

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 22 MAY 2013
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Dominic Bradley MLA (Deputy Chairperson).
Mr Leslie Cree MBE MLA
Ms Megan Fearon MLA
Mr Paul Girvan MLA
Mr David McIlveen MLA
Mr John McCallister MLA
Mr Mitchel McLaughlin MLA
Mr Adrian McQuillan MLA
Mr Peter Weir MLA

In Attendance: Mr Shane McAteer (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Clairita Frazer (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Daithí McKay MLA (Chairperson)
Mrs Judith Cochrane MLA

The meeting opened at 10.05am in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

Agreed: that agenda item 4 and 5 are covered by Hansard and the Official Record published on the Assembly's website.

2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 15 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.

Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill

The Committee noted that the proposed Legislative Consent Motion was not considered by the Executive at last week's meeting.

Agreed: that the Committee would proceed with oral briefings at next week's meeting from Assembly Research and from the Department of Finance and Personnel on the proposed Legislative Consent Motion. It was also agreed that the Assembly research would include an examination of any differences between civil partnerships and same-sex marriages.

Defamation Bill

Mr Cree indicated that Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA would be content to brief the Committee on his Private Members' Bill on this matter.

4. Public Service Pensions Bill: Proposals on way forward – DFP evidence session

Agreed: to share the DFP papers for this evidence session with the trade union representatives in advance of the next session.

Mr Weir joined the meeting at 10.12am.

Mr McCallister joined the meeting at 10.16am.

Mr McQuillan joined the meeting at 10.45am.

Mr Weir left the meeting at 10.46am.

Ms Fearon left the meeting at 10.49am.

Mr Weir joined the meeting at 10.54am.

The Committee received a briefing on proposals on the way forward in relation to the Public Service Pensions Bill from the following DFP officials: Grace Nesbitt, Head of Pensions Division; Blathnaid Smyth, Pensions Division, Corporate Human Resources (CHR); and Margaret Coyle, Pensions Division, CHR. The session was recorded by Hansard.

Agreed: that the DFP officials would provide follow up information in relation to issues raised during the evidence session.

The Committee noted that other relevant statutory committees have been notified of the impending Committee Stage of this Bill and subsequent secondary legislation and that the Committee for Finance and Personnel would be seeking their views in due course.

Mr McCallister left the meeting at 11am.

6. Public Service Pensions Bill – Trade Union evidence session

The Committee took evidence from the following trade union representatives: Bumper Graham, Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA); John O’Farrell, Irish Congress of Trade Unions; Nuala O’Donnell, Irish National Teachers’ Organisation; Jim Quinn, Fire Brigades Union; and Harry Baird, First Division. The session was recorded by Hansard.

Ms Fearon joined the meeting at 11.06am.

Mr Weir left the meeting at 11.28am.

Mr McLaughlin left the meeting at 11.57am.

Agreed: that the trade unions will provide the Committee with a copy of the correspondence they received from the Equality Commission regarding the proposed Bill.

Agreed: that written submissions on the proposed Bill are sought, at this stage, from the Equality Commission and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.

Agreed: that the Committee will review the issues raised in today’s evidence sessions and identify which matters require further examination and responses from the Department.

7. Subordinate Legislation

The Committee considered the following proposal for subordinate legislation:

The Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007 (Disclosure of Higher Education Student Information) Regulations (NI) 2013.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Employment and Learning which indicated contentment that the Finance and Personnel Committee carries out the scrutiny on this proposed Statutory Rule.

Agreed: that the Committee has considered DFP’s proposal for subordinate legislation under The Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007 (Disclosure of Higher Education Student Information) Regulations (NI) 2013 has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

The Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007 (Disclosure of Pupil Information) Regulations (NI) 2013.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Education indicating that it is content with the policy proposals contained in the SL1 and is content that the proposed rule is made.

Dr David Marshall, Head of Demographic Statistics, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) addressed the Committee to respond to queries raised by members on issues relating to the proposed secondary legislation.

Agreed: that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under The Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007 (Disclosure of Pupil Information) Regulations (NI) 2013 has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

8. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- DFP: Ministerial correspondence regarding Corporation Tax;
- DFP: Ministerial correspondence to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment regarding the proposed UK Government economic package for NI;
- DFP: Department of Justice: Equal Pay PSNI;

Agreed: to copy this response to the original correspondent.

- DFP: Forthcoming Legislation – Land Law Bill;

Agreed: to schedule an oral briefing on Land Law Reform after summer recess.

- Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (CETI): Third Sector Mapping Exercise;
- CETI: Consumer Council (NI) Review;

Agreed: that a draft submission to the Review will be prepared for the Committee's consideration.

- DFP: Flexible Working Response;
- DFP: Financial Provisions Bill;
Agreed: to seek initial comments from the relevant Assembly committees in relation to the provisions within the Bill and to ask the Department of Finance and Personnel for clarification on whether powers to access Harbour Commissioners' reserves will be provided for in this legislation.
- Committee for Social Development: Invite to 'Repossessions and Negative Equity in the NI Housing Market';
- DFP: Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill response;
- Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Suicide Prevention Strategies;
- DFP: Monitoring - Post Project Evaluations;

Agreed: to copy this correspondence to the other statutory committees and the Public Accounts Committee for information and action as appropriate.

Members noted that the following items of routine correspondence were emailed to members on 20 May 2013:

- Playboards upcoming Annual Conference
- Equality Commission Newsletter
- Business in the Community Gala Awards
- QUB impact eZine
- Research Briefing note on Explanatory Memorandum 34792 and 34799

9. Committee Work Programme

The Committee considered a draft of the Committee work programme.

The Budget (No.2) Bill

Agreed: to seek information from DFP in advance of the evidence session on the Budget (No.2) Bill, including details of end of year balances on 31 March 2013 in relation to amounts held at the Centre, amounts retained under the Budget Exchange Scheme, and any amounts returned to the Treasury.

10. Any Other Business

None

11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday 29 May 2013 at 10.00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Stormont.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.18pm.

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