Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee for Finance

Minutes of Proceedings

10th November 2026

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present:	Matthew O'Toole MLA (Chairperson)	
	Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)	
	Dr Steve Aiken MBE MLA	
	Gerry Carroll MLA	
	Deirdre Hargey MLA	
	Harry Harvey MLA	
	Brian Kingston MLA	
	Áine Murphy MLA	
Apologies:	Eóin Tennyson MLA	
Virtual:	None	
In Attendance:	Peter Hall	Committee Clerk
	Fiona Rooney	Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk

Tom Armstrong	Assistant Assembly Clerk
Clairita Frazer	Assistant Assembly Clerk
Marion Johnson	Clerical Supervisor
Heather Graham	Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 12:34pm in public session.

1. Apologies.

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests.

None.

3. Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill – Clause by Clause Consideration

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the session would be reported by Hansard.

The Committee considered a clerk's memo to assist during the session, along with correspondence from an Independent Celebrant, Clause by Clause table and copy of the Bill and Explanatory and Financial Memorandum. Members also considered correspondence from the Department of Finance indicating that the Minister of Finance is content to approve suggested changes to the Explanatory and Financial Memorandum of the Bill.

Members noted that the Independent Celebrant had provided consent that their written submission be included in the evidence base for the Committee Stage of the Bill.

Members noted the current draft of the Committee Report on the Bill noting that it would be updated following today's Clause by Clause Consideration of the Bill and agreed at tomorrow's meeting.

Members considered a Hansard Transcript of the General Registrar Office/Department of Finance Briefing at the meeting on 3rd November.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add this Hansard Transcript to the evidence base for the Committee Stage of the Bill.

The Committee moved into closed session at 12:39pm for its informal Clause by Clause Consideration of the Bill.

Members noted that the Bill Clerk and Senior Assistant Clerk were both in attendance to provide advice and guidance as necessary.

Members discussed the individual Clauses of the Bill, reflecting on evidence and comments on each. Members also discussed the proposed amendments to the Explanatory & Financial Memorandum.

Harry Harvey joined the meeting at 12:41pm.

Steve Aiken joined the meeting at 12:49pm.

The Committee moved into open session at 12:49pm to undertake its formal Cause by Clause consideration of the Bill.

The Committee noted that the Clause-by-Clause Consideration would be reported by Hansard.

The Committee commenced its formal Clause-by-Clause consideration of the Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill.

Clause 1- Belief Bodies: registration of members to solemnise marriage

The Committee considered Clause 1 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 1 as drafted.

Clause 2 – Belief bodies: temporary authorisation to solemnise marriage

The Committee considered Clause 2 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 2 as drafted.

Clause 3 – Belief marriage: definitions

The Committee considered Clause 3 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 3 as drafted.

Clause 4 – Belief marriage: further provision

The Committee considered Clause 4 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 4 as drafted.

Clause 5 – Raising of minimum age for marriage

The Committee considered Clause 5 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 5 as drafted.

Clause 6 - Offence of conduct relating to marriage of persons under 18

The Committee considered Clause 6 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 6 as drafted.

Clause 7 - Raising of minimum age for civil partnership

The Committee considered Clause 7 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 7 as drafted.

Clause 8 - Civil partnerships registered outside Northern Ireland

The Committee considered Clause 8 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 8 as drafted.

Clause 9 - Minimum age for marriage and civil partnership: consequential amendments

The Committee considered Clause 9 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 9 as drafted.

Clause 10 - Saving provision

The Committee considered Clause 10 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 10 as drafted.

Clause 11 - Interpretation

The Committee considered Clause 11 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 11 as drafted.

Clause 12 - Power to make consequential provision

The Committee considered Clause 12 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 12 as drafted.

Clause 13 - Short Title and Commencement

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 13 as drafted

Schedules

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Schedules as drafted.

Long Title

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Long Title of the Bill.

Explanatory and Financial Memorandum

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Explanatory and Financial Memorandum, subject to amendments as accepted by the Department of Finance in correspondence to the Committee received on 9th November 2026. Members noted that these changes will be given effect when the Explanatory & Financial Memorandum is updated after the Final Stage of the Bill.

4. Any Other Business

The Committee considered a draft Press Release for its forthcoming visit to the Billy Neill Memorial Garden and Tree Planting Ceremony.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Press Release subject to minor amendment.

5. Date and Time of next meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 11th November 2026 at 2pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

Gerry Carroll and Steve Aiken indicated that they would be joining tomorrow's meeting remotely.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:56pm.

Matthew O'Toole

Chairperson, Committee for Finance

18th November 2026