



Northern Ireland
Assembly

AUDIT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

TUESDAY, 2ND OCTOBER 2012
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr David Hilditch (Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)
Ms Anna Lo

In Attendance: Mr Paul Gill (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Hilary Bogle (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Christopher McNickle (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Danny Kinahan (Chairperson)

The meeting commenced at 3.07pm in open session.

Chairperson's Introduction

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the meeting should commence in open session and move into closed session from Agenda item 8.

The Chairperson welcomed Members to the meeting and informed the Committee that Ms Michaela Boyle had been appointed to replace Mr Paul Maskey as a member 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.

Members noted the registered interests of Ms Michaela Boyle.

3. Draft minutes of the meeting held on 25th June 2012

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 25th June 2012 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters arising

Members noted the Local Government Absenteeism rates for 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11 and the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Local Government Audits 2011-12 which the Committee had requested from the NIAO following discussions at the last meeting of the Committee.

5. October Monitoring Round

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

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 and invited Mr Donnelly to brief the Committee on the October 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's reduced requirement of £70,000 for capital expenditure in the October Monitoring Round.

6. Legislative proposals for the Office of the Ombudsman

The Committee noted the paper received from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdfM) and the Clerk's Paper.

The Committee were briefed by the Clerk on this issue.

Agreed: The Committee was content, subject to the necessary statutory provisions and amendments to standing orders, to endorse the principle that the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) to the Assembly should be treated in the same way as the NIAO and confirmed, in principle, that it would be content to undertake these functions.

Agreed: The Committee was content to endorse the proposal to include the NIAO within the jurisdiction of the proposed NIPSO.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson should issue a response to the OFMdfM Committee.

7. End of Session Report

The Committee agreed its end of session report

3.32pm The meeting moved into closed session

8. Correspondence

Members noted three pieces of correspondence dated 4th July 2012, 26th July 2012 and 30th July 2012 on a complaint about the Northern Ireland Audit Office.

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

Agreed: Following discussion the Committee agreed to write to the complainants setting out the Committee's position on this issue. It was further agreed that the draft letters be brought to the attention of members for their approval prior to being issued.

Members noted correspondence dated 10th July 2012 from the Minister of Finance and Personnel on the use of external consultants by the NIAO.

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

Agreed: Following discussion the Committee agreed that the Chairperson should respond to the Minister setting out the Committee's views 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.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should arrange for the Committee to be provided with further background on the changes to governance arrangements at the National Audit Office and Welsh Audit Office.

9. Any other business

Members noted that the 'Members Attendance figures' have now been placed on the Committee's page on the Assembly website.

10. Time, date and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Tuesday, 4th December 2012 at 3.00pm in Room 29.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 3.45pm.

Danny Kinahan
Chairperson
Audit Committee