

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 3 JULY 2013
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

- Present: Ms Michaela Boyle (Chairperson)
Mr John Dallat (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Trevor Clarke
Mr Michael Copeland
Mr Paul Girvan
Mr Chris Hazzard
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Mr Daithí McKay
Mr Adrian McQuillan
Mr Seán Rogers
- In Attendance: Miss Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Oliver Bellew (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Danielle Saunders (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Darren Weir (Clerical Officer)
- Apologies: Mr Ross Hussey

2:03 pm The meeting opened in public session in Room 29.

1. Apologies

Apologies are listed above.

2.06pm Mr McQuillan joined the meeting

2. Minutes of the meeting on 26 June 2013

Agreed: The minutes of the last meeting were agreed. The Committee also agreed to amend the title of agenda item 4 from the meeting on 13 February 2013.

3. Matters arising

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from Mr Crawford Johnston, creator of Creative Writing Magic Money Cards, in relation to building literacy skills across a range of ability levels.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department for Employment and Learning for information.

- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the family of a fire officer who died as a result of injuries sustained in active service.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in support of the family's appeal for an independent inquiry into the fire officer's death.

- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from Business in the Community in respect of its briefing paper on tackling literacy and numeracy issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department for Employment and Learning for information.

- iv. Members noted correspondence relating to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's commitment regarding illegal dumping.

4. Inquiry into Creating Effective Partnerships between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector – Memorandum of Reply update

Members noted a copy of the DSD report on Tackling Bureaucracy in Government Funding to the Voluntary and Community Sector. The C&AG updated the Committee on the matter.

5. Ministerial Direction – Hardship Fund

The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Audit Office advising of a ministerial direction from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development concerning payments to farmers affected by the Spring blizzard of 22-24 March 2013.

2.18pm the meeting moved into closed session.

6. Inquiry into DCAL: Management of Major Capital Projects

Members noted an issues paper summarising the matters raised at a previous evidence session on the inquiry into the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Management of Major Capital Projects.

The C&AG briefed the Committee on the issues raised in the paper.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Chief Executive of the Lyric Theatre seeking further information in relation to the audit of the refurbishment of the Theatre; and to ascertain what actions had been taken by CPD, Arts Council and departmental officials in response to a tender evaluation report received.

2.41pm Mr McQuillan left the meeting

7. Correspondence from the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Members noted an update by the Clerk in respect of a confidential contingent liability.

2.42pm Mr McQuillan rejoined the meeting

8. Inquiry into PSNI: Use of Agency Staff – Consideration of correspondence

2.48pm Mr Girvan and Mr McQuillan left the meeting

2.51pm Mr Girvan and Mr McQuillan re-joined the meeting

3.38pm Mr Copeland left the meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed to suspend the meeting.

3.56pm the meeting resumed in closed session

3.56pm Mr Copeland re-joined the meeting

On a proposal by Mr Dallat:

“That the Committee report on the PSNI: Use of Agency Staff is considered and ordered to be printed on 4 September 2013, providing the internal audit report has been received beforehand.”

The Committee divided: Ayes 5; Noes 5

AYES

Ms Boyle
Mr Dallat
Mr Hazzard
Mr McKay
Mr Rogers

NOES

Mr Clarke
Mr Copeland
Mr Girvan
Mr McIlveen
Mr McQuillan

On a proposal by Mr Copeland:

“That the Committee moves on with the consideration of the Report and orders it to be printed today; that the Committee report again later on the internal audit report, if required; and to comment in this report that the Committee considered its investigation was hampered by not receiving information in a timely manner which it considers as a delaying tactic to obstruct the work of the Committee.”

The Committee divided: Ayes 5; Noes 5

AYES

Mr Clarke
Mr Copeland
Mr Girvan
Mr McIlveen
Mr McQuillan

NOES

Ms Boyle
Mr Dallat
Mr Hazzard
Mr McKay
Mr Rogers

On a proposal by Ms Boyle:

“That the meeting is now adjourned until 4 September 2013.”

The Committee divided: Ayes 5; Noes 5

AYES

Ms Boyle
Mr Dallat
Mr Hazzard
Mr McKay
Mr Rogers

NOES

Mr Clarke
Mr Copeland
Mr Girvan
Mr McIlveen
Mr McQuillan

4.41pm Mr McIlveen left the meeting

4.43pm Mr Copeland left the meeting

4.50pm Mr Girvan left the meeting

4.52pm Mr Girvan re-joined the meeting

On a proposal by Mr Clarke:

“That the Committee proposes a Standards and Privileges investigation into correspondence between Assembly member Gerry Kelly and the PSNI in relation to PAC matters.”

The Committee divided: Ayes 3; Noes 3; Abstentions 2

AYES

Mr Clarke
Mr Girvan
Mr McQuillan

NOES

Ms Boyle
Mr Hazzard
Mr McKay

ABSTENTIONS

Mr Dallat
Mr Rogers

On a proposal by Mr McKay:

“That the Committee postpones consideration of the PSNI Report until 11 September 2013”

The Committee divided: Ayes 5; Noes 3

AYES

Ms Boyle
Mr Dallat
Mr Hazzard
Mr McKay
Mr Rogers

NOES

Mr Clarke
Mr Girvan
Mr McQuillan

4.56pm Mr McQuillan left the meeting

4.56pm Mr Clarke and Mr McKay left the meeting

4.58pm Mr Girvan left the meeting

5.02pm Mr McIlveen re-joined the meeting

9. Any other business

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, in relation to the handling of Freedom of Information requests during the summer recess, the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson would assume responsibility for the submission of views on the releasing or withholding of information in any non-routine/contentious requests.

10. Date, time and place of next meeting

Members noted that the Committee Office will advise of the date of the next meeting of the Committee.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 5.06 pm

Ms Michaela Boyle
Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee