

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 12 MARCH 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
Mr Adrian McQuillan
Mr Seán Rogers

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

Apologies: None

2.10pm The meeting opened in public session

2.11pm Mr Dallat left the meeting

2.13pm Mr Dallat re-joined the meeting

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 26 February 2014

Agreed: The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

3. Inquiry into Improving Pupil Attendance: Follow-up report – Evidence Session

Mr Hussey declared an interest in this item of business as a member of the Board of Governors of Omagh High School.

The Committee noted correspondence from Mr Paul Sweeney, Accounting Officer, Department of Education, on errors identified in the NIAO Report “Improving Pupil Attendance: Follow-up Report”.

2.14pm Mr Copeland joined the meeting
2.18pm Mr Rogers joined the meeting
2.18pm Mr Girvan left the meeting
2.19pm Mr McKay joined the meeting
2.20pm Mr Girvan re-joined the meeting

The Committee took oral evidence on the above inquiry from:

- Mr Paul Sweeney, Accounting Officer, Department of Education;
- Mrs Caroline Gillan, Director of Access, Inclusion and Well-Being, Department of Education;
- Dr Clare Mangan, Chief Executive, Belfast Education & Library Board; and
- Ms Alex Barr, Chief Education Welfare Officer, Southern Education and Library Board.

The witnesses answered a number of questions put by the Committee and agreed to provide additional information in writing.

2.33pm Mr Clarke left the meeting
2.42pm Mr Clarke re-joined the meeting
2.44pm Mr Hazzard joined the meeting
2.50pm Mr Hussey joined the meeting
2.58pm Mr Hussey re-joined the meeting
2.59pm Mr Rogers left the meeting
3.02pm Mr Rogers re-joined the meeting
3.16pm Mr Copeland left the meeting
3.27pm Mr Copeland re-joined the meeting
3.30pm Mr McQuillan left the meeting
3.33pm Mr McQuillan re-joined the meeting
3.37pm Mr McQuillan left the meeting
3.41pm Mr Clarke left the meeting
3.43pm Mr Clarke re-joined the meeting
3.44pm Mr McQuillan re-joined the meeting
3.52pm Mr McKay left the meeting
3.58pm Mr McKay re-joined the meeting
4.00pm Mr Dallat and Mr Girvan left the meeting
4.01pm Mr McQuillan left the meeting
4.01pm Mr Girvan re-joined the meeting
4.01pm Mr Hussey left the meeting
4.02pm Mr McKay left the meeting
4.33pm Mr Copeland left the meeting

4. Matters Arising

Revision of Standing Order 56

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee on Procedures on the proposed amendment to Standing Order 56.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Committee on Procedures indicating that their acceptance of the proposed amendment.

Responses to PAC requests for further information on MORs relating to:
DCAL: Management of Major Capital Projects; NIFRS; and Use of Locum
Doctors

The Committee noted correspondence from Mr Mike Brennan, Budget Director, Department of Finance and Personnel, in response to requests for further information on the above MORs.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the relevant Departments seeking the requested information.

Correspondence from Dr Andrew McCormick, Accounting Officer, DHSSPS
The Committee noted correspondence from Dr Andrew McCormick providing an update on the memorandum of reply to the Committee's report on the Safety of Services Provided by Health and Social Care Trusts.

Correspondence from Mr Sid McDowell, Vice-Chairman of the Lyric Theatre Board

The Committee noted correspondence from Mr Sid McDowell in relation to his attendance at the Committee meeting on 2 April 2014.

NIAO Estimate 2014-15

Agreed: The Committee noted the NIAO Estimate 2014-15 and agreed to write to the Audit Committee indicating that Members are content with the Estimate.

5.07pm the meeting moved to closed session

Correspondence from the Mr Mike Brennan, Budget Director, Department of Finance and Personnel on the Committee Report "PSNI: Use of Agency Staff"

Agreed: The Committee further considered and agreed to a request for a redaction from the appendix to its report on PSNI: Use of Agency Staff.

Draft Press Release – Report on PSNI: Use of Agency Staff

Agreed: The Committee considered a draft press release on the launch of the report on PSNI: Use of Agency Staff and agreed that the press release be issued, subject to amendment.

Draft Press Release – Report on the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute

Agreed: The Committee considered a draft press release on the launch of the report on the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute and agreed that the press release be issued.

5. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: Members considered and agreed a proposed change to the inquiries to be taken forward following the Easter recess.

6. Any other business

Agreed: Members agreed to reschedule the joint visit with the Audit Committee to the Northern Ireland Audit Office. The revised date for the visit will be 9 April 2014.

7. Date, time and place of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 19 March 2014 at 2.00pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

5.44pm the meeting adjourned

Ms Michaela Boyle
Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee