

## **COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE**

### **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**WEDNESDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2016  
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mrs Emma Little Pengelly (Chairperson)  
Ms Claire Hanna (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Jim Allister MLA  
Mr Paul Girvan MLA  
Mr Gerry Mullan MLA  
Mr John O'Dowd MLA  
Ms Caitríona Ruane MLA  
Mr Philip Smith MLA  
Mr Jim Wells MLA

In Attendance: Mr Jim McManus (Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Phil Pateman (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mrs Liz Marsh (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Miss Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Ross Hussey MLA

*Agreed:* to commence the meeting in closed session to enable consideration of confidential correspondence under matters arising (Agenda Item 3).

*The meeting commenced at 2:10 pm in closed session.*

### 3. Matters Arising

#### Correspondence from the Committee for Standards and Privileges

Members noted the response from the Committee on Standards and Privileges in relation to the Committee's request for a referral to be made to the Commissioner for Standards.

#### Correspondence from the National Crime Agency (NCA)

Members noted a response from the NCA in relation to the Committee's request on the current status of its investigation.

*Agreed:* to give further consideration to the correspondence at a future meeting following receipt and consideration of legal advice.

*Paul Girvan joined the meeting at 2:17 pm.*

*Agreed:* that all papers with a confidential marking applied by the Clerk will be made available for Members to view in the Clerk's office when received and will be tabled for consideration at the applicable meeting.

Jim Allister made the following proposal:

***'That this Committee is provided with all confidential material when available and can take the material away with them to read.'***

The Committee divided:

The question was put on the proposal:

Ayes	Noes	Abstained
Jim Allister	Paul Girvan	
Claire Hanna	Emma Little Pengelly	
John O'Dowd	Gerry Mullan	
Caitríona Ruane	Philip Smith	
	Jim Wells	

The proposal fell.

*The meeting moved into public session at 2:30 pm for the remainder of the meeting.*

### 1. Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Ross Hussey.

## **2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings 14 September 2016**

*Agreed:* the draft minutes of proceedings of the Committee's meeting on 14 September 2016.

## **3. Matters Arising**

The Committee returned to this item to consider further matters in public session.

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

*Agreed:* to request that the Department provides responses to the overdue outstanding requests for information.

## **4. Department of Finance written briefing on Defamation**

Members considered written evidence from the Department of Finance on Defamation reforms.

*Agreed:* to provide members with written briefings and copies of the Official Report which arose during the former Committee's scrutiny on proposals relevant to the reform of defamation laws.

*Agreed:* to write the Department to ascertain its position in respect of the recommendations contained in Dr Scott's report and to establish whether it intends to bring forward legislative proposals to the Executive to reform defamation laws and, if not, whether it would be supportive of such reforms being brought forward through a Private Members' Bill.

*Agreed:* that the Clerk will seek clarification on procedural matters relating to perceived conflicts of interests.

## **5. RaISe Briefing Paper – Overview of 'What Works' Centres**

Members received an oral briefing from Assembly Research on 'What Works' Centres.

*Agreed:* to write to the Cabinet Office to ascertain the provision of funding by Central Government to the currently established 'What Works' Centres in Great Britain and the opportunities there may be for Northern Ireland from adopting this approach.

*Caitríona Ruane left the meeting at 3:10 pm.*

## **6. RaISe Briefing Paper – Non-Domestic Rates/Small Business Rate Relief**

Members considered a written research brief from Assembly Research on Non-Domestic Rates/Small Business Rate Relief.

*Agreed:* to ask the Department for its envisaged timeframe for bringing proposals forward for the Committee's consideration arising from the review of the Non-Domestic Rating System.

*Agreed:* to ask the Department for clarification on the extent of properties that benefit from rate reliefs given in relation to religious and educational sites.

## **7. Programme for Government – Construction Employers Federation response to the NI Executive's Draft Programme for Government Framework**

Members noted a written response from the Construction Employers Federation, to the NI Executive's Draft Programme for Government Framework.

## **8. Subordinate Legislation – SL1 The Rates (Increased Reduction for Recreational Hereditaments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016**

Members considered the proposal for the above SL1. The following departmental were in attendance to provide clarification on any issues.

- Mr Brian McClure, Head of Rating Policy, Department of Finance
- Mr Andrew McAvoy, Rating Policy Division, Department of Finance

*Agreed:* that the Committee is content with the policy implications at this stage.

*Caitríona Ruane returned to the meeting at 3:33 pm.*

## **9. Correspondence**

The Committee noted the following correspondence:

- Committee for the Executive Office - Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-21

*Agreed:* In relation to paragraph 46, to ask the Department of Finance for a summary of the responses to comments sent to the Department.

- Law Society of Northern Ireland - Invite to Chairperson to Law Society Dinner on 7 October
- Committee for the Executive Office - Brussels Report April 2016 – July 2016

*Agreed:* To seek an update from the Department on the outcome/findings of the ‘Labs Connection’ event scheduled for 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> October.

- Department of Finance - Supply Accrual Resources

**10. Committee Work Programme**

The Committee noted the work programme which will be published on the Committee’s website.

**11. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

**12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday, 28 September 2016 at 2:00 pm, Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 3:35pm.*

**Mrs Emma Little Pengelly MLA**  
**Chairperson**  
**Committee for Finance**  
**28 September 2016**