



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Finance

Minutes of Proceedings

17 June 2026

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Matthew O'Toole MLA (Chairperson)

Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Jemma Dolan MLA

Deirdre Hargey MLA

Harry Harvey MLA

Brian Kingston MLA

Apologies: Dr Steve Aiken MBE MLA

Eoin Tennyson MLA

Virtual: Gerry Carroll MLA

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 2:05pm in public session.

The Chairperson welcomed James McNelis and Andrew Trimble who were participating in work experience in the Assembly this week. The Chairperson also welcomed members of the Youth Assembly observing proceedings in the public gallery.

1. Apologies.

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests.

None.

3. Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill – Oral Briefing – Youth Assembly

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

The Committee considered relevant papers for this session, including a Clerk's Memo and a briefing paper on the Bill from the Youth Assembly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the briefing paper to the evidence base of the Committee Stage of the Bill.

The Committee also considered written submissions to the Call for Evidence on the Bill from; the General Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster Government and Morals Committee, the Northern Catholic Bishops, the Northern

Ireland Human Rights Commission, the Christian Institute, Prof Sandberg, Professor of Law, Cardiff University, NI Humanists, the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Law Society NI, the National Society for the Protection of Children, the Presbyterian Church and the General Registrar's Office.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the submissions to the evidence base of the Committee Stage of the Bill and to consider further oral evidence sessions in a short, closed session later in the meeting. Members also agreed to send the written submissions to the Department of Finance for views.

Members noted NIL responses from the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, the Equality Commission, a Hansard transcript of the RaISe oral briefing on the Bill and a Hansard transcript of Committee deliberations on the Bill during the meeting on 10th June 2026.

The following members of the Youth Assembly joined the meeting at 2:10pm;

Logan Scott-McKinley

Landon Woodfield

Mia Hall

Jennifer Soutar

Lawrence Asar

The Youth Assembly Members briefed the Committee on their views on the Bill, including findings of a wider survey on the Bill.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session and a number of issues were discussed including; a higher age for marriage, the solemnness of marriage, enforced marriage and the importance of education and consent.

The Chairperson thanked the Youth Assembly Members for their attendance, and the Members left the meeting at 2:35pm.

The Committee moved into closed session at 2:36pm to consider the need for further oral evidence sessions on the Bill.

The Committee returned to public session at 2:53pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule oral evidence sessions with the Northern Ireland Children’s Commissioner and with a panel of Humanists stakeholders.

4. FDA – Oral Briefing – Performance and Culture of the Northern Ireland Civil Service

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

The Committee considered relevant papers for this session, including a Clerk’s Memo and a submission provided by the FDA in advance of the session.

The Committee also noted a Hansard transcript of Committee deliberations which took place during the meeting on 3rd June and a Hansard transcript of the oral evidence session with NIPSA which took place at the meeting on 10th June 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the FDA submission and Hansard transcripts to the evidence base of the Inquiry.

The following witness joined the meeting at 2:55pm;

Robert Murtagh National Officer, FDA

The witness briefed the Committee on a number of issues pertinent to the NICS Inquiry.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session and a number of issues were discussed including; the impact of start/stop government, graduate recruitment, future developments in the NICS, diversity and equality in the NICS and impact of austerity.

Matthew O’Toole declared an interest in respect of work he carried out around the Graduate Entry Scheme in the UK Civil Service.

The Chairperson thanked the witness for their attendance, and the witness left the meeting at 3:56pm.

Jemma Dolan left the meeting at 3:56pm.

5. Level of Need Analysis – Oral Briefing from the Department of Finance

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

Deirdre Hargey left the meeting at 3:57pm.

The Committee considered relevant papers for this session, including a Clerk's Memo and a briefing paper, with a number of associated documents, provided in advance of the session. The Chairperson also noted the Fiscal Council Sustainability Report for 2026 which had been published and circulated to Members.

The following officials joined the meeting at 3:58pm;

Tony Simpson Deputy Secretary, Strategic Policy and Reform Group

Aidan McMahon Director, Fiscal Policy Division

Eamon Graham Principal Economist, Fiscal Policy Division

The officials briefed the Committee on the Department of Finance analysis of the Level of Need and related pertinent issues.

Deirdre Hargey rejoined the meeting at 4:04pm.

Gerry Carroll left the meeting at 4:11pm.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session and a number of issues were discussed including; current negotiations with the UK Government, differentials in funding due to English Local Councils delivery of services, the Interim Fiscal Framework and Devolution of Fiscal Powers.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance, and the officials left the meeting at 4:34pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury covering a number of issues including the UKG's response on the Level of Need calculations and an update on discussions around agreement of the Northern Ireland Executive Budget, and including an offer for officials to come and brief the Committee.

The Committee suspended at 4:36pm.

Brian Kingston left the meeting at 4:36pm

The Committee reconvened at 4:42pm.

6. Legislative Consent Memorandum: Cyber Security & Resilience (Network Information Systems) Bill

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

The Committee considered a Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM) on the Cyber Security and Resilience (Network Information Systems) Bill laid in the Assembly Business Office on 9th June 2026, under Standing Order 42A (4) (a). Members also considered a DALO Readout Response, a Hansard transcript of a previous oral evidence session on the LCM and a briefing paper provided by the Department of Finance.

The following officials joined the meeting at 4:43pm;

Lorraine McCaffrey	Deputy Director, Digital and Cyber Engagement, Department of Finance
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Paul Grocott	Deputy Secretary, Digital Shared Services
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The officials briefed the Committee on the contents and purpose of the LCM.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session and a number of issues were discussed including; cross border considerations, the devolution analysis, potential for further amendments of the Bill and timescale for Assembly debate.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance, and the officials left the meeting at 4:58pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed it was satisfied with the additional provisions highlighted by officials which fell into the scope of the LCM.

Members raised no further issues.

Members noted that a draft report on the LCM would be considered at next week's meeting.

7. Chairperson's Business.

7.1. Welcome to the Scottish Finance and Public Administration Committee

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Convenor of the new Scottish Finance and Public Administration Committee welcoming her to post and highlighting the Interparliamentary Finance Committee Forum.

8. Draft Minutes of Proceedings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Minutes of Proceedings from the meeting of the 10th June 2026.

9. Matters Arising

9.1. Matters Arising and Correspondence carried over from 10th June 2026

The Chairperson indicated that the following items had been disposed of via email with action agreed as indicated:

Matters Rising

DALO Readout Response – 20th May 2026 – Support for Energy Costs

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance regarding a request for sight of the business case submitted to Treasury regarding a Northern Ireland Scheme for Energy Costs Support.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department for the Economy for sight of the Business Case.

DALO Readout Response – 20th May – Provision of Interim Lump Sums

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance regarding the power to make interim financial support in financial remedy proceedings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Department of Finance’s response to the individual correspondent who raised the matter and to also forward the response to the Committee for Justice who had a similar interest in the subject.

DALO Readout Response – 20th May 2026 – Legal Complaints Oversight Commissioner

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance regarding the appointment of a new Legal Complaints Oversight Commissioner.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing with the new Commissioner at a suitable point before the end of the year and ask the Department of Finance to keep the Committee informed of any pertinent updates before that point.

Further Consideration Stage – NI Fiscal Council Bill

The Committee noted the Minutes of Proceedings for the NI Fiscal Council Bill. Members also noted that the Final Stage of the Bill was scheduled for 15th June 2026.

Further Consideration Stage – Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill

The Committee noted the Minutes of Proceedings for the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill. Members also noted that the Final Stage of the Bill was scheduled for 15th June 2026.

67th Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules

The Committee noted the 67th Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules and that SR 2026/90 The Valuation (Telecommunications, Natural Gas and Water) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026, was not required to be drawn to the special attention of the Assembly.

Correspondence from the Secretary of State for NI to Chair of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee.

The Committee noted a response from the Secretary of State for NI to the Chair of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee regarding the NI Executive's Budget and Public Sector Transformation Fund.

Construction Employers Federation (CEF) – Manifesto for 2027 NI Assembly Election

The Committee noted a copy of CEF's Manifesto for 2027 NI Assembly Election.

Correspondence from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury (CST) – Northern Ireland Executive Budget Discussions

The Committee noted a response from CST regarding discussions around the NI Executive's Budget. The Chairperson reiterated earlier agreement to write to the CST about the NI Executive Budget discussions.

DALO Readout Response – 29 April – Cross Border Financial Services matters

The Committee noted a response from the Department of Finance regarding engagement and work around Cross Border Financial Services matters. Members resolved to consider this matter further at a future meeting.

DALO Readout Response – 27 May – NICS Office Estate Strategy

The Committee noted that the Department of Finance will provide ongoing updates to the Committee on the future of Dundonald House.

Correspondence

The Committee noted correspondence from the Communities Committee regarding Retention and Disposal Schedule.

The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding Translink and the cost of home heating oil.

The Committee noted the Hansard Transcript of the oral briefing with Department of Finance officials on the Review of Arm's Length Bodies which took place on 20th May 2026.

The Committee noted the May 2026 update from the Youth Assembly.

The Committee considered a Call for Evidence from the Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee on the Areas with Natural Constraints (Payments) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to send this to the Department of Finance for information on any relevant policy locus for the Bill.

9.2. DALO Extract – 20th May 2026

The Committee noted the DALO Extract issued following the Committee meeting on 20 May 2026.

9.3 – 9.11 DALO Readout Response – 20th May 2026 – HOCS Oral Briefing – Follow-up information

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance providing follow-up information to the oral briefing with HOCS which took place on 20th May 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule further consideration of this detailed information at a later meeting.

9.12. DALO Readout Response – 6th May – 2026-27 Cash Profiles and Use of the Vote on Account (VOA)

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance regarding the timeline for cashflow forecast/spend profiles. Members also noted an assurance from the Department of Finance that further updates would be provided each month.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the Department of Finance's update with other Statutory Committees and the Assembly Audit Committee. The Clerk will devise a table for the Department to populate that allows the 2025-26 spending profile to be set against the forecast and actual outturns for 2026-27.

9.13. DALO Readout Response – 27th May – Outturn and Forecast Outturn Data

The Committee considered detail provided by the Department of Finance on a number of issues related to the Outturn and Forecast Outturn data.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to copy the detail on Capital DEL easements to other Statutory Committees and the Assembly Audit Committee.

10. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the Hansard transcript of the oral briefing with the Finance Minister and Department of Finance Permanent Secretary which took place on 3rd June 2026.

11. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme and a number of upcoming briefings.

Members noted that the oral evidence session with officials on wider Budgetary matters was confirmed for 1st July 2026 and that the scheduled oral briefing on Shared Property would be moved to the autumn session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold its first meeting in the new session on 9th September 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to start the meeting on 24th June 2026, at the earlier time of 1pm to accommodate business.

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

12. Any Other Business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an update on whether Departments were on track to publish their Annual Reports and Accounts.

The Clerk undertook to provide Members with further details on the Minister of Finance's event to launch the Baby Loss Certificate Scheme on 22nd June 2026.

13. Date and Time of next meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 24th June 2026 at 1pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:14pm.

Matthew O'Toole

Chairperson, Committee for Finance

24th June 2026