



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Finance

Minutes of Proceedings

26 November 2025

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Matthew O'Toole MLA (Chairperson)

Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Harry Harvey MLA

Brian Kingston MLA

Apologies: Steve Aiken MLA

Eoin Tennyson MLA

Virtual: Gerry Carroll MLA

Jemma Dolan MLA

Deirdre Hargey MLA

In Attendance: Peter Hall Committee Clerk

Fiona Rooney Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk

Clairita Frazer Assistant Assembly Clerk

Tom Armstrong Assistant Assembly Clerk

Stephen Magee Clerical Supervisor

Heather Graham Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 2:10pm in public session.

1. Apologies.

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests.

None.

3. Chairperson's Business.

3.1 Budget Announcement

Members reflected on the contents of the Chancellor's Budget announcement, pending a detailed briefing from the Department of Finance at next week's meeting and further updates to the Assembly by the Minister of Finance.

3.2 Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service "Go Succeed"

The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service, outlining concerns with delays and the impact of funding changes on enterprise support service, pending responses from the SOS and the Department of Finance on the development of the Local Growth Fund and the "NI Can't Wait" Campaign.

3.3 Invitation from NI Human Rights Commission to Annual Human Rights Statement Launch.

The Committee noted an invitation from the NI Human Rights Commission to the launch of the Annual Human Rights Statement on Monday 8th December 2025.

3.4 The Executive Office Written Statement – Publication of the Covid-19 Module 2 Report

The Committee noted a press release regarding the publication of the Covid-19 Inquiry Module 2 Report.

3.5 House of Commons – Economic Indicators 21 November 2025

The Committee noted the latest set of Economic Indicators published by the House of Commons.

3.6 Head of the Civil Service – Apology

The Chairperson placed on record apologies to the Head of the NI Civil Service (HoCS) for a recent error in the issuing of correspondence as comments had been made previously in the context of HOCS having received this correspondence.

4. Draft Minutes of Proceedings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Minutes of Proceedings from the meeting of the 19 November 2025.

5. Matters Arising.

5.1 DALO Extract – Meeting 5 November 2025

The Committee noted an extract from the DALO Readout issued following the meeting on 5th November 2025.

5.2 DALO Readout Response – Public Office (Accountability) Bill – LCM

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance regarding the timescale for a Legislative Consent Motion related to the Public Office (Accountability) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an urgent update on the Executive's decision-making in respect of the LCM.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Finance to inform the Committee as soon as it intends to lay the LCM.

5.3 DALO Readout Response – Review of Arm’s Length Bodies

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance regarding the current Arm’s Length Body Review (ALB) exercise.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to copy the information to other Statutory Committees for their information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed seek clarity from the Department of Finance on comments made by the Finance Minister during Question Time regarding urgency of the Review of ALBs and if this will alter the expected completion date for this current exercise. Members also agreed to write to other Executive Ministers to ask what work is being carried out in their departments with regard to reviewing their ALBs.

5.4 Minutes of Proceedings (MoPs) and Annotated Marshalled List – Further Consideration Stage – Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill

The Committee noted the MoPs and Annotated Marshalled List for the Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill.

5.5 Letter from Lord Carlile to Rt Hon Hilary Benn SoS NI regarding the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism

The Committee noted the correspondence from the House of Lords Scrutiny Committee to the SOS outlining concern about the impact of the imminent introduction of the EU’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism on 1 January 2026 in Northern Ireland.

5.6 Tech Secure – Digital Infrastructure & Cybersecurity in NI’s Community & Voluntary Sector

The Committee noted a briefing paper from Tech Sure on strengthening the Digital Infrastructure and Cybersecurity in NI’s Community and Voluntary Sector.

5.7 DALO Readout Response – LPS Trust Statement Rate Levy Accruals Accounts 2024-25

The Committee noted a response from the Department of Finance regarding concerns raised in the C&AG's report within the LPS Trust Statement Rate Levy Accruals Accounts 2024-25.

5.8 DALO Extract – Meeting 12 November 2025

The Committee noted an extract from the DALO Readout issued following the meeting on 12th November 2025.

5.9 DALO Response – Shared Property Management

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance regarding Regulations in relation to Shared Property Management.

Matthew O'Toole and Gerry Carroll declared interests in relation to constituency activity and work related to this issue.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek clarification from the Department of Finance on a definite timeline for Regulations and clarity on whether or not people who buy their homes from the NI Housing Executive (or Housing Associations) will be impacted by the Regulations.

5.10 DALO Response – Baby Loss Certificates Draft Regulations

The Committee noted a response from the Department of Finance regarding the timing and process for the Baby Loss Certificates Draft Regulations coming to the Assembly.

5.11 Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill – Draft Press Release

The Committee considered a Draft Press Release for the Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to make some amendments to the Press Release before issue.

5.12 Department of Finance – Annual Sickness in the NICS Report: Correction to comparison with Local Councils

The Committee noted corrections to Local Government comparator figures presented in the NISRA Sickness in the Civil Service 2022/23 and 2023/24 Reports published by the Department of Finance.

5.13 Communities Committee – Review of Arm’s Length Bodies

The Committee noted the correspondence from the Committee for Communities to the Department of Finance concerning its Review of Arm’s Length Bodies exercise.

5.14 Economy Committee – Call for Evidence The Renewable Heat Inquiry (Closure of Non-Domestic Scheme) Bill

The Committee considered the Economy Committee’s Call for Evidence on the RHI (Closure of Non-Domestic Scheme) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Finance if it has made an assessment of the Bill’s objectives, proposals and potential financial consequences and implications of the Bill.

5.15 & 5.16 NICVA/Pivotal Reports – Voluntary and Community Sector

The Committee noted reports published by NICVA and Pivotal related to the Voluntary and Community Sector.

5.17 Correspondence from an individual

The Committee noted an update in relation to handling of correspondence received from an individual.

6. SL1 The Government Resources and Accounts (NI) Act 2001 (Estimates & Accounts)(Designation of Bodies)(Amendment) Order 2025

The Committee considered the SL1 The Government Resources and Accounts (NI) Act 2001 (Estimates & Accounts (Designation of Bodies)(Amendment) Order 2025, which would designate bodies for inclusion in departmental Estimates and Accounts for year ending 31 March 2026. Members noted that the rule would be subject to negative resolution and the detail of changes to bodies added and renamed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that they were content with the proposed statutory rule: The Government Resources and Accounts (NI) Act 2001 (Estimates & Accounts) Designation of Bodies) (Amendment) Order 2025.

7. NI Fiscal Council Bill – Committee Deliberations

The Committee noted that Ann Watt from Pivotal would join the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre at the oral briefing on the NI Fiscal Council Bill at the meeting on 3rd December 2025. Members also noted that the Nevin Institute would provide written comments for the same meeting.

8. Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill – Committee Deliberations

The Committee noted the admissibility of amendments criteria provided following consideration of legal advice on the scope of the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill.

Gerry Carroll left the meeting at 2:47pm.

9. Cyber Security and Resilience (Network and Information Systems) Bill – Oral Briefing from the Department of Finance

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

Members noted a number of relevant background papers including a briefing paper from the Department of Finance on the Department for Science Innovation and Technology (DSIT) Cyber Security and Resilience Bill and legislative consent process, correspondence from the Department of Finance on the introduction of the Bill, a copy of the Bill and Explanatory Notes for the Bill.

The following officials joined the meeting at 2:48pm:

Paul Duffy, Deputy Secretary Digital, Security and Finance Shared Services;
and

Hugh Tohill, Director Digital Security & Engagement.

The officials provided the Committee with oral evidence on DSIT's Cyber Security and Resilience (Network and Information Systems) Bill and associated Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) from the NI Executive.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session. A number of issues were discussed including the Bill's Devolution Analysis, timescale for the Bill, rationale for the use of a LCM, cybersecurity reporting mechanisms, additional powers for the Secretary of State and implications for the Windsor Framework.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance, and the officials left the meeting at 3:25pm.

Members indicated that they would keep abreast of developments in relation to future Ministerial and Executive consideration of the Bill and potential LCM.

10. Outturn and Forecast Outturn – October Data

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

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an urgent response from the Department of Finance in relation to the timing and publication of the December Monitoring Round and to express its concern to the Department of Finance about subsequent movement and how further returns and bids would be managed post December Monitoring.

11. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the NISRA Annual Report for 2024;
- ii. The Committee noted a Public Accounts Committee – Report on Excess Votes (Northern Ireland) 2024-25 and late accounts from 2023-24;
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Communities Committee to the Department of Finance requesting a joint briefing on cross-departmental work related to the application of the Children's Services Cooperation Act (NI) 2015; and
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Communities Committee to the Department of Finance regarding fair funding principles.

12. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme and noted future items to be scheduled including departmental briefings scheduled for the New Year.

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

13. Any Other Business

None.

14. Date and Time of next meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 3rd December 2025 at 2.00pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:42pm.

Matthew O'Toole

Chairperson, Committee for Finance

3 December 2025