

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 15 MAY 2013
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Daithí McKay MLA (Chairperson)
Mrs Judith Cochrane MLA
Mr Leslie Cree MBE MLA
Mr Paul Girvan MLA
Mr David McIlveen MLA
Mr John McCallister MLA
Mr Mitchel McLaughlin MLA
Mr Peter Weir MLA

In Attendance: Mr Shane McAteer (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Clairita Frazer (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)
Mr Gavin Moore (Bursary Student)

Apologies: Mr Dominic Bradley MLA (Deputy Chairperson).
Ms Megan Fearon MLA
Mr Adrian McQuillan MLA

The meeting opened at 10.16am in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

Agreed: that agenda item 6 is covered by Hansard and the official record published on the Assembly's website.

2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 8 May 2013

Agreed: that the minutes are published on the Assembly website.

3. Matters Arising

Table of Requests for Information from the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP)

The Committee noted the table of requests for information from DFP which provided an update on any matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

Defamation Act 2013

The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) and Johnsons Law Firm on the Defamation Act 2013.

Mr Weir joined the meeting at 10.18am.

Mr Girvan joined the meeting at 10.18am.

Agreed: that the Committee will invite representatives from the NIHRC and Johnsons Law Firm to each provide oral briefings on issues relating to the Defamation Act 2013.

Agreed: that the Committee will commission Assembly research into this matter, which will inform the forthcoming oral briefings.

Agreed: that Mr Cree will seek an update from Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA on the progress of his Private Members' Bill on this matter, with a view to briefing the Committee in due course.

Visit to Derry/Londonderry on 12 June 2013

Members considered various options for site visits on the afternoon of 12 June.

Agreed: that the Committee will consider this matter further at its next meeting.

4. & 5. Performance against 2012-13 Departmental Business Plan; and draft Departmental Business Plan 2013-14 – DFP briefing

The Committee received a briefing from Stephen Poever, Permanent Secretary, DFP, and Colm Doran, Head of Business Planning and Corporate Governance, DFP, on the performance against the 2012-13 Departmental Business Plan and the draft Departmental Business Plan 2013-14.

Mrs Cochrane joined the meeting at 10.24am.

Mr Weir left the meeting at 11.09am.

Mr Weir returned to the meeting at 11.19am.

Agreed: that the DFP officials will provide additional information on rating debt as requested during the evidence session, including: the percentage of cases where the Department is principal in pursuing bankruptcy for rating debt; the level of debt arising from the rating of empty homes; and the scope for information sharing between public bodies regarding failing businesses.

Agreed: the Department will apprise the Committee of developments in setting a series of separate targets for the collection of rating debt, together with the associated action plans.

6. Departmental Performance against Efficiency Delivery Plans 2008-11 and Savings Delivery Plans 2011-15 – DFP briefing

The Committee took evidence from Brigitte Worth, Finance Director, Central Services Group (CSG), DFP; and Preeta Miller, Finance Division, CSG, DFP, on the Department's performance against 2008-11 Efficiency Delivery Plans and 2011-15 Savings Delivery Plans. The session was recorded by Hansard.

Mr McCallister left the meeting at 11.39am.

7. NICS Human Resources Shared Services: Benefits Realisation – Assembly Research briefing

Mrs Cochrane left the meeting at 11.40am.

The Committee received a briefing from Assembly Research and Information Service on the Research paper, *NICS Human Resources: Shared Services*.

Mr Girvan left the meeting at 12noon.

Agreed: to forward the research paper to DFP for response to each of the issues raised.

8. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- Warrenpoint – Burren – Rostrevor (WBR) Chamber of Commerce: Narrow Water Bridge.

Agreed: to invite representatives from WBR Chamber of Commerce and from DFP to brief the Committee on this issue.

- DFP: Update on the Chancellor's Budget 2013.
- DFP: Contractual Overtime – Stormont Estate Security Guards.

Agreed: to copy the correspondence to the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) for comment on the points made and their view on how this issue can be resolved.

Agreed: to request a written briefing from DFP on Mr Justice Stephens' judgement on the appeal in June 2012.

- DFP: Public Service Pensions Bill

Agreed: to remind DFP that a response to the Committee's previous correspondence recommending steps to establish more accurate assessment of the implications of the proposed pension reforms for NI will be required in advance of the evidence session on the Bill at next week's meeting.

- Minister of Finance and Personnel: Budget (No. 2) Bill (NI) 2013.
- Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development: relocation of Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Headquarters.

Members noted that the following items of routine correspondence were emailed to members on 13 May:

- Advice NI e-Newsletter
- Equality Commission e-Zine
- List of documents available in Room 419

9. Subordinate Legislation

Members noted the response from DFP to queries raised in relation to the proposal for subordinate legislation on the Compulsory Acquisition (Interest) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2013.

Agreed: that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under the Compulsory Acquisition (Interest) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2013 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

10. Committee Work Programme

The Committee considered a draft of the Committee work programme.

Mr Girvan returned to the meeting at 12.10pm.

Potential Scrutiny Topics

The Committee noted a list of potential topics for scrutiny to add to the work programme from September 2013.

Agreed: that all topics listed should be included in the Committee's work programme, with priority given to following up on the public procurement inquiry and to the briefings from NAMA and NICVA that were agreed at last week's meeting.

Agreed: to request a written update from DFP on developments in relation to Senior Civil Service pay and bonuses.

Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Finance and Personnel regarding a possible legislative consent motion (LCM) on the provisions of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill. Members were advised that, should the LCM

proceed, the Committee will have limited time to consider it and report to the Assembly.

Mr Cree left the meeting at 12.14pm.

Agreed: to take evidence from DFP officials on the proposed LCM at the earliest opportunity.

Agreed: to commission Assembly research into this matter and to invite NIHRC, the Rainbow Project and the four main local churches to provide written comment on the LCM, should it proceed.

11. Any Other Business

None

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday 22 May 2013 at 10.00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Stormont.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.19pm.

Mr Daithí McKay MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance and Personnel
22 May 2013