

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2016
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present:	Mrs Emma Little Pengelly MLA	(Chairperson)
	Mrs Claire Hanna MLA	(Deputy Chairperson)
	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)
	Mr Joe Westland	(Clerical Supervisor)
	Miss Heather Graham	(Clerical Officer)
	Ms Alice McKelvey	(Legal Adviser)
Apologies:	Mr Jim Allister MLA	
	Mr Jonathan Bell MLA	
	Mr Ross Hussey MLA	

The meeting commenced at 2:07 pm in public session.

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

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 19 October 2016

Agreed: that the minutes will be published on the Assembly website.

3. Matters Arising

Summary of Requests to DoF

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.

4. Scrutiny of the Budget response from the Department of Finance

Members scrutinised the departmental response with regard to the Budget and noted the Clerk's paper provided in relation to the response.

Agreed: to schedule an oral briefing from the Department and the Strategic Investment Board in respect of work undertaken to increase to uptake of Financial Transactions Capital.

Caitríona Ruane joined the meeting at 2:13 pm

5. Budget 2017/18: Assembly Research Briefing

The Committee received a briefing on Executive Draft Budget 2017/18 from Assembly Research.

Agreed: to seek a response from the Department to each of the issues highlighted in the research.

Agreed: to write to the relevant Assembly Committees highlighting that they may wish to seek responses from their departments to the issues contained in the research paper.

6. Outcome of October Monitoring Round – Oral Evidence from the Department of Finance

The Committee heard oral evidence on the Outcome of the October Monitoring Round from the following departmental officials:

- Ms Joanne McBurney – Head of Central Expenditure Division, Department of Finance

- Ms Emer Morelli – Head of Supply – Public Spending Directorate, Department of Finance.
- Mr Stephen Barret - Central Expenditure Division, Department of Finance

Agreed: that as accepted by officials further work will be undertaken to progress previous work on a ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ on the Budget Process for completion prior to the Committee’s meeting on 5 April 2017.

Agreed: that Department will, as undertaken explore what scope exists to lay a draft Budget in the Assembly prior to the Christmas period and that all budget guidance issued to Departments will be copied to the relevant Assembly Committees for information.

Caitríona Ruane left the meeting at 3:55 pm

This session was recorded by Hansard.

7. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following correspondence.

- Department of Finance - Written response on the implementation of each of the recommendations contained within the former Committee’s report on ‘Sickness Absence in the Northern Ireland Public Sector’.

Agreed: to schedule an oral briefing from the Department to include for each business area the performance against compliance measures and actions being undertaken to address any underperformance.

Caitríona Ruane returned to the meeting at 4:15 pm.

Philip Smith left the meeting at 4:15 pm.

- Department of Finance - Response regarding Defamation update.

Agreed: to seek clarification from the Department on whether it would be supportive of reforms through a Private Member’s Bill as previously requested.

- Committee for the Executive Office - Draft Programme for Government – engagement with stakeholders.

Agreed: to identify what engagement the Department plans to undertake with stakeholders and to respond to the Committee for the Executive Office accordingly.

- Invest NI - Invitation from Invest NI to the Chair and Deputy Chair to Lunch with the President of Colombia.

Agreed: to note that the Chair & Deputy Chair attend on behalf of the Committee, subject to their availability.

- Committee for the Executive Office - Together: Building a United Community strategy.

Agreed: to seek from the Department for its assessment of actions it is taking in respect of the Strategy.

- Department of Finance - Written response regarding Departmental Annual Progress Report and Section 75.
- Department of Finance - Copies of responses issued to Mr Neil Adair.
- Department of Finance - Review of Effects of the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.
- Department of Finance - Minister's response to the Chair of the Committee for Communities letter regarding Concentrix.
- Committee for Communities - Decision by HMRC not to renew the Concentrix Contract in 2017 – and invitation to HMRC to brief the Committee.
- Committee for the Executive Office - Draft Programme for Government 2016-21: Briefings on Outcomes-based Accountability Approach.

8. Committee Work Programme

Rescheduling of NISRA session on PfG

Members noted a request from the Department to reschedule the planned session from NISRA relating the anticipated work which may arise from the draft Programme for Government.

Agreed: to reschedule the session to a future meeting.

Non-Domestic Rating System

The Chairperson highlighted a recent discussion she had with the Northern Ireland Retail Consortium in respect of the Committee's work on the Non-Domestic Rating System.

Agreed: to undertake two external meetings which will be considered on the basis of the responses received in respect of the Committee's call for evidence and that

members should highlight any proposed locations they wish to be considered by the Committee.

Committee Work Programme

The Committee noted the work programme which will be published on the Committee's webpage.

Philip Smith returned to the meeting at 4:19pm

9. Any Other Business

Committee input on FOI matters during recess periods.

Agreed: to delegate authority to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson FOI handling arrangements during recess, subject to judgement being exercised in respect of any issues which may be sensitive or controversial in nature.

10. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance Committee will be held on Wednesday, 9 November 2016 at 2:00pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Committee agreed to move into closed session for consideration of agenda items 11 and 12 at 4.21 pm.

11. Sale of the NAMA Loan Portfolio in Northern Ireland – Advice from Legal and Governance Services

The Committee received legal advice from Legal and Governance Services on the draft Terms of Reference for its Inquiry into the sale of the NAMA Northern Ireland loans portfolio.

12. Sale of the NAMA Loan Portfolio in Northern Ireland – Consideration of a draft Inquiry Plan and Draft Terms of Reference.

The Committee considered an Inquiry Plan around the Committee's approach to initiating an Inquiry into the Sale of the NAMA Loan Portfolio in NI.

Agreed: that the draft Terms of Reference are amended to provide a distinction between the work of the former Committee for Finance and Personnel and the current Committee for Finance.

Agreed: that, following agreement of the Terms of Reference, a response is sought from the Law Society in respect of the action it has taken as a result of the recommendation made by the former Committee for Finance and Personnel in its progress report.

Claire Hanna left the meeting at 4:50pm

Gerry Mullan left the meeting at 5:05pm

Agreed: to accept in principle the invitation from the Committee of Public Accounts in Dublin to meet regarding matters of joint concern in relation to the Project Eagle Sale.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 5:07 pm.

Mrs Emma Little Pengelly MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance
09 November 2016