



Northern Ireland
Assembly

AUDIT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

TUESDAY, 25TH MARCH 2014
ROOM 21, 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 Oliver Bellew (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Watson (Clerical Supervisor)

Apologies: None

The meeting commenced at 3.33pm in open session

1. Apologies

As 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.

3.34pm Mr Bradley joined the meeting

3. Draft minutes of the meeting held on 14th January 2014

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 14th January 2014 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5. NIAO Estimates 2014-15

Members noted the draft NIAO Estimate for 2014-15 and correspondence from the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) and the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). Members also noted a letter and memorandum from the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Kieran Donnelly, Comptroller and Auditor General; Ms Janet Sides, Assistant Auditor General; Mr Andrew Allen, Audit Manager; and Mr Richard Emerson, Audit Manager. The Chairperson invited Mr Donnelly to brief the Committee on the NIAO Estimate for 2014-15.

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

3.50pm The Chairperson left the meeting. Mr Hilditch assumed the Chair.

6. Memorandum of understanding on the governance and accountability arrangements of the NIAO

Members noted a copy of the draft memorandum of understanding on the governance and accountability arrangements of the NIAO.

The officials briefed the committee on the content of the memorandum.

Following a question and answer session the deputy Chairperson thanked the officials for their contribution.

4.06pm The meeting moved to closed session

7. Re-appointment of non-executives to the NIAO Audit Committee

Members noted correspondence from the NIAO in relation to the re-appointment of non-executives to the NIAO Audit Committee.

The C&AG briefed the Committee on the content of the paper.

Following a question and answer session the deputy Chairperson thanked the officials for attending the meeting.

4.09pm the officials left the meeting

The Committee returned to the NIAO Estimate for 2014-15. The Committee considered the advice from DFP and PAC

Agreed: The Committee agreed the NIAO Estimates for 2014-15.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft Committee Report on the NIAO Estimates for 2014-15 (as amended).

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Committee Powers and Membership and Table of Contents should form part of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Appendix 1 ‘Other Evidence considered by the Committee’ should form part of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Appendix 2 ‘Minutes of Proceedings relating to the Report’ should form part of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the tabled extract of today’s Minutes of Proceedings should be included in Appendix 1 of the report.

Agreed The Committee ordered the Report on the Estimates of the Northern Ireland Audit Office 2014-15 to be printed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should write to the Department of Finance and Personnel advising them of the Committee’s decision.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the C&AG to advise of its decision to approve the MoU on the governance and accountability arrangements of the NIAO, as amended. The Committee also agreed that the MoU would be published on the Assembly website and a copy sent to each MLA. The Committee also agreed to issue a press release in relation to the MoU.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to endorse the C&AG’s proposal to appoint a new non-executive member to the NIAO Audit Committee and the C&AG’s Advisory Group. Members also agreed that the Chairperson should act as the Committee’s representative on the appointment panel for non-executives to the NIAO Audit Committee.

8. Draft Foreword to the Corporate Plan 2014/15 to 2016/17

Members noted and approved the draft foreword to the Corporate Plan 2014/15 to 2016/17.

9. Memorandum of understanding on the budget process between the Executive and the Assembly

The Clerk briefed members on the MoU on the budget process between the Executive and the Assembly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the protocol at Annex 1 of the clerk's paper should be amended to apply to the agreement of a multi-year budget and that it should then be appended to the Memorandum of Understanding on the Budget Process between the Executive and the Assembly.

10. Salary of the Comptroller and Auditor General

Members noted a briefing by the Clerk and advice from Assembly Legal Services in relation to the salary of the C&AG.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the following motion: “*That this Assembly notes that the salary paid to the holder of the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General has not increased since 1 April 2009; determines that from the date of this resolution, until such time as the Assembly makes a further determination, the salary to be paid, under article 4(1) of the Audit (Northern Ireland) Order 1987, to the holder of the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, shall be the same as that recommended for a judge in salary group five in the 36th Annual Report on Senior Salaries 2014 (Cn8822); and notes that this amounts to an increase of 0.95%.*”.

11. Correspondence

Members noted anonymous correspondence about matters at the NIAO and agreed to forward it to the C&AG for a response.

12. Any other business

There was no other business.

13. Time, date and place of next meeting

Members noted that Committee staff will inform members of the time, date and place of the next meeting in due course.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 4.34pm.

Danny Kinahan
Chairperson
Audit Committee

Dated: 1 July 2014