



OFFICIAL DAERA MINUTES

MEETING TITLE	Finance and Major Projects Committee (FMPC)	
DIVISION/BRANCH REFERENCE	FMPC 6/25a	
VENUE	Clare House and MS Teams	
DATE/TIME	28 February 2025 10.00-12.00	
LIST OF ATTENDEES	<p>FMPC MEMBERS Shane Lynch Julie Thompson</p> <p>David Reid Roger Downey</p> <p>OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE Gregor Kerr</p> <p>Richard McAuley Declan McCarney Nuala Hennessy Briege Lafferty</p> <p>Nichola Patton</p> <p>Beverley Bhatia</p>	<p>Non-Executive Board Member (Chair) Deputy Secretary, Environment, Marine & Fisheries Group (via MS Teams) Chief Executive, NIEA (via MS Teams) Finance Director</p> <p>Assistant Director, Rural Affairs Delivery Unit Finance Deputy Director (via MS Teams) Deputy Finance Director Head of In Year Financial Planning Head of Integr8 and Financial Systems Branch Head of Future Years Financial Planning (via MS Teams) In Year Financial Planning (Secretariat)</p>

KEY POINTS DISCUSSED

INTRODUCTION

- FMPC Chair, Shane Lynch opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and no Conflicts of Interest were declared. Shane noted that the Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning & Corporate Services Group post is currently vacant, with the post to be filled in March 2025. The postholder will be invited to the next FMPC meeting in May 2025.

MINUTES AND ACTION POINTS OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- Members agreed minutes of the 13 November 2024 FMPC meeting.
- In relation to the action points from the 13 November 2024 meeting, two of the five action points are complete, two are to be discussed in Agenda Item 7, and one will be completed before the next relevant exercise is commissioned with an update provided to the May committee meeting.

UPDATE ON BUDGET 2025-26

Declan McCarney:

- provided an update on the current Budget 2025-26 position;
- advised that the NI Executive approved the 2025-26 Draft Budget allocations on the 19 December 2024 and this has issued for full consultation;
- noted that a Windsor Framework exercise was underway;
- highlighted that Minister approved internal proposals on 31 January 2025 and that these proposals were presented to the AERA Committee on 6 February 2025; and
- added that DoF's consultation on Draft Budget 2025-26 will close on 13 March 2025 after which the Final Budget is due to be agreed by the Executive.

There were significant discussions between members regarding statutory obligation and contractual pressures, including bTB compensation. Members **agreed** that a representative from Veterinary Service and Animal Health Group should attend the next FMPC meeting which will include June Monitoring Round proposals to discuss the latest projected bTB Compensation requirement and what controls are in place to manage the significant bTB programme costs – **Action Point**

ESTIMATED PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2024-25

Nuala Hennessy:

- reminded members of the purpose of the Estimated Provisional Outturn (EPO) exercises;
- confirmed that in keeping with previous years, In Year Financial Planning Branch is conducting EPO exercises, with the third exercise to be commissioned next week;
- advised that Finance Division is working closely with VSAHG to ensure that any emerging pressures in respect of the recent Avian Influenza outbreaks are identified; and
- requested that business areas be advised to contact Finance as soon as possible to discuss any underspends or pressures identified.

Julie Thompson advised that she would raise the need for Business Areas to provide accurate information in the next EPO exercise at the next Weekly Business Review meeting.

CASEWORK COMMITTEE UPDATE

Nuala Hennessy:

- provided an update on the two business cases considered by the Casework Committee since the last update in November 2024 – Horticulture Pilot Programme and Investment Area 5.1 PEACEPLUS;
- advised that the Rural Development Programme Forestry Measure (Third Addendum) was approved by DoF in January 2025; and
- highlighted a summary of business cases that are due to be considered by the Casework Committee in 2025-26.

PEACEPLUS UPDATE

Gregor Kerr:

- provided an update on the PEACEPLUS Programme;
- detailed the applications received for the five Investment Areas (IA) for which DAERA is the Accountable Department; and
- confirmed that Letters of Offer have issued to the three successful applications under IA 2.4 Smart Towns & Villages.

PUBLICATION OF THE EVALUATION OF EXECUTIVE COVID-19 RELATED GRANT FUNDS FINAL REPORT

Briege Lafferty advised that the Permanent Secretary had requested that the Committee considers if there are any actions DAERA may need to take in light of the EY Report: Evaluation of Executive Covid-19 Related Grant funds and the associated DoF presentation to Permanent Secretaries.

Members discussed the report, and Julie Thompson highlighted that there were no Lessons Learned on 'Value for Money'.

Members **agreed** that whilst the EY Report should be shared with SCSG, the DAERA Funding Schemes Post Project Evaluations should be reviewed alongside the EY Report to create a summary of conclusions and key recommendations for contingency planning, which should then be shared throughout the Department – **Action Point**

COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND FORWARD WORKPLAN

Declan McCarney:

- reminded members that the Terms of Reference (ToR) and Forward Workplan (FWP) should be reviewed at least annually;
- detailed the comments and suggested amendments to the ToR and FWP provided by members following the request in January 2025; and
- highlighted the proposed changes to the ToR and FWP.

Members discussed the comments and suggested wording. Members **agreed** that amendments to the draft ToR and FWP would be circulated to the Committee for consideration before submission to DB for agreement.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- The next meeting is scheduled for 15 May 2025.

Shane Lynch closed the meeting at 11.45.

ACTION POINTS/OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE/TARGET DATE:

- Representative from Veterinary Service and Animal Health Group to attend the next FMPC meeting to discuss the latest projected bTB Compensation

requirement and what controls are in place to manage the significant bTB programme costs – IYFPB to issue invite

- DAERA Funding Schemes Post Project Evaluations to be reviewed alongside the EY Report to create a summary of conclusions and key recommendations - Briege Lafferty
- Amended Terms of Reference and 2025-26 Forward Workplan to issue to members by correspondence for comments and agreement – Declan McCarney

**Minutes written
by:** Beverley Bhatia

Date: 28 February 2025