



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Audit Committee

### Minutes of Proceedings

2 June 2021

**Meeting Location:** Room 29, Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

Ms Joanne Bunting MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Mr Jim Allister MLA

Mr Alan Chambers MLA

**Apologies:**

Ms Emma Rogan MLA

Mr Daniel McCrossan MLA (Chairperson)

**In Attendance:**

Ms Marie Austin (Clerk to the Committee)

Mr David McClure (Assistant Clerk)

Ms Alison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)

**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)



## Northern Ireland Assembly

The meeting commenced at 12.52pm in open session.

The Deputy Chairperson took the Chair in the absence of the Chairperson.

### 1. Apologies

As noted above.

### 2. Declaration of Interests

Mr Allister declared an interest in relation to Agenda Item 6 due to ongoing complaints being dealt with by the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman.

### 3. Draft Minutes

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 5 May 2021.

### 4. Matters Arising

**Noted:** The Committee noted the decision taken under Standing Order 115(9) to agree its 'Report on the Estimates of the Northern Ireland Audit Office and the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman 2021-22'.

**Noted:** The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Finance providing comments on the RaSe paper: Public Audit Governance - The Role of the Accounting Officer. This matter will be considered further at a later date.



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

**Noted:** The Committee noted the RaSe paper: Investigation of complaints against local councillors for breaches of codes of conduct. This matter will be considered further at a later date.

**5. Review of governance and accountability arrangements for the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) and the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) - Oral evidence**

Dame Fiona Reynolds, Chairperson, National Audit Office, and Ms Lindsay Foyster, Chairperson, Audit Wales, joined the meeting at 12.56pm.

Dame Reynolds and Ms Foyster provided evidence as part of the Committee's review of governance and accountability arrangements for the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) and the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO).

The oral evidence was followed by a question and answer session.

*Mr Alan Chambers joined the meeting at 1.14pm.*

The Chairperson thanked Dame Reynolds and Ms Foyster for their evidence.

The witnesses left the meeting at 1.34pm.

**6. Review of governance and accountability arrangements for the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) and the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) - Oral evidence**

Ms Margaret Kelly, Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman, Mr Sean Martin, Acting Deputy Ombudsman, Mr Dónall Curtin, Chairperson of the NIPSO Audit and Risk Committee and Mr John McGinnity, Director of Finance and Corporate Services joined the meeting at 1.36pm.



## Northern Ireland Assembly

The Ombudsman and her officials, and the Chairperson of the NIPSO Audit and Risk Committee, provided evidence as part of the Committee's review of governance and accountability arrangements for the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) and the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO).

The oral evidence was followed by a question and answer session.

During discussions, the Ombudsman agreed to provide a copy of the NIPSO whistleblowing policy and details of the process for the removal of a member from the NIPSO Audit and Risk Committee.

*Mr Jim Allister left the meeting at 1.59pm.*

The Chairperson thanked the Ombudsman and her officials, and the Chairperson of the NIPSO Audit and Risk Committee, for their evidence.

The witnesses left the meeting at 2.03pm.

### **7. June 2021 Monitoring Round – Independent bodies**

The Committee considered briefings provided by the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman and the Northern Ireland Audit Office on their proposed returns under the June 2021 Monitoring Round.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider 'thresholds' on its input to in-year adjustments to the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's budget at its meeting scheduled for 7 July 2021.

### **8. Scrutiny Schedule**

The Committee considered a draft Scrutiny Schedule for the remainder of 2021.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the draft Scrutiny Schedule.



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## 9. Correspondence

**Noted:** The Committee noted the Northern Ireland Local Government Commissioner for Standards Annual Report for 2019-20.

**Noted:** The Committee noted correspondence from the Clerking and Member Support Office in relation to a Member Development programme on 'Protecting Your Social Media Reputation'.

## 10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

## 11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next Audit Committee meeting will take place on Wednesday 7 July 2021, at 12.40pm in Room 29.

The meeting was adjourned at 2.06pm.

**Daniel McCrossan MLA**  
**Chairperson, Audit Committee**

**Wednesday 7 July 2021**