Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee for Finance

Minutes of Proceedings

3rd November 2026

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present:	Matthew O'Toole MLA (Chairperson)	
	Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)	
	Dr Steve Aiken MBE MLA	
	Harry Harvey MLA	
	Brian Kingston MLA	
Apologies:	Deirdre Hargey MLA	
	Áine Murphy MLA	
	Eóin Tennyson MLA	
Virtual:	Gerry Carroll MLA	
In Attendance:	Peter Hall	Committee Clerk
	Fiona Rooney	Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk
	Tom Armstrong	Assistant Assembly Clerk

Clairita Frazer	Assistant Assembly Clerk
Stephen Magee	Clerical Supervisor
Heather Graham	Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 1:04pm in public session.

1. Apologies.

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests.

None.

3. Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill – Oral Briefing from General Registrar (GRO) and Department of Finance Officials

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

The Committee noted a clerk's memo to assist during the session, along with a written briefing from GRO and copy of the Bill and Explanatory and Financial Memorandum. Members also noted an updated briefing note from the General Registrar on processes and requirements, including a copy of the Guidance for Officiants on Marriage Procedures in Northern Ireland. Finally, Members noted suggested amendments to the Explanatory & Financial Memorandum for the Bill.

The following officials joined the meeting, at 1:08pm;

Dr Philip Wales	Chief Executive and Registrar General, GRO
Aoife Rooney	Deputy Registrar General, GRO
Becci Riley	Assistant Registrar General & Head of Operations, GRO
Martin Tyrrell	Policy Advisor, Civil Law Reform, Departmental Solicitors Office (DSO)

The officials briefed the Committee on issues relevant to the administrative aspects of the Bill and on matters relating to the GRO processes for Registration of Groups who can celebrate marriage. A number of issues were discussed including existing guidance for officiants, future proofing criteria and complaints/appeals processes.

Gerry Carroll left the meeting at 1:40pm.

The officials undertook to provide the Committee with written briefing on the interaction between the Registration Service and Immigration Service.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance, and the officials left the meeting at 1:47pm.

The Committee moved into closed session at 1:47pm.

Members discussed potential amendments to the Bill and to the Explanatory and Financial Memorandum.

The Committee returned to open session at 1:57pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to discuss the matter further at tomorrow's meeting before moving forward with Clause by Clause consideration of the Bill.

4. Any Other Business

None.

5. Date and Time of next meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 4th November 2026 at 2pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:58pm.

Matthew O'Toole

Chairperson, Committee for Finance

11th November 2026