

## **PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

WEDNESDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2013  
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

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

*2.04 pm The meeting opened in public session*

The Chairperson welcomed Miss Clare Rice, Bursary Student, as a new member of the committee staff.

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies are listed above.

#### **2. Minutes of the meeting on 25 September 2013**

Agreed: The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

### **3. Matters arising**

*Mr Easton declared an interest as Assembly Private Secretary to the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety.*

- i. Members noted correspondence between the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Chairperson of that Committee in respect of his decision not to proceed with an independent inquiry into the death of firefighter Joe McCloskey. Mr Dallat commended the Committee for its work in helping the family to pursue an inquiry into the incident.
- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from Canine Breeders Ireland Ltd. which contained allegations of improper and questionable use of public funds.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Northern Ireland Audit Office for further assessment.

- iii. The Committee noted that five of its members would attend the PAC Symposium scheduled for 22 and 23 October 2013 in London and that the proposed AFBI hearing was therefore postponed until 27 November.

### **4. Inquiry into Invest NI: A Performance Review – Memorandum of Reply**

Members noted the memorandum of reply and supporting Clerk's brief in relation to the Committee's report on 'Invest NI: A Performance Review'. Members put questions to the Treasury Officer of Accounts.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek further clarification from the Treasury Officer of Accounts about the reply to recommendations 1 and 3; and to seek an MOR update in a year's time.

*3.23 pm Mr Girvan left the meeting*

### **5. Inquiry into Improving Literacy and Numeracy Achievement in Schools – Memorandum of Reply**

*The Chairperson declared an interest as a member of the Committee for Education.*

*Mr Clarke declared an interest as a member of the Board of Governors for Creavery PS; Groggan PS; and Randalstown PS.*

*Mr Copeland declared an interest as a member of the Board of Governors for Braniel PS.*

Members noted the memorandum of reply and supporting Clerk's brief in relation to the Committee Inquiry into Improving Literacy and Numeracy Achievement in Schools.

3.26 pm Mr Copeland left the meeting

3.27 pm the meeting was suspended

3.32 pm the meeting resumed in closed session with the following members present:

Ms Michaela Boyle (Chairperson)  
Mr John Dallat (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Trevor Clarke  
Mr Michael Copeland  
Mr Alex Easton  
Mr Paul Girvan

## **6. Inquiry into DCAL: Management of Major Capital Projects – Correspondence**

3.33 pm Mr Clarke left the meeting

3.36 pm Mr Dallat left the meeting

3.36 pm Mr Clarke re-joined the meeting

*Agreed:* Members noted correspondence in relation to the above inquiry and agreed to include it in the Committee's report. The Committee also agreed to write to the Chief Executive of the Lyric Theatre in respect of the departmental internal audit which had been initiated as a result of the NI Audit Office Report.

3.46 pm Mr Dallat re-joined the meeting

## **7. Inquiry into NI Water's Response to a Suspected Fraud – Issues Paper**

The Committee noted an issues paper by the Northern Ireland Audit Office on the above inquiry.

The Committee discussed the evidence session and proposed amendments.

4.03 pm Mr Girvan left the meeting

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the issues paper, as amended, to form the skeleton of the report.

## **8. Inquiry into DRD: Review of an Investigation of a Whistleblower Complaint – Briefing Session**

4.11 pm Mr Girvan re-joined the meeting

The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson updated the Committee on the informal meeting they had had with senior NICS officials in respect of witnesses selected to give evidence in relation the above inquiry.

4.34 pm Mr Easton left the meeting

The Committee considered the letter of 2 October of the Head of the Civil Service, Dr Malcolm McKibbin in summary of the concerns conveyed at that meeting.

The Committee considered a Clerk's brief setting out the issues which a response might reasonably be expected to outline.

Agreed: The Committee agreed terms in which to respond to Dr McKibbin on the issues of witness selection; clarification of roles; Cabinet Office and similar guidance; arrangements for clearance of NIAO reports; and rescheduling of the evidence session.

Audit Office officials briefed the Committee on the above inquiry. Members put questions to the Audit Office officials.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the Forward Work Programme in order to establish a suitable time to table a motion in the Assembly which would share with other MLAs the work of the Committee.

## **9. Any other business**

Members noted that clarification of the required handling arrangements for the PSNI internal audit report had not been confirmed and that the report would therefore be circulated to members via confidential document distribution procedures on Monday 07 October.

*5.01 pm Mr Copeland left the meeting*

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

Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 9 October 2013 at 2pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 5.05 pm

**Ms Michaela Boyle**  
**Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee**