



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Finance

Minutes of Proceedings

25 June 2025

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

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

Apologies: None

Virtual: Steve Aiken MLA
Gerry Carroll MLA
Jemma Dolan MLA

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 2:07pm in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1. Comprehensive Spending Review

Members noted a copy of the Chancellor's Spending Review.

3.2. Cash Access UK – Annual Review 2024

The Committee considered Cash Access UK's Annual Review 2024. Members noted the significant increase in gross profit as set out in Cash Access UK's Financial Statements.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek clarification from Cash Access UK on what happens to the profits made by Cash Access UK.

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

3.3. Pivotal – Policy Delivery in Northern Ireland

The Committee noted a report by Pivotal "Policy Delivery in Northern Ireland". Members noted that this report could be a useful tool when work is progressed in relation to NICS HR Reform in the Autumn.

3.4. Meeting with the Secretary of State

The Chairperson informed Members that the Secretary of State for NI had invited the Committee to a meeting on Thursday 25th June 2025. The Committee noted that the Chairperson, deputy Chairperson and Jemma Dolan would attend and that the Chairperson would provide a readout of the meeting in due course.

Gerry Carroll joined the meeting at 2:15pm.

The Committee also noted correspondence from the Department of Finance regarding the Public Sector Transformation Board which provided an update on Membership and Terms of Reference for the Board.

3.5. Data (Use and Access) Bill LCM – Correspondence from Chris Bryant MP

The Committee considered correspondence from Chris Bryant MP, Minister of State in the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology to Robin Swann MP regarding clarity on comments made in respect of a Legislative Consent Motion for the Data (Use and Access) Bill.

Members also noted that the Committee has still not receive a response from Chris Bryant MP to its request for clarification on the matter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to this issue at a later date.

3.6. A5 Court Case and Judgement

The Committee discussed a High Court Judgement on the A5 road upgrade and potential outworkings of the Judgement.

Diane Forsythe declared an interest as a Member of the Public Accounts Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to obtain the Department of Finance's understanding on a number of issues related to the judgement, including detail on what control mechanisms were missed, any budget impact of the decision in current

or future financial years, wider impact in respect of the Department's response to the Major Capital Projects Report and awareness of any legal ramifications or precedent.

4. Draft Minutes of Proceedings

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Minutes of Proceedings from the meeting of the 18 June 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to the scheduled oral briefing from the Department of Finance.

6. Consultation on Domestic Rates – Oral Briefing from the Department of Finance

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

The Committee noted background information including the Minister of Finance's Oral Statement on the Strategic Roadmap for Rating Policy, summary report on Revenue Raising Consultation and a Supplementary Consultation on Domestic Rating Measures.

The following official joined the meeting at 2:31pm:

Andrew McAvoy Director of Rating Policy, Department of Finance

The official briefed the Committee on the context for current consultations and anticipated timeline for decision-making. The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

A number of issues were discussed including; the strategic review of Business Rate Relief, non-domestic rating matters, departmental engagement with relevant stakeholders, revenue implications of potential decisions, changes to 10 year Strategic Review Cycle and social value considerations.

Eoin Tennyson joined the meeting at 2:40pm.

Phillip Brett joined the meeting at 3:07pm.

The Chairperson thanked the official for their attendance and the official left the meeting at 3:15pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek more information from the Department of Finance on the Strategic Asset Management Unit in Land and Property Services and detail on how the 10 year Strategic Review Cycle will change.

5. Matters Arising

5.1. Minister of Finance – Hospitality Ulster Informal Meeting

The Committee noted a reply from the Minister of Finance regarding issues raised by Hospitality Ulster during a recent informal meeting with the Committee.

5.2. Department of Finance – Executive Public Procurement Policy

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Finance on the development of an Executive Public Procurement Policy Statement.

5.3. Department of Finance – Future of the Census and Population Statistics

The Committee noted correspondence enclosing a copy of a NISRA publication “The Future of census and population statistics in Northern Ireland: NISRA recommendation”.

5.4. Department of Finance – Road Projects – Compensation Differences

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Finance to the Committee for Infrastructure concerning differences in compensation claimed and amounts awarded for historical road projects.

5.5. House of Lord NI Scrutiny Committee

Matthew O’Toole and Steve Aiken declared interests as they both had recently given evidence to the House of Lord NI Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee noted copy correspondence from the Chairperson of the House of Lords NI Scrutiny Committee to the Secretary of State regarding EU Regulation Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and its interaction with the Government's domestic approach and an amending directive establishing a system for Greenhouse Gas Emission Allowance trading within the Union.

5.6. Federation of Small Businesses – Banking on Small Business

The Committee considered a research report from the Federation of Small Businesses entitled “Banking on Small Business”.

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

5.7. Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill - Committee for Justice

The Committee considered a written submission from the Justice Committee on the Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to send the issue raised by the Justice Committee in relation to the handling and retention of sensitive data to the Department of Finance for consideration and response.

5.8. Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill - National Association of Funeral Directors

The Committee considered a written submission from the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) on the Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an oral briefing with representatives of the NAFD at its meeting next week.

5.9. Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill – Notice of Amendments

The Committee noted Notice of Amendments for the Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill which had not yet been accepted by the Speaker.

5.10. DALO Readout Extract – Meeting of 4th June 2025

The Committee noted an extract from the DALO Readout issued following the Committee meeting on 4th June 2025 and that a request for information in relation to the consultation on scheme yield contributions had already been addressed at the Committee meeting on 11th June 2025.

5.11. DALO Readout Response – Civil Partnerships converted to marriages

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance regarding errors made in the incorrect conversions of same sex couple civil partnerships to marriages.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Finance for information on what specific help and support had been offered to the couples involved and if there was any undue financial or legal detriment to the couples involved.

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

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance regarding issues raised by Belfast City Council in respect of charging for long form certificates in prescribed circumstances. Members noted that Belfast City Council had recently agreed to absorb the fees in prescribed circumstances.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the response to the Committee's Report on the Bill in due course and to highlight the issue in the report for post-legislative scrutiny.

5.13 DALO Readout Response – Chancellor's Announcement of Funding

The Committee noted a response from the Department of Finance regarding potential Barnett Consequentials of a recent announcement by the Chancellor of funding for transport projects.

7. Monthly Outturn and Forecast Outturn May Data – Written Briefing from the Department of Finance

The Committee considered a briefing paper from the Department of Finance on 2025-26 Public Expenditure Outturn and Forecast Outturn – May position.

A number of issues were discussed, including; June Monitoring Round, NI Water overspend and the reporting of significant overcommitments at the beginning of each financial year.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to raise some issues discussed with NICS Finance Directors at next week's informal meeting and to forward the papers on May Outturn and Forecast Outturn to other Statutory Committees and the Assembly Audit Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into closed session at 3:40pm for initial consideration of a draft Committee report.

12. Banking and Financial Services Landscape Inquiry – Initial Consideration of Report

The Committee considered an initial draft of its Banking and Financial Services Landscape Inquiry Report.

The Committee returned to open session at: 4:16pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed a number of additions, themes and conclusions for the report.

The Committee placed on record its thanks to the Committee team for its work drafting the report.

8. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from a number of individuals regarding a perceived lack of structured, legally protected post-19 support for individuals with Severe Learning Difficulties. Members noted clarification from the

Department that the Executive had agreed that the Departments for the Economy and Health will lead on this issue and that the Committee for the Economy has agreed to receive and deal with this correspondence.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Economy Committee and to advise the individuals accordingly.

9. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme, as drafted.

The Committee noted the informal meeting with Finance Directors would be from 1-2pm on Wednesday 2nd July in the Senate Chamber and that an oral briefing from the National Association of Funeral Directors would take place at the meeting on 2nd July 2025.

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

10. Any Other Business

None.

11. Date and Time of next meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 2nd July 2025 at 2.00pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:29pm.

Matthew O'Toole

Chairperson, Committee for Finance

2nd July 2025