

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 29 JANUARY 2014
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 Ross Hussey
Mr Daithí McKay
- In Attendance: Miss Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Lucia Wilson (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Trevor Allen (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Danielle Saunders (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Darren Weir (Clerical Officer)
- Apologies: Mr Adrian McQuillan
Mr Seán Rogers

2.28pm The meeting opened in public session

1. Apologies

Apologies are listed above.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 22 January 2014

Agreed: The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

2.30pm Mr Clarke left the meeting

3. Matters Arising

Correspondence from Nick Perry, Accounting Officer, Department of Justice

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence from Nick Perry, Accounting Officer, Department of Justice, on the Committee's report on Managing Criminal Justice Legal Aid and agreed to respond on the issues raised.

Anonymous Correspondence on alleged fraudulent activity in DOE Planning Division

2.50pm Mr Hazzard joined the meeting

Agreed: The Committee noted anonymous correspondence on alleged fraudulent activity in DOE Planning Division and agreed to write to the Department for a response on the issues raised.

Correspondence from the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety on the Committee's report on the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety on the Committee's report on the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and agreed that the C&AG should consider the correspondence in detail and report back to the Committee at a later date. The Committee also agreed to write to the Health Committee informing it of the PAC's decision.

3.06pm Mr Copeland left the meeting

Correspondence from the Social Development Committee on the PAC report on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive: Management of Response Maintenance Contracts

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence from the Social Development Committee requesting a copy of papers considered during the PAC inquiry into NIHE: Management of Response Maintenance Contracts and agreed to the release of the papers.

*3.07pm The meeting moved to closed session
NIAO officials left the meeting.*

Correspondence from Mr Sid McDowell

3.10pm Mr Clarke re-joined the meeting

The Committee noted correspondence from Mr Sid McDowell, Vice-Chairman of the Lyric Theatre Board, in relation to the Committee's request for his attendance at the meeting of 5 February 2014. Members discussed options and agreed a way forward on the issue.

3.14pm Mr Dallat left the meeting

3.16pm Mr Copeland re-joined the meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Mr McDowell accepting his request to defer attendance before the Committee until 2 April 2014.

4. Inquiry into the PSNI: Use of Agency Staff – Consideration of Draft Report

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the draft report to the meeting of 5 February 2014.

5. Strategic Direction, Development and Effective Scrutiny

Agreed: The Committee reviewed the work of members in the strategic direction, development and effective scrutiny programme at Tullylagan. The Committee agreed the actions of the 2014 Tullylagan protocol to build on the achievement of the original 2013 protocol. The Chairperson thanked the outgoing Clerk for leading this work. The Chairperson welcomed the incoming Clerk. The Committee agreed the Committee's Strategic Plan 2014 and that the new Clerk should incorporate the agreed Strategic Plan in the Committee's forward work programme to deliver the actions identified.

3.29pm Mr McKay left the meeting

3.30pm Mr Girvan left the meeting

3.31pm Mr Hussey left the meeting

NIAO officials returned to the meeting.

6. Inquiry into Account NI: Review of a Public Sector Financial Shared Service Centre – Issues Paper

The Committee received briefing from the C&AG, Jacqueline O'Brien, Karen Armstrong and Richard Emerson on the inquiry's issues paper.

3.39pm Mr Girvan re-joined the meeting

Agreed: The Committee noted the issues paper and agreed that the report on the inquiry be drafted on this basis.

7. Inquiry into NI Water's Response to a Suspected Fraud and DRD: Review of an Investigation of a Whistleblower Complaint – Correspondence and draft report

Members noted correspondence received from Mr Richard Pengelly, Accounting Officer, Department for Regional Development, and from the whistleblower.

4.10 pm Mr Clarke left the meeting

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence and agreed to defer consideration of the draft report until Members should have sufficient time to consider additional issues raised in the correspondence.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the whistleblower acknowledging his very helpful submission and declining oral briefing from him on the matter.

4.15 pm Mr Clarke re-joined the meeting

8. Any other business

Members noted that an FOI request has been received in relation to the Committee's report on DCAL: Management of Major Capital Projects and agreed to consider formal notification of this at the meeting of 5 February 2014.

9. Date, time and place of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 5 February 2014 at 2.00 pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

4.17 pm the meeting was adjourned

Ms Michaela Boyle
Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee