

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2016
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mrs Emma Little Pengelly MLA (Chairperson)
Mrs Claire Hanna MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Jonathan Bell 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)
Mr Joe Westland (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Ross Hussey MLA

The meeting commenced at 2:04 pm in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 23 November 2016

Agreed: that the amended 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. Budget – Impact of the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s Autumn Statement – Oral Evidence from the Department of Finance

The Committee heard oral evidence on the ‘Impact of the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s Autumn Statement’ from the following departmental officials:

- Joanne McBurney, Head of Central Expenditure Division, Department of Finance
- Jeff McGuinness, Central Expenditure Division, Department of Finance
- Kirsty McMillan, Central Expenditure Division, Department of Finance

Agreed: to receive further information from the Department on a number of key issues.

Agreed: to ascertain what the assumed inflationary pressures are for both the Department of Education and Department of Health for the next financial year.

5. Monitoring Rounds – January Monitoring Round: Departmental Position – Oral Evidence from the Department of Finance

The Committee heard oral evidence on the Departmental Position on the January Monitoring Round from the following departmental officials:

- Brigitte Worth, Finance Director, CSG, Department of Finance; and
- Paula Magee, Head of Business Partnering, ESS, Department of Finance

Agreed: to schedule oral evidence from Mr David Sterling, Permanent Secretary, on management of in-year monitoring and general management issues.

6. Subordinate Legislation – SR 2016/412 The Building (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

Members considered the DoF papers relating to this statutory rule.

Agreed: that the Committee has considered SR 2016/412 The Building (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 and, subject to the Examiner's report, has no objection to the rule.

7. Committee Consideration of Rating Policy

The Committee considered papers provided by the Clerk in relation to Rating Policy.

Agreed: to forward correspondence received from the Federation of Small Businesses to the Department for a response to the issues raised and to express the Committee's view that the Minister should bring provide clarification in respect of the future of the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme.

Agreed: to receive an indicative timeframe from the Department for the policy proposals and any resulting legislation.

Agreed: to write to universities seeking their views on the impact of the policy proposal which may result in halls of residence being liable for rates.

Agreed: to include the report on Small Business Rate Relief produced by the University of Ulster Economic Policy Centre in next week's pack.

Agreed: to Commission research on comparable rating systems in other jurisdictions and associated costs with transposing the English or Scottish systems to Northern Ireland.

8. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following correspondence.

- Department of Finance - Minister's availability to brief the Committee.

Agreed: to accept the Minister's proposal to attend the Committee on 18th January and to reiterate the Committee's view that there should be separate briefing sessions on Budget, Rates and Departmental Priorities.

- Member of the Public - Reaction to Minister Statement about Rates.

Agreed: to suggest that the correspondent responds to the Department's consultation on its proposals once it is issued.

- The Law Society of Northern Ireland - Progress on the review of NAMA Property Loan Portfolio in Northern Ireland.
- Committee for Justice Committee Review of the need for Stalking Legislation in Northern Ireland.
- Department of Finance - Performance against its 2016-17 business plan targets up to 30 September 2016.
- Committee for Education - Inquiry into Educational Underachievement.

9. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: to defer the session on January Monitoring scheduled for the 18 January to accommodate the Minister's attendance on that day.

Agreed: to invite a representative from the University of Ulster Economic Policy Centre to attend the Committee on 25th January.

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

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Committee for Finance will be held on Wednesday, 07 December 2016 at 2:00 pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings

The Committee agreed to move into closed session at 3:35 pm for the remainder of the meeting.

12. Inquiry into the Sale of the NAMA Loan Portfolio in Northern Ireland

Members considered papers in relation to the Committee Inquiry.

Agreed: to refine the paper on witness/evidence providers for further consideration by the Committee at its meeting next week.

13. Strategic Planning

The Committee considered the draft Strategic Plan.

Agreed: to receive a summary of issues discussed and considered at the proposed future meeting between the Minister and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury

Agreed: to ascertain whether a report entitled ‘A Sectoral Audit of Complexities and Risks arising from Brexit’ arising from the North/South Ministerial Council could be made available for the Committee’s consideration.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 3:55 pm.

Mrs Emma Little Pengelly MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance
07 December 2016