



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

## **AUDIT COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**MONDAY, 25<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2012  
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

**Present:** Mr Danny Kinahan (Chairperson)  
Mr David Hilditch (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Dominic Bradley  
Ms Anna Lo

**In Attendance:** Mr Paul Gill (Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Hugh Widdis (Director of Legal Services)  
Ms Hilary Bogle (Assistant Clerk)  
Mr Christopher McNickle (Clerical Officer)

**Apologies:** None.

*The meeting commenced at 3.36 pm in open session.*

#### **Chairperson's Introduction**

The Chairperson welcomed Members to the meeting. The Chairperson also welcomed Mr Dominic Bradley, who replaced Ms Margaret Ritchie, to his first meeting of the Committee.

The Chairperson informed the Committee that Mr Paul Maskey was leaving the Audit Committee and the Assembly. Members expressed their appreciation for Mr Maskey's contribution to the work of the Committee.

#### **1. Apologies**

As detailed above.

#### **2. Declaration of Interests**

The Chairperson reminded Members of their obligation to declare any relevant financial or other interests before and during each Committee meeting.

The Committee noted Mr Bradley's registered interests.

### **3. Draft minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2012**

*Agreed:* The draft minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2012 were agreed by the Committee.

### **4. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **5. NIAO Annual Report and Accounts 2011-12**

Members noted the Clerk's Paper; the NIAO Annual Report and Accounts 2011-12; the NIAO Paper on the Outturn 2011-12; and the Audit Findings Report.

*3.37 pm* The Chairperson welcomed Mr Kieran Donnelly, Comptroller and Auditor General; Ms Janet Sides, Assistant Auditor General; Mr Andrew Allen, Audit Manager; and Mr Joe Campbell, Audit Manager. The Chairperson invited Mr Donnelly to brief the Committee on the NIAO Annual Report and Accounts 2011-12.

*3.50 pm Mr Hilditch joined the meeting.*

Following discussion the Chairperson thanked Mr Donnelly and his colleagues and asked them to remain at the table for the following agenda item.

*4.25 pm Mr Hilditch left the meeting.*

*Agreed:* Following discussion the Committee agreed that it was content to note the Audit Office's Annual Report and Accounts 2011-12.

*Agreed:* The Committee also agreed that the NIAO should provide it with further information on NIAO annual absenteeism rates for 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11; and on NIAO Local Government Audits 2011-12.

### **6. June Monitoring Round**

The Committee noted the Clerk's Paper and the NIAO Paper on the June Monitoring Round.

The Chairperson invited Janet Sides to brief the Committee on the June Monitoring Round.

Following discussion the Chairperson thanked Mr Donnelly and his colleagues for attending the meeting.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content to note the NIAO Paper on the June Monitoring Round.

## **7. Re-appointment of the External Auditors for the NIAO**

The Committee noted the Clerk's Paper and the correspondence and paper received from the Department of Finance and Personnel.

*Agreed:* Following discussion the Committee agreed that the Department of Finance and Personnel should enter into discussions regarding the re-appointment of Baker Tilly Mooney Moore as the external auditor to the NIAO for the fifth, and final, year of a five year contract; and that the Clerk should write to the Department of Finance and Personnel informing them of the Committee's decision.

*4.36 pm Mr Bradley left the meeting.*

### **4.36 pm The meeting moved into closed session.**

## **8. Correspondence in relation to NIAO issues and DFP**

The Committee noted the Clerk's Paper and supporting correspondence. The Committee noted correspondence of 12 March 2012 received from the Minister for Finance and Personnel on the issue of section 63 of the Northern Ireland Act.

The Clerk briefed the Committee on the background to this issue.

*4.39 pm* The Chairperson welcomed Mr Hugh Widdis, Director of Legal Services to the meeting and invited him to brief the Committee on the legal advice.

The Committee then noted correspondence dated 12<sup>th</sup> March 2012 from the Minister for Finance and Personnel on the issue of the NIAO's use of external consultants.

The Committee noted the information provided by the NIAO on its use of consultants during 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12.

*Agreed:* Following discussion the Committee agreed that the Chairperson should write to the Minister for Finance and Personnel stating the Committee's position.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the NIAO should include the figures and background on its use of external consultants in its Annual Report and Accounts 2011/12 and in future years.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Public Accounts Committee.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Chairperson should write to the Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee thanking him for drawing this issue to the Committee's attention and informing him of the Audit Committee's position on this

issue. It was further agreed that the draft letter be brought to the attention of members for their approval prior to its issue.

*4.59 pm* The Chairperson thanked the Director of Legal Services for attending the meeting.

## **9. Maximising the Assembly's contribution to the Northern Ireland Budget Process**

The Committee noted correspondence and a Discussion Paper received from the Committee for Finance and Personnel.

The Clerk briefed the Committee on the background to this issue.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Chairperson should respond to the Committee for Finance and Personnel outlining the Committee's views on this issue. It was also agreed that the Clerk would circulate the draft response for members' approval prior to issuing it.

## **10. Any other business**

There was no other business.

## **11. Time, date and place of next meeting**

Members will be informed of the date of the next meeting by Committee staff in due course.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 5.05pm.*

**Danny Kinahan**  
**Chairperson**  
**Audit Committee**