



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Finance

Minutes of Proceedings

25 March 2026

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Matthew O'Toole MLA (Chairperson)

Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Harry Harvey MLA

Brian Kingston MLA

Apologies: Deirdre Hargey MLA

Virtual: Steve Aiken MLA

Gerry Carroll MLA

Jemma Dolan MLA

Eoin Tennyson 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.

1. Apologies.

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests.

None.

3. Chairperson's Business.

3.1. Executive Office – Written Ministerial Statement: Publication of the Executive Response to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry Module 2 Report

The Committee noted a Written Ministerial Statement from the First and deputy First Minister on the publication of the Executive Response to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry Module 2 Report.

Some Members voiced their concern about the adequacy of the statement.

3.2. Scottish Parliament – Finance and Public Administration Committee

The Committee noted a copy of the Scottish Finance and Public Administration Committee's Legacy Report.

The Chairperson reflected on the value of the Interparliamentary Finance Committee Forum, indicating his desire that the Forum should continue. The Chairperson also wished his Scottish colleagues best wishes on the forthcoming elections.

3.3. Baby Loss Certificates Regulations

The Committee expressed disappointment with the delay bringing forward the Baby Loss Certificates Regulations and associated papers contrary to assurances given by Department of Finance officials.

3.4. Department of Finance – Local Growth Fund

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Finance updating Members on the position in relation to the Local Growth Fund.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Finance again about ongoing issues around the Local Growth Fund.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to forward the update from the Department of Finance to the Communities and Economy Committees to update them on developments and ongoing concerns in relation to jobs in the Voluntary and Community Sector.

3.5. Minister of Finance – Written Statement – Treasury Funding available 2026-2029/30

The Committee considered a Written Ministerial Statement made by the Finance Minister on 25th March 2026 regarding Treasury Funding available for 2026-2029/30. Members noted funding which will be provided to the Executive over 3 financial years for Resource DEL and over 4 financial years for Capital DEL, as well as Financial Transactions Capital.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to raise further issues during the oral briefing with Department of Finance officials, later in the meeting. Members also agreed to ask the Department of Finance for a breakdown of awards for Transformation Funding and for an update on the status of Round 2 awards.

4. Draft Minutes of Proceedings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Minutes of Proceedings from the meeting of the 18th March 2026.

5. Matters Arising

5.1. DALO Extract – Meeting 4th March 2026

The Committee noted the DALO Extract issued following the meeting on 4th March 2026.

5.2. DALO Readout Response – Budget 2026-2029/30

The Committee noted that the DALO would be in touch should there be any updates or developments in relation to the Budget 2026-2029/30 before the Ministerial Oral Briefing on 3rd June 2026.

5.3. Correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

The Committee noted correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland regarding the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism.

5.4. Correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

The Committee noted correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland regarding the impact of developments in the US, UK and EU tariff relationships.

5.5. Correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

The Committee considered correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland regarding mandatory dual vehicle approval.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to copy the correspondence to the Infrastructure Committee given relevance to that Committee's remit.

5.6. DALO Readout Response – Land Registration Fees Order

The Committee noted a response from the Department of Finance regarding a recent consultation on Land Registration Fees.

5.7. DALO Readout Response – Local Growth Fund

The Committee considered a response from Department of Finance regarding the Resource/Capital spilt for the Local Growth Fund in England. Members also considered a further update provided by the Department of Finance which indicated that the Executive had endorsed the NIO Local Growth Fund Investment Plan.

Members again voiced their frustration about the Resource/Capital spilt for the Local Growth Fund.

5.8. DALO Readout Response – “Open Book Exercise”

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance which included a copy of the Terms of Reference for the “open book exercise”

Agreed: The Committee agreed to raise further issues during the oral briefing with Department of Finance officials, later in the meeting. Members also agreed to seek a copy of the report from the “open book exercise” from the Department of Finance, when it is available.

Jemma Dolan joined the meeting at 2:36pm.

5.9. DALO Readout Response – £81m Resource AME as referenced in AQW 39557/22-27

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance related to the £81m Resource AME and additional Barnett consequentials of £17.2m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to raise further issues during the oral briefing with Department of Finance officials, later in the meeting. Members also agreed to seek a further update from the Department of Finance when details have been finalised for the comparable scheme referenced in the response.

5.10. DALO Readout Response – Fraud and Security Trends

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance regarding ongoing work in the Department related to current fraud and security threats in the public sector.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to explore the potential for an informal closed session with the Bank of Ireland on current fraud and security trends.

The Committee moved to agenda items 8 & 9.

8. NICS People Strategy – 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, briefing paper from the Department of Finance and a copy of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) People Strategy.

The following officials joined the meeting at 2:44pm;

Jill Minne Deputy Secretary, People and Organisational
Development;

Catherine Shannon Deputy Secretary, NICS Human Resources; and

Paul Duffy Deputy Secretary, Integr8 Programme and Finance
Shared Services.

The officials briefed the Committee on the NICS People Strategy.

Gerry Carroll joined the meeting at 2:47pm.

The oral briefing from officials was followed by a question and answer session and a number of issues were discussed including the Northern Ireland Audit Office Report “Leading and Resourcing the NICS”, sickness absence levels in the NICS, recruitment, temporary promotions, performance management, vacancy levels, consultation with Trade Unions, and the Interg8 Programme.

Gerry Carroll left the meeting at 4:05pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek follow-up information from the Department of Finance on a number of issues discussed during the session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance, and the officials left the meeting at 4:24pm.

The Committee considered proposed draft questions for the Citizen Space Call for Views on the Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the questions would be published on Citizen Space.

9. Outturn and Forecast Outturn – February Data – Oral Briefing from the Department of Finance

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 briefings to other Statutory Committees and the NI Assembly Audit Committee.

The following officials joined the meeting at 4:27pm;

Joanne McBurney Deputy Secretary, Public Spending Directorate,
Department of Finance (DoF); and

Emer Rice Head of In year Monitoring, CED, DoF.

The officials provided the Committee with a briefing on the February position on Outturn and Forecast Outturn Data for all Departments. The briefing was followed by a question and answer session. A number of issues were discussed including the “open book exercise”, Multi-Year budget, Final Outturn and issues discussed during earlier agenda items.

Diane Forsythe left the meeting at 4:46pm.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance, and the officials left the meeting at 4:49pm.

The Committee returned to previous agenda items.

Steve Aiken left the meeting at 4:50pm.

5.11. DALO Readout Response – Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill

The Committee noted a response from the Department of Finance which indicated that an Executive paper was being prepared to obtain agreement for amendments to the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill.

5.12. Justice Committee – RaISe Paper on Domestic Abuse in Private Family Law Proceedings

The Committee noted that the Justice Committee had sent a RaISe Paper on Domestic Abuse in Private Family Law Proceedings to the Finance Minister for a response to the key issues and themes raised in the paper.

6. SR 2026/45 The Rates (Small Business Hereditament Relief) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

The Committee considered a Statutory Rule laid by the Department of Finance which will amend the Rates (Small Business Hereditament Relief) Regulations 2010 so as

to extend the existing small business rate relief scheme until 31st March 2027.

Members noted that the Rule was subject to the negative resolution procedure and that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had, in her 61st Report, indicated that the Rule did not require to be drawn to the Assembly's attention.

Agreed: The Committee for Finance agreed that it has considered SR 2026/45 The Rates (Small Business Hereditament Relief) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026 and that it has no objection to the Rule.

7. 2026/46 The Public Service Pensions Revaluation Order (Northern Ireland) 2026

The Committee considered a Statutory Rule laid by the Department of Finance which will specify the annual percentage change in prices and earnings for the purposes of revaluation of pension benefits accrued by active members in Career Average Revaluated Earnings (CARE) public service pension schemes. Members noted that the Rule was subject to the negative resolution procedure and the Department has stated that since the SL1 was submitted to the Committee Clerk, HM Treasury has informed the Department that the change in Average Weekly Earnings is 4.8% (not 4.6% as originally notified).

Members also noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had, in her 61st Report, indicated that the Rule did not require to be drawn to the Assembly's attention.

Agreed: The Committee for Finance agreed that it has considered SR 2026/46 The Public Service Pensions Revaluation Order (Northern Ireland) 2026 and that it has no objection to the Rule.

10. Budget 2026-2029/30 – Consideration of evidence from other Statutory Committees

The Committee gave initial consideration to a draft report on the draft Budget 2026-2029/30. Members also noted that further responses from Statutory Committees were expected and that the report could be updated at that point. Finally, the report could also be updated if any developments occurred in relation to Multi-Year Budget as well as any agreement reached in respect of a Committee Motion.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to consideration of the report if and when further responses are received and if developments occur.

11. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the individual.
- ii. The Committee considered a Hansard Transcript of the session to agree the NI Fiscal Council Bill Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add this to the relevant appendix of the NI Fiscal Council Bill Report.

12. Draft Forward Work Programme

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule consideration of the Baby Loss Certificate Regulations on receipt of appropriate papers from the Department of Finance.

Members noted that details about the forthcoming visit to Integr8 would be circulated.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Forward Work Programme should be amended accordingly and 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 15th April 2026 at 2pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:56pm.

Matthew O'Toole

Chairperson, Committee for Finance

15th April 2026