

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 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
Mr Chris Hazzard
Mr Daithí McKay
Mr Adrian McQuillan
Mr Seán Rogers

In Attendance: Miss Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Trevor Allen (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Danielle Saunders (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Darren Weir (Clerical Officer)
Miss Clare Rice (Bursary Student)

Apologies: Mr Ross Hussey

1.42pm The meeting opened in public session

1. Apologies

Apologies are listed above.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 6 November 2013

Agreed: The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

1.43pm Mr Copeland joined the meeting

1.44pm Mr Clarke and Mr Girvan left the meeting

3. Matters arising

- i. Members noted correspondence from Potato Partners NI Ltd., as received from the Assembly's Audit Committee Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development and the Audit Office, in relation to its concern regarding the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report on the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI). The Committee also noted the Comptroller and Auditor General's (C&AG) response to the correspondence.

Agreed: Members agreed to note the correspondence and consider it as part of its inquiry on the AFBI report;

1.47pm Mr Girvan and Mr Clarke re-joined the meeting

1.48pm the meeting moved to closed session

1.49pm Mr Copeland and Mr Clarke left the meeting

1.51pm Mr Clarke and Mr Copeland re-joined the meeting

- ii. The Committee discussed its debate which took place on 12th November 2013 to put it that the Assembly take note of several of its reports and associated memoranda of reply.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Finance and Personnel, requesting a meeting with the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to discuss his response to the debate.

2.15pm Mr McKay left joined the meeting

4. Inquiry into The Police Service of Northern Ireland: Use of Agency Staff - Consideration of Draft Report

The Committee continued its consideration of the draft report on the Inquiry into The Police Service of Northern Ireland: Use of Agency Staff.

2.24pm Mr McKay re-joined the meeting

2.24pm Mr Dallat joined the meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request advice from the Assembly's Legal Services Office in relation to an issue of concern to Members.

2.33pm Mr Copeland left the meeting

2.36pm Mr McKay left the meeting

2.38pm Mr Copeland re-joined the meeting

2.40pm Mr McKay re-joined the meeting

2.59pm Mr Dallat left the meeting

3.00pm Mr Dallat re-joined the meeting

3.12pm the meeting suspended

3.21pm the meeting resumed 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
Mr Chris Hazzard
Mr Daithí McKay
Mr Adrian McQuillan
Mr Seán Rogers

Paragraphs 51 read, amended and agreed.
Paragraph 52 - 53 read and agreed.

3.33pm Mr McKay re-joined the meeting

3.41pm Mr Girvan re-joined the meeting

Paragraph 54 read, amended and agreed.
Paragraph 55 read and agreed.

3.50pm Mr Copeland and Mr Rogers left the meeting

Paragraph 56 read, amended and agreed.

3.51pm Mr Rogers re-joined the meeting

3.52pm Mr Easton left the meeting

3.53pm Mr Clarke left the meeting

3.55pm Mr McKay left the meeting

Members having completed consideration of the body of the report agreed it subject to the legal advice and also defer consideration of the Executive Summary and final approval until the legal advice has been received and considered.

5. Matters arising (Continued...)

3.57pm Mr Copeland re-joined the meeting

3.57pm Mr McQuillan left the meeting

The Committee noted correspondence from the Assembly's Freedom of Information Unit in relation to a request for information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that a response be issued, in the terms detailed in the correspondence.

6. Ministerial Direction – DARD Financial Support for the Fishing Industry

3.58pm Mr Girvan re-joined the meeting

The Committee noted a Direction from the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development in relation to financial assistance for the fishing industry and received briefing from the C&AG on its content and the concerns of the Accounting Officer. C&AG also undertook to keep the Committee informed if any issues of concern that arise as a result of the Direction.

7. Inquiry into the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI)

- 4.10pm Mr Dallat left the meeting*
- 4.16pm Mr Dallat re-joined the meeting*
- 4.18pm Mr Hazzard left the meeting*
- 4.19pm Mr Copeland left the meeting*
- 4.26pm Mr Copeland re-joined the meeting*

The Committee received briefing from the C&AG, Eddie Bradley, Paul Turley and Richard Emerson on the Audit Office's report on AFBI.

- 4.28pm Ms Boyle left the meeting; Mr Dallat took the Chair*

8. Forward Work Programme

The Committee received briefing from the C&AG on the reports that the NIAO has produced into which the Committee may consider conducting inquiries.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that its first inquiry in the Spring term should relate to the NIAO report "Account NI: Review of Public Sector Financial Shared Service Centre".

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to consider its forward work programme further at a later date.

- 4.48pm Mr Rogers left the meeting*
- 4.48pm the meeting became inquorate*
- 4.49pm Mr Copeland left the meeting*

9. Any other business

No other items of business were raised.

10. Date, time and place of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 20 November 2013 at 2.00 pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

- 4.56pm the meeting was adjourned*

Ms Michaela Boyle
Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee