



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

## **PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

THURSDAY, 21<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY 2021, THE ASSEMBLY CHAMBER,  
PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Roy Beggs MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA  
Mr Harry Harvey MLA  
Mr David Hilditch MLA  
Mr Andrew Muir MLA  
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA

Apologies: Mr Cathal Boylan MLA  
Mr Maoliosa McHugh MLA

In Attendance: Ms Lucia Wilson, Assembly Clerk  
Ms Gillian Barker, Assistant Assembly Clerk  
Ms Karen Barry, Clerical Supervisor  
Mr Darren Weir, Clerical Officer

#### ***The meeting began in Closed Session at 2.06 pm***

The Committee discussed the recent Health Protections (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No.2) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 made on 7 January 2021 in regard to attending PAC meetings.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to continue providing Members with the option to meet remotely and to attend in person.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted meeting rooms booked will have 'Starleaf' available and that Members attending remotely will continue to adhere to all COVID regulations.

The Committee discussed the potential of undertaking some work jointly with PAC in Westminster and would return to this matter once the Clerk had sought further information.

The Committee considered the NIAO Report ‘Generating Electricity from Renewable Energy.’

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek further clarification from C&AG on a number of issues that had arisen since the publication of the report.

***The meeting was adjourned at 2.39 pm***

***Mr Matthew O’Toole joined the meeting at 2.45 pm***

***The meeting reconvened at 2.50 pm in Closed Session***

*Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG and Mr Tomas Wilkinson, Director NIAO joined the meeting.*

The Committee discussed the NIAO Report ‘Generating Electricity from Renewable Energy’ and the evidence session scheduled for 28 January 2021.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to defer its inquiry into ‘Generating Electricity from Renewable Energy’ until further notice.

*Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG and Mr Tomas Wilkinson, Director NIAO left the meeting.*

***The meeting was adjourned at 3.02 pm***

***The meeting went into Open Session at 3.06 pm***

## **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mr Cathal Boylan MLA and Mr Maoliosa McHugh MLA.

## **2. Minutes of the meeting 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

*Agreed:* The draft minutes of the meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021 were agreed and to be published.

## **3. Declaration of Interests**

There was no additional declaration of interests that hadn’t been declared by Members in previous meetings.

## **4. Matters Arising**

None

## **5. Correspondence**

The Committee noted correspondence dated 20 January 2021 from Sue Gray AO DoF confirming her attendance on 4 February 2021 to continue her

evidence on NIAO report on ‘Capacity and Capability in NICS’, in closed session.

*The meeting remained in Open Session at 3.08 pm*

## **6. Ministerial Direction: Reimbursement of Wages to Healthcare Workers**

*Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG joined the meeting.*

The Committee noted correspondence to Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG dated 18 January 2021, from the Permanent Secretary for DoH regarding a Ministerial Direction to reimburse the wages lost by healthcare workers during strike action.

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG outlined the background to the Ministerial Direction. The Committee noted the relevant correspondence including the letter of 9 January 2021 from the Executive, proposing the Ministerial Direction.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted the Ministerial Direction.

*The meeting remained in Open Session at 3.10 pm*

## **7. Inquiry into ‘Generating Electricity from Renewable Energy’ – Briefing Session**

This Agenda Item was deferred.

*The meeting remained in Open Session at 3.10 pm*

## **8. Inquiry into ‘Generating Electricity from Renewable Energy’ – Preparation Session**

This Agenda Item was deferred.

*The Committee remained in Open Session at 3.12 pm*

## **9. Draft Forward Work Programme**

The Committee discussed correspondence dated 17 December 2020 from the Justice Committee regarding the qualifying of Legal Services Agency Annual Accounts over the past number of years.

The Committee noted that it has planned to request a further update in March 2021, on the recommendations arising from PAC report on Managing Legal Aid 2017 and would therefore be revisiting this matter when this information has been received.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Justice Committee to inform them of their agreed actions.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to discuss current and forthcoming NIAO reports at next week's meeting in regard to primacy, and how the Committee could release reports.

The Committee noted the Clerk will amend the draft forward work programme January–March 2021 to reflect that 'Generating Electricity from Renewable Energy' has been deferred.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to consider the amended draft Forward Work Programme at next week's meeting.

## **10. Any Other Business**

*The meeting was adjourned at 3.19 pm*

*The meeting reconvened at 3.25 pm in Open Session.*

## **11. Date, time and place of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Public Accounts Committee will take place on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 2.00 p.m. in The Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting adjourned at 3.26 pm.*

**Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA**  
**Chairperson**  
**Public Accounts Committee**

**21<sup>st</sup> January 2021**

**Signed .....**