meeting on 7th May 2025.

5.2. DALO Readout Response – Motor Insurance Taskforce

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance regarding the cross-government Motor Insurance Taskforce.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to obtain an update on the meeting in due course.

5.3. DALO Readout Response – Follow-up information from oral evidence session with the Minister of Finance

The Committee considered follow-up information from an oral evidence session with the Minister of Finance regarding the Strategic Income Review, Cost of Doing Business report, Prof. Holtham's assessment of relative need, recruitment platform

for HR Connect including contact details, additional appointments to the Public Sector Transformation Board and the second call for transformation funding.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the UK Treasury to ask the rationale for not taking Prof Holtham's assessment of relative need into account as part of the recent CSR.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek clarity from the Department of Finance on the use of the term "Board" when referring to the Public Sector Transformation Board as this would suggest that it is more than an advisory panel, as well as whether the approach taken to appointing additional members to the Board adheres to RHI recommendations to use recognised and best practice HR processes to make such appointments.

Paul Frew left the meeting at 2:23pm.

5.4 DALO Readout Response – Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance regarding provision for charging within the Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek further clarity from the Department of Finance on hypothetical reasons for including the enabling power to provide for charging in the Bill.

5.5. AIB – Banking Inquiry – Follow-up queries

The Committee considered follow-up information provided by AIB following its oral evidence session on 9th April.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek more detail particularly in respect of lending volumes over the past decade.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the information to the evidence base for the Banking and Financial Landscape Inquiry.

5.6. Bank of Ireland – Banking Inquiry – Follow-up queries

The Committee considered follow-up information provided by Bank of Ireland following its oral evidence session on 9th April.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek more detail particularly in respect of lending volumes over the past decade.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the information to the evidence base for the Banking and Financial Landscape Inquiry.

5.7. NI Branch of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)

The Committee considered written comments provided by CIPFA to the Banking and Financial Landscape Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the information to the evidence base for the Banking and Financial Landscape Inquiry.

5.8. Danske Bank – Banking Inquiry – Follow-up queries

The Committee considered follow-up information provided by Danske Bank following its oral evidence session on 9th April.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek more detail particularly in respect of lending volumes over the past decade.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the information to the evidence base for the Banking and Financial Landscape Inquiry.

Phillip Brett joined the meeting at 2:37pm.

5.9 Fair Banking for all – additional submission

The Committee considered an additional submission provided by Fair Banking for all following its oral evidence session on 21st May.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to make reference, in its Banking and Financial Service Inquiry report, to the Department of Economy's consultation on Credit Unions.

5.9 Examiner of Statutory Rules – 41st Report

The Committee considered the 41st report from the Examiner of Statutory Rules which referenced SR 2025/91 and 3 draft Affirmative SRs relating to the Legal Oversight Commissioner. Members discussed concerns over the lack of detail in respect of costs associated with the Legal Oversight Commissioner and potential governance issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the contents of the Examiner's report pending further consideration of SRs related to the Legal Oversight Commissioner at next week's meeting.

6. City and Growth Deals – Oral Briefing from the Department of Finance

The Committee noted background information, an update paper from the Department of Finance and previous quarterly progress reports in relation to City & Growth Deals.

The following officials joined the meeting at 2:44pm:

Jillian Gilmore	Head of City and Growth Deals, Department of Finance; and
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Jason Beggs	Deputy Principal, City and Growth Deals, Department of Finance.
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The officials updated the Committee on details of current deals, contracts awarded and various projects associated with City and Growth Deals. The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

A number of issues were discussed including; the Mourne Mountains Gateway Project, environmental considerations, accessibility considerations, community benefit, social value and value of jobs associated with projects.

Steve Aiken declared an interest as a result of constituent work related to the matters under discussion.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance and the officials left the meeting at 3:30pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek additional information on a number of pertinent issues discussed including on Hydrogen Hubs.

7. SL1 – The Public Service (Civil Service and Others) Pension (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025 & Consultation response on Scheme Yield Member Contributions – Oral Briefing from the Department of Finance

Steve Aiken declared an interest as the Chairperson of the NI Assembly Pension Fund.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Finance regarding the outcome of a consultation on adjustments to NICS employee contributions to meet the required scheme yield as well as a copy of the consultation report.

Members also considered a policy proposal from the Department of Finance to enable the Department of Finance to increase employee contribution bands to meet the required Employee Contribution Scheme Yield.

Finally, Members considered copies of the full consultation responses from NIPSA and PCS which were provided by the Department of Finance in advance of the briefing.

The Committee noted that Department of Finance officials are attending Committee today to answer questions Members may have in this regard.

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

Colette Heaney	Director of Pensions Division, Department of Finance;
	and
Stephen Ball	Deputy Director of Pensions Division, Department of Finance.

The officials briefed the Committee on detail of consultation responses and the rationale for the proposed way forward. The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

A number of issues were discussed including; legislative need for adjustments to meet required yield and details of union responses to the consultation.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance and the officials left the meeting at 3:49pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the policy proposal to enable the Department of Finance to increase employee contribution bands in order to meet the Employee Contribution Scheme Yield.

8. Department of Finance Service Delivery Brochure – Oral Briefing from the Department of Finance on targets and delivery metrics set to IT

The Committee noted background information and a briefing paper provided by the Department of Finance in advance of the session.

The following officials joined the meeting at 3:50pm:

Paul Duffy	Deputy Secretary for Digital, Security and Finance Shared Services;
Colin Daysh	Director of Digital Operations;
Hugh Tohill	Head of Cyber Resilience and Assurance; and
David Hughes	Director of Corporate Services Division

The officials briefed the Committee on IT services as outlined in the Service Delivery Brochure. The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

A number of issues were discussed including; media monitoring, IT response following recent incorrect URL incident in LPS, reporting of metrics in the brochure and health checks.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a ready reckoner which outlines how much is raised for all IT services and for a redacted health check.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek information on what contract is in place for media monitoring within the NI Assembly.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance and the officials left the meeting at 4:16pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer consideration of correspondence until next week's meeting.

10. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme, as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that departmental officials attend next week's meeting to answer any questions Members may have in relation to the subordinate legislation associated with the Legal Services Oversight Commissioner.

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

11. Any Other Business

The Chairperson thanked the Committee team for facilitating the visit and external meeting.

12. Date and Time of next meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 18th June 2025 at 2.00pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:18pm.

Matthew O'Toole

Chairperson, Committee for Finance

18th June 2025