



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Finance

Minutes of Proceedings

22 April 2026

Meeting Location: Goodwood House, May Street, Belfast

Present: Matthew O'Toole MLA (Chairperson)
Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Gerry Carroll MLA
Deirdre Hargey MLA
Harry Harvey MLA
Brian Kingston MLA
Eoin Tennyson MLA

Apologies: Steve Aiken MLA
Jemma Dolan MLA

Virtual: None

In Attendance: Peter Hall Committee Clerk
Fiona Rooney Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk

Clairita Frazer Assistant Assembly Clerk

Tom Armstrong Assistant Assembly Clerk

Marion Johnson Clerical Supervisor

Heather Graham Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 2:15pm in public session.

The Chairperson welcomed Jack Stewart, a final year Politics & International Studies student at Ulster University, currently on work experience at the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Chairperson also wished Deirdre Hargey, Happy Birthday on behalf of the Committee.

1. Apologies.

As above.

The Chairperson indicated that he would be leaving today's meeting early.

2. Declaration of Interests.

None

3. Chairperson's Business.

3.1. Interg8 Visit

The Chairperson reflected on today's visit and tour around the Interg8 Programme and on ongoing work within the Programme.

3.2. Jade's Law

The Committee discussed the campaign to extend Jude's Law to Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an update from the Department of Finance on this issue based on a meeting between Departmental officials and the Finance Minister, with a view to considering the need for oral briefing at a later date.

3.3. Open Book Exercise

Members discussed the urgent need for the Committee to be sighted on the Open Book Exercise Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Finance to organise a briefing on the exercise, along with Treasury and NIO officials and for an update on further engagement around it and its relationship to Fiscal Framework matters, including whether or not these discussions will require a restart to discussions about the Executive Budget 2026-29/30.

3.4. Transformation Funding

The Chairperson highlighted to Members that the Committee's previous request for an update on Transformation Funding was unanswered.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reiterate to the Department of Finance that a response was expected as soon as possible.

4. Draft Minutes of Proceedings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Minutes of Proceedings from the meeting of the 15th April 2026.

5. Matters Arising

5.1. Minister of Finance – Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill

5.2. Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill – Marshalled List of Amendments

5.3. Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill – Grouping of Amendments

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Finance regarding the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill.

The Committee also noted the Marshalled List of Amendments and Grouping of Amendments for the Consideration Stage of the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill, which took place on Monday 20th April 2026.

In his capacity as an individual Member, Matthew O'Toole indicated his disappointment with the amendments selected for Consideration Stage of the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill.

The Committee also noted that Consideration Stage for the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council Bill was scheduled for Tuesday 5th May 2026.

5.4. Department of Finance – City & Growth Deals Quarterly Progress Report

The Committee considered the latest quarterly progress report for the City & Growth Deals. Members discussed issues surrounding City & Growth Deals including the impact of potential job losses in the University of Ulster and delivery of the Lagan Pedestrian Cycle Bridge. Members also indicated that they would like to see further detail on project evaluation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Finance for further information on various issues discussed.

5.5. Northern Ireland Affairs Committee – Correspondence to the Minister of Finance regarding “open book exercise”

The Committee considered copy correspondence from the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee to the Finance Minister regarding the “open book exercise”.

Agreed: The Committee referred to earlier agreement in relation to this matter.

5.6. Secretary of State for Northern Ireland – Support for Energy Costs

The Committee considered correspondence from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland regarding recent allocations made to the Executive.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and to seek information from the Department of Finance on the status of the funding for a comparable scheme to the GB Energy Company Obligation Scheme.

6. Report on 2026-29/30 draft Budget – Committee Motion

The Committee considered inputs from both the Economy Committee and Health Committee to the Finance Committee’s Report on the 2026-29/30 draft Budget. Members also noted a Hansard Transcript of the oral evidence session with Departmental officials which took place at the meeting on Wednesday 15th April 2026 and a Hansard Transcript of the session to agree the Committee’s report, at the same meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Finance if it intended to restart negotiations with Treasury following the Open Book Exercise.

Members also considered a draft Committee Motion on the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to submit the Motion to the Business Committee for scheduling in the coming weeks.

7. SL1 The Whole of Government Accounts (Designation of Bodies) Order (Northern Ireland) 2026

The Committee noted that the Department of Finance proposes to make a statutory rule: The Whole of Government Accounts (Designation of Bodies) Order (Northern Ireland) 2026 which will provide the Department of Finance with the legal authority to request financial information from designated Northern Ireland departments and public bodies, and to share that information with HM Treasury for the preparation of the Whole of Government Accounts. Members noted that the Department of Finance had submitted a SL1 letter, a draft Statutory Rule and draft Explanatory and Financial Memorandum.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue a call for views for the SL1, and to publish the SL1, the draft Statutory Rule and any relevant documents from the Department of Finance on the Committee's website.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Committee staff would seek information from the Department of Finance, where necessary, on any matters raised during the SL1 stage, including in the call for views.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish any responses received to the Committee call for views on the SL1, after they have been considered by the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note receipt of the proposed statutory rule and to consider it at the meeting on 27th May 2026.

Members were content that an oral briefing from officials was not necessary at this stage.

8. Interg8 Programme – Oral Briefing from the Department of Finance

The Committee considered a number of papers provided to assist with the session, including a Clerk's Memo, briefing material from the Department of Finance and correspondence from the DALO regarding a Committee visit to Digital, Security & Finance Shared Services and Interg8 Programme.

The following Department of Finance officials joined the meeting at 2:51pm;

Paul Duffy Deputy Secretary, Integr8 Programme & Finance Shared Services; and

Kirstie Murray Integr8 Programme Director, Department of Finance.

The officials briefed the Committee on the Intergr8 Programme.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session and a number of issues were discussed including; costs for project delivery, anticipated savings, data security, use of artificial intelligence, error/fraud monitoring, procurement for the programme and potential to eliminate silo approaches.

Matthew O'Toole left the meeting at 3:03pm and Diane Forsythe assumed the Chair at that time.

The deputy Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance, and the officials left the meeting at 3:40pm.

Deirdre Hargey left the meeting at 3:40pm.

9. Marriage & Civil Partnership Bill – Oral Briefing from the Department of Finance

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Hansard would provide a transcript of the oral evidence session.

The Committee considered a number of papers provided to assist with the session, including a Clerk's Memo, a Briefing Paper from the Department of Finance, copy of the Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill and Explanatory & Financial Memorandum and a copy of the Department of Finance's Report on the Marriage Law Consultation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to refer the Delegated Powers Memorandum to the Examiner of Statutory Rules for advice on the delegated powers within the Bill.

The following Department of Finance officials joined the meeting at 3:41pm;

Michael Foster Head of Civil Law Reform, Departmental Solicitors Office (DSO);

Dr Martin Tyrell Policy Advisor, Civil Law Reform, DSO; and

Maurice Dowling Policy Advisor, Civil Law Reform, DSO.

The officials briefed the Committee on the Bill and connected matters.

Deirdre Hargey rejoined the meeting at 3:44pm.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session and a number of issues were discussed including; impact of continued use of temporary arrangements, no-fault divorce, the recognition of independent celebrants, definition of belief bodies, the position in other jurisdictions and legal recognition of young people married in common law.

Members also discussed Jade's Law and Non-Molestation Orders with officials.

Deirdre Hargey left the meeting at 4:10pm.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance, and the officials left the meeting at 4:11pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Finance for the list of Religious Organisations as referenced during the oral briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Committee Clerk would liaise with RaISe colleagues to incorporate some points raised by Members during today's oral briefing, in the forthcoming research briefing on the Bill.

10. Outturn & Forecast Outturn March (R12) – Written Briefing

The Committee considered a briefing paper on February Outturn and Forecast Outturn data provided by the Department of Finance in advance of today's session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the written briefing to other Statutory Committees and the NI Assembly Audit Committee.

Gerry Carroll left the meeting at 4:17pm and decision making quorum was lost.

11. Performance and Culture of the NICS Inquiry – Committee Deliberations

The Committee noted that there were no papers to be considered under this agenda item.

12. Correspondence

i. The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules 62nd Report to the Assembly.

13. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme and a number of upcoming briefings, including; an overview briefing with the Bill Clerk on the Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill; an oral briefing scheduled on the Level of Need analysis and Youth Assembly briefing on the Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill.

The Committee suspended at 4:20pm.

Gerry Carroll rejoined the meeting at 4:23pm and the Committee reconvened at 4:23pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a number of upcoming briefings, including a request for oral briefing on City & Growth Deals on 24th June 2026. Members also agreed that the Forward Work Programme should be amended accordingly and published on the Committee webpages.

14. Any Other Business

The deputy Chairperson wished Brian Kingston well in the London Marathon this weekend.

15. Date and Time of next meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 29th April 2026 at 2pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:24pm.

Matthew O'Toole

Chairperson, Committee for Finance

29th April 2026