



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 3 June 2021

Meeting Location: The Senate, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Harry Harvey MLA
Mr David Hilditch MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Cathal Boylan MLA
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA
Mr Andrew Muir MLA

Apologies: **None**

In Attendance: Ms Lucia Wilson (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Gillian Barker (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Karen Barry (Clerical Supervisor)



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The meeting commenced in Closed Session at 2.04 pm

First Consideration of the draft Report into ‘Generating Electricity from Renewable Energy’

The Committee noted they will receive additional evidence from Mr Mike Brennan AO DfE regarding their ‘Report into Generating Electricity from Renewable Energy’ on 17 June 2021. Mr Brennan will be updating the Committee on the Departments analysis of the figures in KPMG’s report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer the first consideration of the draft report into ‘Generating Electricity from Renewable Energy’ until it has been briefed on the DfE’s analysis of the KPMG report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider when to schedule the consideration of the draft report at Agenda Item 8, the draft Forward Work Programme.

Report into Driver and Vehicle Agency 2019 - 2020.

The Committee noted their sixth report, ‘Report into Driver and Vehicle Agency 2019 – 2020’, was published today, 3 June 2021. The Committee noted the accompanying press release has been amended to reflect a factual correction.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the amendment to the press release.

The meeting went into Open Session at 2.16 pm.



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1. Apologies

None

2. Draft Minutes of 27 May 2021

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting of 27 May 2021 were signed and agreed to be published.

3. Declaration of Interest

None

4. Matters Arising

None

5. Correspondence

The following officials joined the meeting:

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) for Northern Ireland Assembly (NIAO);
Mr Tomas Wilkinson, Director; and
Mr Kyle Bingham Assembly Support Officer, NIAO joined the meeting remotely.



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Member Development Programme – Social Media Training

The Committee noted correspondence dated 28 May 2021 from CAMS regarding Social Media training which is part of the Member Development Programme.

Agreed: The Committee noted the dates of the sessions which is open to Members and party staff.

Committee for Finance – Surplus Land Sales

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 28 May 2021, from the Committee for Finance, to Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG regarding 'Surplus Land Sales', on the sale of Portavoe Reservoir and whether value for money has been obtained.

The Committee also noted correspondence from Mr Andy Monaghan DoF, Department Liaison Officer (DLO), dated 21 May 2021, that includes a list of Surplus Land Sales and a valuation report for the sale of Portavoe Reservoir, dated 27 April 2012.

Agreed: The Committee noted the C&AG is completing a VFM Report for the Committee for Finance on Surplus Land Sales which will be laid in the Assembly and available to PAC.

DoF Published List of Ministerial Directions

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 28 May 2021, which it had been copied into, from Mr Andy Monaghan, DLO, Department for Finance, to the Committee for Finance, regarding clarification on why the recently published list of Ministerial Directions does not appear to be inclusive of all Departments.

The Committee noted previous advice from the Audit Office:

'The differences in lists are down to the fact that DoF agreed with the NIAO to only publish the Ministerial Directions that PAC have been informed of by the C&AG. This protects PAC's primacy and enables the C&AG to scrutinise each of these.'



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Committee for Finance to request they keep PAC copied into any further correspondence regarding Ministerial Directions.

The Committee remained in Open Session at 2.25 pm

6. Ministerial Directions

The Committee noted correspondence from Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG, dated 1 June 2021, regarding five Ministerial Directions from the DoH Minister, Robin Swann MLA. Mr Richard Pengelly, AO, DoH wrote to the C&AG, on 31 March and 15 April 2021, to advise he had sought the following Ministerial Directions:

- i. a one off award of £15 million to HSC Charitable Trust Funds;
- ii. a grant scheme to support Cancer Services of £10.7 million including management fee;
- iii. a grant scheme to support Mental Health Services of £10.7 million including the management fee;
- iv. a grant scheme to support carers in Northern Ireland of £4.4 million including management fee; and
- v. a payment of £1.3 million to Hospices.

The Committee noted the relevant background and supporting papers for each of the five Ministerial Directions including the individual letters signed off by the Minister Robin Swann.

Agreed: The Committee noted the C&AG will keep these matters under review as the audit of the 2020-21 financial statements progresses and will brief the Committee at the earliest opportunity

The meeting went into Closed Session at 2.34 pm



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7. Generating Electricity from Renewable Energy – Consideration of the draft Report

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG, Mr Tomas Wilkinson, Director, and Mr Kyle Bingham Assembly Support Officer (remotely) joined the meeting.

The following officials remained in the meeting:

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG NIAO;
Mr Tomas Wilkinson, Director, NIAO;
Ms Brian O'Neill, Senior Auditor; and
Mr Kyle Bingham Assembly Support Officer, NIAO remotely

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the draft report 'Generating Electricity from Renewable Energy'.

The Committee remained in Closed Session at 2.35 pm

8. Draft Forward Work Programme

The following officials remained in the meeting:

Mr Kieran Donnelly, CB C&AG;
Mr Tomas Wilkinson, Director; and
Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer NIAO.

The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme covering the period 15 April to 8 July 2021 and agreed to schedule a briefing with the C&AG regarding the Committee's draft Forward Work Programme for September 2021 to Christmas 2021.



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The Committee noted the witnesses have now been formerly invited to appear before the Committee on 1st July regarding Sports NI Sustainability Funding and COVID Expenditure.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reschedule consideration of the draft report 'Generating Electricity from Renewable Energy' to 24 June 2021 proposing to publish the report on 15 July 2021.

Agreed: The Committee noted that due to the difficulty of scheduling evidence sessions and the additional evidence sessions scheduled, next week's Agenda has no substantial business. The Committee agreed to cancel next week's meeting of 10 June 2021.

The meeting remained in Closed Session at 2.40 pm

9. Any Other Business

Steven Agnew RenewableNI and KPMG

The Clerk advised Members that she had been in contact with Mr Steven Agnew, regarding his email dated 25 May 2021, seeking clarification on the recent correspondence, received from Mr Russell, KPMG. The Clerk informed Members that it has been confirmed that Mr Russell's correspondence reflects the position of both RenewableNI and KPMG.

The Committee noted this position.

10. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Public Accounts Committee will take place on Thursday 17 June, at 2.00 pm in The Senate, Parliament Buildings.



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The meeting adjourned at 2.44 pm.

Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA
Chairperson
Public Accounts Committee
3 June 2021