

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 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 Ross Hussey
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: None

2:09 pm The meeting opened in public session in Room 29.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 3 July 2013

Agreed: The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

3. Matters arising

- i. The Chairperson welcomed Richard Emerson, Northern Ireland Audit Office, as successor liaison officer to Joe Campbell. The Chairperson, Clerk and Members thanked Joe for his work in support of the Committee.

2.13pm Mr Girvan left the meeting

2.14m Mr Girvan re-joined the meeting

2.14pm Mr Clarke left the meeting

2.14pm Mr McQuillan left the meeting

- ii. In response to a complaint which had been brought to the attention of the Committee, Members noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Audit Office which provided clarity on Land and Property's Shortfall in Service Policy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the correspondence to the original complainant.

- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister for Justice; the Accounting Officer for the Department of Education; and the Booktrust in relation to its report on improving literacy and numeracy achievement in schools.

2.15pm Mr Clarke re-joined the meeting

- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Chief Executive of the Housing Executive in relation to a recent tendering process by the organisation.

2.16pm Mr McQuillan re-joined the meeting

- v. Members noted correspondence from Mr Dallat, MLA in relation to alleged misadministration and misuse of public monies at the North West Regional College. The C&AG briefed the Committee on the former investigations into the NWRC and the ongoing monitoring of its administration.

- vi. The Committee noted, with regret, a response from the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety in respect of correspondence forwarded by the Committee on behalf of the family of Firefighter McCloskey.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the McCloskey family to suggest alternative avenues in seeking an inquiry into the death of Mr McCloskey.

- vii. The Chairperson reminded Members of a decision taken at the last meeting of the Committee not to seek an investigation by the Committee on Standards and Privileges into correspondence between Assembly Member

Gerry Kelly and the PSNI in relation to PAC matters.

- viii. As a result of Mr Clarke's request that the motion be put again, prior notification had been given to members by the Committee Office. Members noted that should the proposal be upheld, the original Committee decision would be rescinded.

2.56pm Mr Hussey left 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 4; Noes 3; Abstentions 3

| AYES | NOES | ABSTENTIONS |
|--------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Mr Clarke | Ms Boyle | Mr Copeland |
| Mr Girvan | Mr Hazzard | Mr Dallat |
| Mr McIlveen | Mr McKay | Mr Hussey |
| Mr McQuillan | | Mr Rogers |

3.10pm Mr Copeland left the meeting

- ix. Members noted the agenda for a PAC symposium which had been arranged by the International Centre for Parliamentary Studies for October 2013. Members were asked to indicate their availability to attend the two day programme.

3.15 pm Mr Girvan left the meeting

3.16 pm Mr Copeland returned

3.19 pm Mr Hazzard left the meeting

4. PAC End of Year Report

Members noted a draft copy of the Committee's End of Year Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the draft report be published.

5. Briefing on the Inquiry into NI Water's response to a Suspected Fraud and Review of an Investigation of a Whistleblower's Complaint

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Kieran Donnelly, Comptroller and Auditor General and Northern Ireland Audit Office Officials Richard Emerson; Mr Patrick O'Neil; and Ms Jacqueline O'Brien to the meeting and invited them to brief members on the above inquiry.

3.24 pm Mr Girvan re-joined the meeting

3.31 pm the meeting moved into closed session in order that the Committee receive legal advice

3.38 pm Mr Hazzard returned

3.46 pm Mr McIlveen left the meeting

3.52 pm Mr Clarke left the meeting

3.55 pm Mr Clarke re-joined the meeting

4.07 pm Mr Dallat left the meeting

4.10 pm Mr Copeland left the meeting

4.12 pm Mr Copeland re-joined the meeting

4.14 pm The Committee agreed to suspend the meeting

4.29 pm The meeting resumed in closed session

4.30 pm Mr Dallat re-joined the meeting

6. Briefing on the Northern Ireland Audit Office Report on ‘NI Fire and Rescue Service: An Organisational Assessment and Review of Departmental Oversight’ and ‘Report on Accounts 2011-2012’

The Chairperson welcomed the C&AG and NIAO officials Jacqueline O’Brien; Louise Mason; and Richard Emerson, and invited them to brief the Committee on further correspondence received in relation to the inquiry.

4.38 pm Mr McQuillan left the meeting

4.54 pm Mr McKay left the meeting

5.02 pm Mr McKay re-joined the meeting

5.06 pm Mr Copeland left the meeting

Members considered the Committee’s draft report.

Paragraph 31 Read and agreed

Paragraph 32 Read, amended and agreed

Paragraph 33 Read, amended and agreed

Paragraph 34 Read, amended and agreed

Recommendation 4 Read, amended and agreed.

7. Any other business

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk would contact Members to establish a convenient time for an additional meeting of the Committee.

8. Date, time and place of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 18 September 2013 at 2 pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 5.17 pm

Ms Michaela Boyle
Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee