



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY 17 JUNE 2020, THE SENATE CHAMBER,
PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr William Humphrey MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Cathal Boylan MLA
*Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA
Mr Harry Harvey MLA
Mr David Hilditch MLA
Mr Andrew Muir MLA
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA

*Member attending meeting via teleconferencing.

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Ms Lucia Wilson, Assembly Clerk
Ms Gillian Barker, Assistant Assembly Clerk
*Ms Karen Barry, Clerical Supervisor

* Staff attending remotely

The meeting commenced at 3.02 pm in public session.

1. Apologies

None

2. Minutes of meeting on 27 May 2020

The draft minutes of 27 May 2020 were agreed and signed.

3. Matters Arising

Members noted the passing of Billy Bell, who was the first Chair of PAC, and recorded their condolences.

Members noted the passing of Michael Rickard, a former Clerk for PAC, and recorded their condolences.

Members noted the updated Guidance for Assembly Committees during the public health crisis which was revised on 2 June 2020.

Agreed: Committee agreed to adopt these principles for a consistent approach when managing essential business and allowing flexibility to include other business.

4. Declaration of Members' Interests

The following declaration of members' interests were declared.

- With reference to correspondence on the Presbyterian Mutual Society (PMS), Mr Roy Beggs MLA declared he had close family members who had previously invested in the Society
- Mr Andrew Muir MLA, declared he was a former employee of Translink; a member of Ards and North Down Borough Council; and specifically in relation to the Major Capital Projects, that his step father is a quality manager for the A6 Dungiven by-pass.

Matthew O'Toole joined the meeting at 3.07pm

5. Correspondence

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, C&AG and Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer joined the meeting.

The Committee noted correspondence from Mr James McKeown regarding the Presbyterian Mutual Society (PMS).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward correspondence to NIAO from James McKeown, dated 5 March and 30 April 2020 regarding PMS.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Mr McKeown advising him that NIAO will be contacting him to organise a meeting to discuss Mr McKeown's concerns regarding the

Presbyterian Mutual Society accounts and the current and future role of NIAO in auditing the Society.

Agreed: For the Clerk to confirm with Mr McKeown is content for his contact details to be forwarded to NIAO.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Clerk of the Justice Committee dated 26 March 2020, regarding NIAO report on *Mental Health in the Criminal Justice System* setting out the current position in relation to each of the report's three recommendations.

Agreed: The Committee will explore the NIAO report and recommendations in further detail, when it conducts its own inquiry, in line with the principles of primacy over NIAO reports.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Clerk of the Justice Committee, dated 26 March 2020, informing PAC that the Justice Committee has written to the Chair of the Policing Board and to the Minister of Justice in respect of the NIAO *Report on Injury on duty Schemes for Officers in the Policing Service of NI and Prison Service of Northern Ireland*, requesting what actions have been taken in respect to the findings.

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 26 March 2020, from Mike Brennan, Permanent Secretary for DfE, in response to the Committee's letter to the Department dated 20 March 2020, in respect of Dr Edward Cooke.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Mr Cooke to advise him the matter is being taken forward by DfE.

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 8 April, from Tracy Meharg, Permanent Secretary DfC regarding the PAC report issued on 16 February 2011, *Administration and Management of Disability Living Allowance and Appeals Process Report*.

The Committee noted an email from Ann Watt, Director of 'Pivotal' dated 1 June 2020 regarding 'Pivotal's report 'Moving Out of Lockdown'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Ms Watt inviting her to attend PAC to brief the Committee, at a date in the future, subject to the forward work programme.

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 1 June 2020, from the Audit Office regarding a whistleblower.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this correspondence and to write to the whistleblower once PAC's legal position is known regarding its statutory remit in addressing the issues raised by the whistleblower.

The Committee noted correspondence from C&AG, Kieran Donnelly, dated 12 June 2020, regarding issues raised by Mr T McManus.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Mr T McManus to inform him that C&AG proposes to bring a report to the Committee in due course, outlining what consequences the ruling has for the work of CCNI.

Moved into closed session 3.25pm

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 1 June 2020, from Tracy Meharg, Permanent Secretary DfC, regarding *Governance Issues in Sport NI – Findings and Recommendations*. The Committee discussed the findings and recommendations and were updated by Mr Donnelly, C&AG on a number of issues arising from the report.

Agreed: The Clerk agreed to liaise with NIAO to provide a further update to the Committee at a future date.

Moved into open session 4.10pm

6. Memorandum of Reply Update – Inquiry into Managing Legal Aid Update.

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, C&AG and Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer joined the meeting.

The Committee noted correspondence from Peter May, Permanent Secretary DoJ dated, 24 March 2020, regarding the legislative changes required to progress the recommendations, as outlined in PAC's *Managing Legal Aid Report, 2017*.

Moved in to closed session at 4.12pm

7. Report on Major Capital Projects

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, C&AG; Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer joined the meeting.

The Committee considered the evidence sessions previously heard from David Sterling, HOCS; Sue Gray, AO DoF; Brett Hannam SIB on the overall findings of the NIAO Major Capital Projects report; and in closed evidence session from Mike Brennan, AO DfE in respect of major capital spend on the Ulster University Greater Belfast Development. They also discussed the planned visit to Critical Care Centre and the outstanding evidence sessions regarding Casement Park and A5 & A6.

Agreed: To forego the visit to the Critical Care Centre due to the current pressures on the Belfast Health Trust.

Agreed: To reschedule the evidence sessions from Katrina Godfery, AO DoI in respect of A5 & A6; and the evidence session from Tracy Meharg, AO DoC in respect of Casement Park.

Closed session 4.22pm

8. Draft Forward Work Programme

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, C&AG; and Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer joined the meeting.

The Committee noted a memo dated, 17 June 2020, from the Committee for Finance regarding NIAO report on DOF, Land & Property Services, LandWeb, and if it was PAC's intention to consider the report further, or if not, was it content for the Committee for Finance to initiate an inquiry?

The Committee considered the forward work programme including an update from NIAO on available and future reports. The Committee also considered combining reports with similar themes but agreed to return to this aspect of the forward work programme, after further consideration, for some reports.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that its next inquiry will be on NIAO's report on LandWeb and also Digital Transformation, which will be launched in September 2020.

The Committee agreed the following order for its next four inquiries as follows:

Inquiry Number	Report Title (s)
First Inquiry	Land & Property Services LandWeb & Digital Transformation
Second Inquiry	Mental Health in the Criminal Justice System
Third Inquiry	Special Needs Education
Fourth Inquiry	Capacity and Capability in the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Agreed: The Clerk will put together a draft forward work programme including a strategic planning day, for consideration at PAC's next meeting.

Agreed: The committee agreed to write to the Committee for Finance on PAC's intention to take forward an inquiry into the Land & Property Services LandWeb report and Digital Transformation.

9. Any Other Business

None

10. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next committee meeting will be held on Thursday 2 July 2020 at 10.00 am in Room 115.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.50 pm

Mr William Humphrey
Chairperson
Public Accounts Committee
17 June 2020