



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2020, THE SENATE,
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 Maolíosá McHugh MLA
Mr Andrew Muir MLA
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Ms Lucia Wilson, Assembly Clerk
Ms Gillian Barker, Assistant Assembly Clerk
Ms Karen Barry, Clerical Supervisor
Mr Darren Weir, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 2.06pm in Public Session.

1. Apologies

2. Minutes of meeting on 10 September 2020

The draft minutes of 10 September 2020 were agreed and signed.

3. Declaration of Members' Interests

- Mr Andrew Muir MLA, declared he was a former employee of Translink.
- Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA declared he was a Trustee of Naomh Eoghain Caisleán na Deirge, Gaelic Athletic Association.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee discussed last week's briefing from TOA regarding the Theft and Fraud Report 2018/19 and the role NIAO have in reporting fraud. The Committee also discussed the Audit Office's recent report 'COVID19 Fraud Risks'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from the TOA and NIAO in the New Year on the wider issues of fraud, in conjunction with presenting DoF's 2019/20 Theft and Fraud Report.

The Committee noted that nominations have been sent to CPA regarding the conference 19 – 23 October 2020 'Westminster Workshop on Public Financial Oversight'. Further information has been requested on the agenda and how the virtual conference will be managed.

The Committee noted a memo from the Audit Committee dated 14 September 2020, notifying the Committee that the report on the 'Estimates of the Northern Ireland Audit Office' has been laid and published.

5. Correspondence

The Committee noted correspondence regarding the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (CCNI), which refers to the implications of a High Court ruling in May 2019 (upheld in the February 2020) and a number of related matters. The Committee noted a report by C&AG on this issue in the Charity Commission Report and Accounts for 2019/2020, a copy of which was provided to Members. .

The Committee noted correspondence from Mr Joe Hughes and members of the Lifesaving Charity Volunteers dated 29 August, to Mrs Patricia Lappin, Chief Commissioner of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (CCNI). The Committee noted that the Committee for Communities has been copied into this correspondence as well.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Chair of the Committee for Communities asking the Committee to keep PAC informed of any developments in relation to this issue.

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 11 September 2020, from Mr Trevor McKee regarding a letter sent to Mr Kieran Donnelly, C&AG on the CCNI Annual Accounts 2019/20.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek the views of the C&AG on the issues raised in Mr McKee's correspondence.

The Committee noted correspondence from Robert Crawford, dated 15 September, regarding the C&AG's report on the CCNI Annual Accounts 2019/20.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek Mr Crawford's permission to forward his correspondence to C&AG for comment.

The Committee noted correspondence from Robert Orton regarding CCNI Annual Accounts 2019/20 as follows: a letter to Mr Orton from Nicole Lappin Chief Charity Commissioner dated 10 July 2020; a letter from Mr Orton to Nicole Lappin, Chief Charity Commissioner dated 15 August 2020; a letter to Mr Orton from the Information Commissioner's Officer, dated 10 September 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek Mr Crawford's permission to forward his correspondence to C&AG for comment.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to respond to the correspondents once it had received and considered the additional information requested, as outlined above, and in the interim, to acknowledge receipt of the correspondence, as noted above.

The Committee remained in Public Session 2.14pm

6. Ministerial Direction in relation to the Infected Blood Payment Scheme

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

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 11 September 2020, from Mr Kieran Donnelly, C&AG, providing details of the Ministerial Direction in respect of the 'Infected Blood Payment Scheme'

Mr Donnelly briefed the Committee on the Ministerial Direction and there then followed a discussion.

The Committee remained in Public Session 2.16pm

7. Inquiry into the LandWeb Project and Digital Transformation – Briefing Session

Mr Kieran Donnelly, C&AG; Mr Rodney Allen, Director; Ms Christine Burns, Audit Manager; Ms Clare Doran, Audit Manager [remotely] and Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer joined the meeting.

Mr Kieran Donnelly, C&AG, and his team, briefed the Committee on the LandWeb Project and Digital Transformation inquiry. The Committee noted the NIAO reports on ‘The LandWeb Project: An Update’; and the NIAO Report on ‘Management of the NI Direct Strategic Partner Project –Helping to Deliver Digital Transformation’ and NIAO briefing paper.

There then followed a question and answer session.

The Committee went into Closed Session 2.39pm

8. Inquiry into the LandWeb Project and Digital Transformation – Preparation Session

Mr Kieran Donnelly, C&AG; Mr Rodney Allen, Director; Ms Christine Burns, Audit Manager; Ms Clare Doran, Audit Manager [remotely] and Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer remained in the meeting.

The Committee discussed the evidence session on 24 September 2020 in relation to the inquiry into the LandWeb Project and Digital Transformation.

The Committee noted the following witnesses attending are:

- Ms Sue Gray, AO Department for Finance;
- Mr Ian Snowden, Chief Executive of Land & Property Services; and
- Mr Paul Duffy, the Strategic Programme Director for the Central Government Transformation Project

The Committee remained in Closed Session 3.38pm

9. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the draft forward work programme covering the period September – December 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite Mr Richard Pengelly, AO DoH to attend PAC on 12 November regarding NIAO’s Report ‘Addiction Services’, while acknowledging the current climate of Covid-19 and the unprecedented pressures on the Department.

Agreed: The draft forward work programme was agreed and will be published on the Committee website.

10. Any other business

None

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next PAC meeting will be held on Thursday 24th September 2020 at 2.00 pm in the Senate Chamber.

The meeting was adjourned at 3.44pm

**Mr William Humphrey MLA
PAC Chairperson
Minutes of 17 September 2020**

Signed: