

4th MEETING OF THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY FINANCE COMMITTEE FORUM

19th March 2025

The Interparliamentary Finance Committee Forum (IFCF) met for the fourth time on 19th March 2025 at the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The meeting was chaired initially by Diane Forsythe MLA, Deputy Chair of the Committee for Finance and then by Matthew O'Toole MLA, Chair of the Committee for Finance, who joined later, supported by Kenneth Gibson MSP, Convener of the Scottish Parliament's Finance and Public Administration Committee and Peredur Owen Griffiths MS, Chair of the Senedd Cymru Finance Committee.

The meeting was attended by representatives from the three committees.

The following informal sessions were held:

- A 15-minute online meeting with the Rt Hon Darren Jones MP, Chief Secretary to the Treasury (CST)
- A meeting with John O'Dowd, NI Executive Finance Minister; and
- A meeting with Sir Robert Chote, Chair of the NI Fiscal Council.

Each Committee provided updates regarding their respective work programmes and there was discussion regarding a Legacy Report covering the four meetings of the Forum held to date.

The IFCF agreed to issue a joint letter to the CST, welcoming his engagement with the Forum, albeit for a very restricted period and via videocall, and echo his and the UK Government's stated desire to reset relationships and work more closely together, and to seek action in the following issues:

- That the CST and/or the Chancellor responds favourably to invites to give evidence to our respective Committees, particularly considering the robust scrutiny that finance committees apply to the overarching budgets of the Devolved Governments and the fact that our budgets are so contingent on the actions of the Treasury.

That consideration of such invitations should reflect the guidance set out in Devolution Note 12, given that such engagement was the practice in previous parliamentary sessions; and

- Greater engagement with the Treasury more broadly to allow Members to discuss the allocation of budgets and other funding to the devolved governments, together with more and better information and greater transparency around the UK Government's budgetary decisions affecting Devolved Governments.
- That this correspondence will be copied to the Treasury Select Committee.
- Members also agreed to write expressing their thanks to Minister O'Dowd and Sir Robert Chote for their contributions.

The three Committees also shared updates regarding their respective work programmes, particularly focusing on areas of common interest which might be explored more fully in the future.

Members agreed that the Forum should be used as a vehicle for information-sharing and collaboration between the Committees, with recognition of the Committees having greater influence when acting together.

It was agreed that a Legacy Report highlighting the work of the Forum to date would be produced for the approval of the Committees.

There was consensus in endorsing the work of the Forum and agreement that this work should continue as soon as is practicable following the Scottish Parliament and Senedd Cymru elections in 2026.

Attendees:

- Kenneth Gibson MSP, Convener, Finance & Public Administration Committee
- Ross Greer MSP, Member, Finance & Public Administration Committee
- Craig Hoy MSP, Member, Finance & Public Administration Committee
- Liz Smith MSP, Member, Finance & Public Administration Committee

- Peredur Owen Griffiths MS, Chair, Finance Committee
- Sam Rowlands MS, Member, Finance Committee
- Rhianon Passmore MS, Member, Finance Committee

- Matthew O'Toole MLA, Chair, Finance Committee
- Diane Forsythe MLA, Deputy Chair, Finance Committee
- Phillip Brett MLA, Member, Finance Committee
- Eóin Tennyson MLA, Member, Finance Committee
- Jemma Dolan MLA, Member, Finance Committee
- Paul Frew MLA, Member, Finance Committee
- Dr Steve Aiken OBE MLA, Member, Finance Committee
- Gerry Carroll MLA, Member, Finance Committee