



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**MONDAY 14 DECEMBER 2020, ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS,  
BALLYMISCAW, STORMONT**

*Present:* Daniel McCrossan MLA, Chairperson  
Joanne Bunting MLA, Deputy Chairperson  
Jim Allister MLA  
Emma Rogan MLA

*Apologies:* None

*In Attendance:* Clairita Frazer, Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk  
Aoibheann Baker, Assistant Assembly Clerk

*The meeting commenced at 11:18am in open session.*

**1. Apologies**

No apologies were received.

**2. Declaration of Interests**

No interests were declared.

The Committee noted that the draft minutes from the previous Committee meeting on 9 December 2020, along with the draft minutes of this meeting, would be considered at the next Committee meeting.

**3. Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (NIAC) – Evidence session on draft**

## **Budget 2021-22**

The session was recorded by Hansard.

The Committee noted a briefing paper provided by Assembly Commission officials and a number of background papers, including correspondence from the Department of Finance.

The Chairperson welcomed the following NIAC officials to the meeting and invited them to brief the Committee:

- Lesley Hogg, Chief Executive, NIAC; and
- Richard Stewart, Director of Corporate Services, NIAC.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session in which the Committee questioned the officials on a range of issues in regard to the draft Budget for 2021-22 including: proposed capital projects; disability access in the Assembly chamber; the facilitation of hybrid Plenary sessions to allow remote access for Members; ongoing issues with the roof in Parliament Buildings; and increased expenditure incurred due to the Assembly Members (Salaries and Expenses) (Amendment) Determination (Northern Ireland) 2020.

The Committee noted some typographical errors within the NIAC briefing paper.

Members also noted previously considered correspondence received from the Committee on Procedures, in regard to hybrid plenary proceedings and noted that informal discussions have commenced regarding this issue and potential amendments to relevant Standing Orders.

The NIAC officials agreed to provide follow up information as requested.

The Committee placed on record its thanks to all Assembly Secretariat staff for their continued support to Members in their role during the pandemic.

The Committee voiced concern that the NIAC draft Budget 2021-22 did not include any potential provision for roof repairs.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek an urgent update from the Assembly Commission on issues discussed in relation to the roof in Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting moved into closed session at 12:02pm*

*Jim Allister left the meeting at 12:02pm*

**4. Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO), Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) and NIAC – Consideration of Committee position on draft Budgets for 2021-22**

The Committee noted the secretariat briefing paper and a number of background papers in regard to the draft budgets for the three Non-Ministerial Public Bodies.

In noting the provisional agreement on the draft budgets for the NIAO and NIPSO reached at the last Committee meeting on Wednesday 9 December 2020 and in light of the further evidence and clarification received, members discussed the Committee position in regard to the NIAC draft Budget 2021.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed its final position in respect of the draft budgets 2021-22 for the three Non-Ministerial Bodies and that the Committee Secretariat would amend the response to the Minister of Finance as discussed and issue accordingly.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek further information from the NIAC including: clarification regarding Members' Support Staff costs; the proposed capital works project associated with Broadcasting equipment; and the amount of lost revenue given the closure of Parliament Buildings to the public as a result of the pandemic.

**5. Correspondence**

The Committee noted correspondence from two members of the public.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed final responses to the correspondents.

**6. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

**7. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The date, time and place of the next meeting will be agreed and communicated to Committee members in due course.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 13:01pm*

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