



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Finance

Minutes of Proceedings

22 January 2025

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Matthew O'Toole MLA (Chairperson)
Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Phillip Brett MLA
Paul Frew MLA
Steve Aiken MLA
Deirdre Hargey MLA

Online: Gerry Carroll MLA
Nicola Brogan MLA
Eóin Tennyson MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Peter Hall Committee Clerk

Clairita Frazer Assistant Assembly Clerk

Sarah-Anne McKinley Assistant Assembly Clerk

Stephen Magee Clerical Supervisor

Heather Graham Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 1:07pm in public session.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 Minister of Finance - Budget Bill Accelerated Passage

The Chairperson referred Members to correspondence from the Finance Minister in relation to accelerated passage of the Budget Bill. The Minister plans to introduce the Budget Bill to the Assembly on Monday 17 February. This will authorise the 24-25 SSEs, the 25-26 Vote on Account and the 23-24 Statement of Excesses, with the Supply resolutions for these scheduled for debate on that day too. The Minister also indicated that in order to enable the Bill to pass through all of its stages and receive Royal Assent by 24 March 2025, it will be necessary to proceed under the accelerated passage procedure, before any Department reaches the cash limit imposed by the Budget (No.2) Act (Northern Ireland) 2024.

The Chairperson also updated Members that in order to inform contributions to both a report and debate, contributions would be sought from other Statutory Committees and the Audit Committee on the 2025-2026 Budget.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing with officials at the meeting on 12th February to discuss the Budget Bill and associated timelines.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission a round robin written exercise to all statutory Committees and the Audit Committee seeking their views on their

respective department's 2025-2026 Budget. The Committee also agreed to encourage committee to raise any issues they wished with regard to the 24/25 Budget.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request information from the Department of Finance with regard to its 2025-26 Budget.

3.2 Minister of Finance - Written Ministerial Statement

The Chairperson referred Members to a written ministerial statement from the Finance Minister regarding allocations as part of the 2024-2025 January Monitoring Round. This was emailed to Members on the 16 January.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department what is the position of the Fresh Start funding and where this currently sits.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to ask the Department for further updates on improving FTC take-up amongst Departments.

3.3 The Allied Health Professions Federation Northern Ireland - Invitation

The Chairperson referred Members to an invitation from The Allied Health Professions Federation Northern Ireland to their Long Gallery event 'AHPs - doing what matters most' on the 24th February at 1pm. Members wishing to attend should refer to the RSVP details in the invite.

3.4 Queen's University Belfast - Invitation

The Chairperson referred Members to an invitation from Queen's University Belfast to their drop-in event 'Research to Reality: Partners in Shaping a Better World' which is the first event marking Queen's 180th anniversary. The event took place in the Long Gallery on the 21st January.

3.5 Minister of Finance - Civil Service Pay Award 2024

The Chairperson referred Members to correspondence from the Finance Minister in relation to the Civil Service Pay Award for 2024. The Minister has indicated that a 20-month pay offer has been made to the recognised civil service trade unions covering the period 1 August 24 to 1 March 2026. The offer includes a 3% consolidated increase with effect from 1 August 2024 and a 6% consolidated

increase with effect from 1 August 2025 along with other changes to bring up the pay of lower paid workers and improvements to allowances and other terms and conditions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department for clarity on the £128m that the Minister references, seeking to understand how much of this amount will be included in the 24/25 Budget and how much of this amount will be included in the 25/26 Budget. The Committee also agreed to ask the Department if the pay deal will add pressure to the 2025-26 Budget baseline.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department what impact the rise of the national insurance costs from the 1st April will have on the baseline and what additional funds might be required for 2025-26 Budget to mitigate these costs.

3.6 Draft Press Release - Joint Budget Event with the Economy Committee

The Chairperson referred Members to a draft press release in relation to the Joint Budget Event with the Economy Committee which is taking place on the 29 January.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the draft press release to be released.

3.7 Minister of Finance - Independent Review of Need

The Chairperson referred Members to correspondence from the Finance Minister regarding Independent Review of Need. The Minister has informed the Committee that the Department has reached an agreement in principle to conduct an independent review of the level of need in Northern Ireland with Professor Holtham. Members noted the letter.

4. Draft Minutes of Proceedings

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

5. Matters Arising

5.1 Department of Finance - Response to Committee for Communities NICVA Public Sector Policy Development

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department to the Committee for Communities regarding work being carried out with the voluntary and community sector in relation to any aspects of public sector policy development. The Department have provided information on a number of areas including the Shared Prosperity Fund, post 2026 funding work and engagement with the sector around procurement and engagement in relation to policy and guidance. The Committee has been copied in for information and noted the response.

5.2 DALO Readout extract of requests - Following 27 November meeting

The Committee noted the DALO Readout table issued following the meeting on 27 November 2024.

5.3 Department of Finance - Public Sector Transformation Board (PSTB)

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department in relation to the PSTB. The Department have indicated that Treasury engagement has been primarily in relation to the potential profiling of expenditure from transformation funding and NIO engagement has been primarily on the operation of the interim PSTB including UK Government representation on the interim Board, and its terms of reference. The Finance Minister wrote to the Secretary of State (SoS) on the 12 November requesting a meeting with him to agree the Terms of Reference for the interim Board which is expected to take place in the New Year.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department if a meeting date has been agreed between the Finance Minister and the SoS regarding agreement of the Board's ToR. The Committee also agreed to ask the Department what specific input is being sought from the SoS and what engagement from the NIO has been offered.

5.4 Department of Finance - Potential Amendment to the NICS Staff Handbook

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding potential amendments to the NICS Staff Handbook. This Committee previously requested the Department's view on the merit of an amendment to the NICS Staff Handbook to reflect the unique circumstances and challenges of prison custody officers and other prison service staff. The Department has indicated that it is important the policies within the HR Handbook apply to all staff and there are no plans to have a separate annex to the NICS for prison service staff.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the Committee for Justice given that Committee's interest in the matter.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to bring back the item to next week's meeting.

5.5 Department of Finance - SR 2024/191 - The Building Amendment Regulations 2024 Fire Safety Duties

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department in relation to fire safety duties contained within SR 2024/191 The Building Amendment Regulations 2024. This Committee previously requested clarification from the Department on how the term "a person with fire safety duties" is defined in the context of the SR. The Department has indicated that this is defined in Article 52 of the Fire and Rescue Services NI Order 2006.

5.6 Department of Finance - Departmental Solicitors Office (DSO) follow-up queries following Oral Briefing

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding follow up queries following the oral briefing with the DSO where staff numbers and vacancies were discussed. The Department has provided DSO headcount statistics for over the last 10 years including a breakdown of roles and the number of vacancies across the same period.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this response pending receipt of similar information from OLC.

5.7 Minister for the Economy - National Financial Inclusion Strategy

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister for the Economy to the Economic Secretary to the Treasury and City Minister in relation to the Financial Inclusion Strategy and the new Financial Inclusion Committee. The Committee has been copied in to this correspondence for information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request sight of any response to the Economy Minister's letter.

5.8 Minister for Infrastructure - Written Statement on October Monitoring Allocation to NI Water

The Committee noted a written statement from the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the October Monitoring allocation to NI Water. The Minister has indicated that NI Water has received an additional allocation of £19.5m Capital DEL to specifically address constraints in wastewater infrastructure and to unlock capacity for housing connections.

5.9 Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) - Cryptocurrency

The Committee noted correspondence from the FCA in relation to cryptocurrency as part of its scrutiny of the LCM on the Property (Digital Assets, etc.) Bill. The Committee previously wrote to the FCA to request further information on a survey carried out by the FCA which suggested that Northern Ireland has the highest proportion of cryptocurrency ownership outside of London. The FCA has indicated that more recent consumer research indicates that Northern Ireland still has higher ownership rates; some conclusions have been provided for the Committee which indicate that NI crypto consumers hold on average less crypto, are older on average and are more likely to have purchased their crypto through a payment firm.

5.10 Peace Summit Partnership - Correspondence and Request for meeting

The Committee noted correspondence and a request to meet the Committee from the Peace Summit Partnership. This correspondence was considered by the Committee at its meeting on the 11 December. Members agreed that the Clerk would ask if the Committee for the Executive Office had considered similar correspondence given their lead responsibility for scrutiny of the PfG. They have agreed to meet the partnership as part of its FWP going forward.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Peace Summit Partnership to inform them that it would be more appropriate for them to meet with the Committee for the Executive Office as the lead with regard to PfG scrutiny.

5.11 Northern Ireland Open Government Network - Follow up information

The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Open Government Network regarding a number of follow-up issues following their oral briefing with the Committee. Open Government have provided information on statistical analysis on FOI across the Northern Ireland Executive, information on how Open Government commitments can enhance public engagement; the terms of reference for the Multi-

Stakeholder Forum as well as a copy of the Monitoring Report on 2021-22 NI Local Action Plan.

5.12 Minister of Finance - Impact of the Chancellor's Autumn Budget

Statement on local business

The Committee noted correspondence from the Finance Minister in relation to the impact of the Chancellor's Autumn Budget Statement on local business. The Minister has indicated that she has asked the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre to carry out a focused cost of doing business sectoral study and the types of interventions that can be undertaken by the Executive including the rating system.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Committee staff check the Hansard from Economy Question Time earlier in the week when this issue was referenced, with a view to bringing back any new information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department for clarity on the £200m figure referenced. Members seek clarity on what the figure covers, any comparable figure for local government and a figure for the elements of the Community and Voluntary sector that provide government services. The Committee also agreed to ask the Department what it expects to receive from the Treasury with respect to this issue, and whether there can be any flexibility in grants to the CVS to help cover the increase in their Employer's National Insurance contributions.

5.13 DALO Readout extract of requests made following 4 December 2024 meeting

The Committee noted the DALO Readout table issued following the meeting on 4 December 2024.

5.14 Department for Finance - Changes to Employer's National Insurance, Minimum and Living Wages

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Finance in relation to changes to Employer's National Insurance and National Minimum and Living Wages. The Department has indicated that the Minister has written to the CST on this issue, requesting support be provided to those outside central government who also provide vital public services on behalf of government and raised the issue of the

impact of this increase in Employer National Insurance Contribution rates on the Voluntary and Community sector with the Minister of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

5.15 Department for Finance - SEUPB Accounts

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Finance regarding 2023 SEUPB Accounts. The Committee previously requested information on the delay of these accounts being laid and the Department have indicated that they have now been finalised and agreed with the next step being certification by the Comptroller and Auditor Generals in both jurisdictions.

Phillip Brett left the meeting at 1.52pm and returned at 2.00pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department the status of the 2024 SEUPB accounts, the current reason for the continued delay of the 2023 accounts and whether the certification process by both C&AGs has been completed.

5.16 Economy Committee - Budget 2025-2026 Equality Impacts

The Committee noted correspondence from the Economy Committee on the 2025-2026 Budget Equality Impacts. The Committee previously wrote to all statutory Committees to ask if they have received information on potential equality impacts of the draft budget for 2025-2026 scenarios. The Committee have highlighted some errors in the Equality Impacts templates submitted to DoF which have now been resubmitted.

5.27 Health Minister - WMS Draft Budget 2025-26 Equality Impact Assessment

The Committee noted a written ministerial statement from the Health Minister in relation to Department of Health's equality impact assessment on the draft Executive Budget for 2025-2026.

5.28 Infrastructure Committee - Budget 2025-2026 Equality Impacts

The Committee noted correspondence from the Infrastructure Committee on the 2025-2026 Budget Equality Impacts. The Committee have indicated that it has received no information on the potential equality impacts of the draft Budget 2025-2026 to date.

5.29 AERA Committee - Budget 2025-2026 Equality Impacts

The Committee noted correspondence from the AERA Committee on the 2025-2026 Budget Equality Impacts. The Committee have indicated that they received a briefing on the January Monitoring Round but have not yet received information on equality impacts however the Committee has requested a briefing on the draft 2025-2026 Budget and will request that this includes equality impacts.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department have the completed equality impact statements on the 2025/2026 Budget for each department.

5.17 Department of Finance - Correspondence to the Communities Committee Sickness Absence in the NICS

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Finance to the Communities Committee regarding sickness absence in the NICS covering July to September 2024. The Committee has been copied in for information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department the following information:

- To ask what further steps will be taken to reduce sickness absence for NICS staff overall.
- To ask if there is a strategy to bring down sick absence, if there is an acceptable target that NICS are aiming for and if there is a best practice level.
- To ask if there are differences in sickness absence levels by grade of those on a TP.
- To ask if there is comparable figures available for neighbouring jurisdictions and local government in Northern Ireland regarding those involved in complaint procedures.
- To ask if departments are taking different approaches to sickness absence across the NICS.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the correspondence with other Statutory Committees to raise with their respective Departments.

5.18 Committee for Communities - Sickness absence in the NICS

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Communities to the Department of Finance. The Communities Committee has raised queries to the

Department in relation to requesting information on the NICS absence rate, action being taken to improve sickness rates and absence since COVID. The Committee has been copied in for information.

5.19 - Department of Finance Final Explanatory Paper on Methodological Changes for Excess Deaths

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the final explanatory paper on methodological changes for excess deaths. The Department have provided a final copy of the NISRA paper on excess deaths methodology which was published on the 20 January.

5.20 DALO Readout extract of requests made following 11 December meeting

The Committee noted the DALO Readout table issued following the meeting on 11 December 2024.

5.21 Department of Finance - Subordinate Legislation Schedule

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Finance in relation to the subordinate legislation schedule. The Department have provided an indicative schedule for all forthcoming subordinate legislation. Whilst some more information is given there remains generic months and a number of items are TBC.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for Committee Staff continue to press the Department for specific meeting dates to assist with planning.

5.22 Department of Finance - Commissioning letters to Departments January Monitoring Round and SSEs

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Finance regarding commissioning letters to Departments on the January Monitoring Round and SSEs. The Department have indicated that in relation to the SSEs all ambits were received by 16 December and completed SSEs have been received from Food Standards Agency, NIAO, DoH (Superannuation) and DoF (Superannuation). For those participating in Stage 2 of January monitoring returns are not required until 16 January and the Department have noted that they are not aware of any difficulties at this time.

In relation to January Monitoring the Department has set out a summary of which departments did/did not meet the appropriate deadline and if applicable a reason for any delay.

5.24 Department of Finance - Fujitsu etc. Contracts

Agreed: The Committee agreed to go into **closed session at 2.10pm** to discuss this item of correspondence due to the contents being deemed restricted.

The Committee moved into **open session** at **2.20pm**.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department for further clarification in relation to Fujitsu contracts, specifically the current status of the Cabinet Office work being undertaken with respect to Fujitsu contracts that was highlighted to the Committee early last year, and to ask the Department if there will still be a wider independent review of Fujitsu contracts.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed ask the Department to consider whether it believes its Fujitsu systems are safe and reliable going forward, rather than provide an assessment of their performance to date.

5.23 Department of Finance - Forthcoming Primary Legislation

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Finance in relation to forthcoming Primary Legislation. The Department have provided indicative timelines for the Registration of Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill; the Marriage & Civil Partnership Bill and the Financial Provisions Bill.

Steve Aiken joined the meeting at 2.24pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the Committee team to design a table to check on the progress of primary legislation to be approved at the next meeting.

5.25 Department of Finance - SL1 Designation of Bodies (Estimates and Accounts)

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Finance regarding the SL1 Designation of Bodies (Estimates and Accounts). The oral briefing on this SR took place at last week's meeting.

5.26 Department of Finance - Follow-up to Oral Briefing with LPS

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Finance in relation to follow up queries following the oral briefing with LPS on the 11 December. The Department have indicated that the average amount of in-year rate assessments not paid in full by the 31st March for the previous 5 years was £60,668,268. The Department also confirmed that any changes in relation to the level of max capital value and early payment discount can be enacted through subordinate legislation. Lastly the Department outlined how a 10-year cycle is defined as the Minister's wish to ensure that within a 10-year period every single rate support measure is to be cycled through a review process, "ensuring each policy is strategically evaluated and assessed".

6. Outturn & Forecast Outturn Data - Oral Briefing from Department Officials

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

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.42pm;

Maryann Smyth, Head of Central Expenditure Division

Cris Farmer, Head of In-Year Monitoring

The officials briefed the Committee on the Outturn & Forecast Outturn Data for November and December 2024.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

A number of issues were discussed including the civil service pay award and January Monitoring.

The officials left the meeting at 2.56pm.

7-9. Subordinate Legislation SL1 - The Rates (Regional Rates) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025, the Rates (Exemption for Automatic Telling Machines in Rural Areas) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025 and the Rates (Temporary Rebate) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025

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

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.47pm;

Andrew McAvoy, Director of Rating Policy Land & Property Services

The officials briefed the Committee on the proposed statutory rules.

Phillip Brett left the meeting at 3.00pm and returned at 3.02pm

Steve Aiken left the meeting at 3.32pm and returned at 3.33pm

Phillip Brett left the meeting at 3.48pm and returned at 3.54pm

Paul Frew left the meeting at 3.51pm and returned at 3.52pm

The Committee considered a proposal by the Department to set out in legislation the amount of the domestic and non-domestic regional rates for the year ending 31 March 2026.

The Committee considered a second proposal by the Department to reinstate a micro-policy within the rating system which applies a rates exemption to ATMs in a designated rural area.

The Committee considered a third proposal by the Department to continue the 'Back in Business' scheme for the 2025/26 rating year.

All the proposed rules will be subject to affirmative resolution procedure.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

A number of issues were discussed including promotion of the 'Back in Business Scheme and the strategic roadmap review of the rates system in Northern Ireland

The officials left the meeting at 3.54pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that there was broad consensus supporting the proposed Statutory Rule to set out in legislation the amount of the domestic and non-domestic regional rates for the year ending 31 March 2026.

The Chairperson Matthew O'Toole and Gerry Carroll put on record that they would be opposing the SR in relation to domestic and non-domestic regional rates for the year ending 31 March 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposed Statutory Rule to reinstate a micro-policy within the rating system which applies a rates exemption to ATMs in a designated rural area.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposed Statutory Rule to continue the 'Back in Business' scheme for the 2025/26 rating year.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department for the average rating charge applied to a standalone ATM.

10. Northern Ireland Banking & Financial Services Landscape - Oral Briefing from RaiSe

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

Deirdre Hargey left the meeting at 3.59pm and returned at 4.01pm

The following official joined the meeting at 3.59pm

Michael Scholes, Research Officer, Northern Ireland Assembly Research Office

The official briefed the Committee on the key issues regarding the potential introduction of a mutual banking ownership model in Northern Ireland.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

A number of issues were discussed including examples of mutual banking in other countries and the key benefits of a mutual bank.

The officials left the meeting at 4.29pm.

Steve Aiken left the meeting at 4.29pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the Clerk to follow up with RaiSE on any areas of potential further research on the matter.

11. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Finance regarding Shared Property Management.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an oral briefing once the scoping exercise has been completed.

- ii. The Committee noted a correspondence from the Department of Finance on the laying of a Memorandum of Reply (MoR) on the 19 December 2024 in relation to the PAC Report on Child Poverty in Northern Ireland.

The Deputy Chairperson declared an interest as a Member of the PAC.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the MoR to the Communities Committee for information. The Committee also agreed to seek a written briefing from the Department on progress towards implementation of recommendation 9 before the conclusion of the current Assembly mandate.

- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from Department of Finance regarding a Service Delivery Brochure that contains the services that the Department of Finance provides to Departments and others, along with charges, delivery metrics and key contacts.

Agreed: The Committee to ask the Department for oral briefings on the HR, IT and Procurement business areas contained within the brochure, including the target metrics highlighted for each of these areas.

- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Finance regarding a forthcoming consultation on adjustments to NICS employee contributions to meet the required scheme yield.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask about the initial engagement with Civil Services Unions (through the Special Advisory Board and meetings of the Civil Service Pensions Forum) as well as details of any other planned staff engagement to ensure that NICS employees are fully aware of the detail and rationale of the changes.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to seek information from the Department on approaches taken by other public service schemes in a similar under-yield position and the outcome of any consultations which have already taken place.

- v. The Committee noted a Trust Statement from LPS in relation to Rate Levy Accruals Account 2023-2024 which was laid before the Assembly on the 13 December 2024 under Section 11(3)c of the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001 by the Department of Finance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to LPS to ask if figure of target collection figure of 92% is comparable with other jurisdictions and how this figure has been arrived at.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to LPS to ask what action has been taken on the matters of the increasingly high value of ratepayer debt, the limited actions taken to verify properties listed as vacant and the outstanding valuations caseload impacting rate revenue.

- vi. The Committee noted the Ulster Bank Northern Ireland Growth Tracker for December 2024.
- vii. The Committee noted a press release from the Construction Employer's Federation outlining the results of their latest construction survey.
- viii. The Committee noted a Hansard transcript for the oral briefing on the 4 December 2024 from the Open Government Network.
- ix. The Committee noted a Hansard transcript for the oral briefing on the 12 December 2024 from the Department of Finance on the Rating Policy.
- x. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding a complaint about governance in the Department of Finance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise that Members will not become involved in individual cases and the query should be directed to one of their constituency MLAs.

- xi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Public Accounts Committee in relation to primacy over Northern Ireland Audit Office reports.
- xii. The Committee noted the 29th Report from the Examiner of Statutory Rules. There are no rules referenced with relevance to this Committee.

12. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme, as drafted.

The Committee noted the following evidence sessions as part of the Forward Work Programme:

- Proposed date of 2 April for a visit to Kilkeel Banking Hub and an external meeting in the Kilmorey Arms Hotel.
- LCM Property (Digital Assets etc.) Bill oral evidence session postponed. The Department will formally table the LCM when the Bill is amended at Westminster and the Committee's work can continue when timings have been confirmed.
- Social Enterprise NI oral evidence session as part of the Committee Inquiry due to take place at today's meeting has been postponed due to unforeseen circumstances and an alternative date will be confirmed in due course.
- Development Trusts will now provide an oral briefing on a NI Capital Investment Fund for the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector rather than the Committee Inquiry on the 12 February.

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

13. Any Other Business

The Chairperson referred Members to a report by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research on the Modelling Northern Ireland within the context of the all island economy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the report in next week's meeting pack.

The Clerk talked through arrangements with Members for next week's joint budget event with the Committee for the Economy taking place at NICVA Headquarters, Belfast.

14. Date and Time of next meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 29 January 2025 at 3:00pm in NICVA Headquarters, Belfast.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.58pm.

Matthew O'Toole MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Finance

29 January 2025