

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 25 JUNE 2014
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

- Present: Ms Michaela Boyle (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)
- Apologies: Mr John Dallat (Deputy Chairperson)

2.11pm The meeting began in public session

1. Apologies

Apologies are listed above.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 18 June 2014

Agreed: The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

3. Correspondence

Correspondence relating to a Freedom of Information Act Request for Information from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI)

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence in relation to an FOI request to DETI regarding the Presbyterian Mutual Society and agreed to refer consideration of the issue to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

Correspondence from the Chief Executive of the Lyric Theatre

The Committee noted correspondence from the Chief Executive of the Lyric Theatre in response to a request for information relating to the inquiry into “DCAL: Management of Major Capital Projects”.

Correspondence from Mr Paul O'Hagan of Mouth Recording

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence from Mr Paul O'Hagan of Mouth Recording in relation to the DCAL / Invest NI Music Business Support Programme 2013 and agreed to refer the correspondence to the Comptroller and Audit General for consideration.

4. Matters Arising

2.17pm *Mr Hazzard joined the meeting*

Correspondence from the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mr Easton declared an interest in this item of business as Assembly Private Secretary to the Health Minister.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Health Minister in response to a request for information on the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service's provision of fuel and facilities to charities.

2.20pm *The meeting moved to closed session*

Correspondence from Minister for Finance and Personnel on media coverage of the Committee's Account NI report

2.28pm *Mr Clarke joined the meeting*

2.29pm *Mr McKay left the meeting*

2.37pm *Mr Copeland left the meeting*

2.39pm *Mr McQuillan left the meeting*

2.40pm *Mr Copeland re-joined the meeting*

2.44pm *Mr McQuillan re-joined the meeting*

2.45pm *Mr Girvan left the meeting*

2.48pm *Mr Girvan re-joined the meeting*

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from the Finance Minister in relation to the media coverage of the Committee's Account NI report and agreed to reply to the Minister on the issues raised.

Correspondence from the Accounting Officer, for the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS)

Agreed: Members considered an update from the Accounting Officer for the DHSSPS, in relation to the Memorandum of Reply to the Report on the Safety of Services Provided by Health and Social Care Trusts and agree to forward the correspondence to the Health Committee for information.

5. Memorandum of Reply Updates to PAC Report - correspondence

Agreed: Members considered a number of responses received in relation to requests for information following consideration of the Memoranda of Reply (MOR) to four of its reports.

The Committee acknowledged receipt of responses to three of the MORs and agreed to write to the Accounting Officer for the Department of Finance and

Personnel in relation to the report on The Transfer of Former Military and Security Sites to the Northern Ireland Executive and Ilex Accounts 2010-11.

6. Inquiry into the Future Impact of Borrowing and Private Finance Commitments and Belfast Metropolitan College's Titanic Quarter PPP Project – Consideration of Issues Arising from Evidence Session

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence received from members of the public in relation to this inquiry and agreed to seek clarification of the issues raised.

The Committee considered the information received during the evidence session on 18 June 2014.

3.09pm *Mr Rogers left the meeting*
3.19pm *Mr Rogers re-joined the meeting*
3.20pm *Mr Clarke left the meeting*
3.22pm *Mr McQuillan left the meeting*
3.23pm *Mr McQuillan re-joined the meeting*
3.23pm *Mr McQuillan left the meeting*
3.24pm *Mr Girvan left the meeting*
3.28pm *Mr Copeland re-joined the meeting*
3.34pm *Mr Clarke left the meeting*
3.41pm *Mr Hazzard left the meeting*
3.46pm *Mr Hazzard re-joined the meeting*
3.47pm *Mr Hazzard left the meeting*
3.48pm *Mr Hazzard re-joined the meeting*

Agreed: The Committee agreed to call, to provide further evidence at the meeting of 17 September, the original witnesses in the BMC inquiry, and further to call an additional named representative of the Strategic Investment Board. The Committee also agreed to seek information from Ulster Bank in relation to the financing of the project.

7. Consideration of Draft Forward Work Programme – September to December 2014

The Committee considered NIAO reports to prioritise in its work plan for the autumn session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to refer consideration of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report 'Improving Social Housing Standards through Stock Transfers' to the Social Development Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to select the NIAO reports 'Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service Trust Statement' and 'DETI: High Speed Cross-Border Broadband Initiative: The Bytel Project' for inquiry and to invite the relevant Accounting Officers to give evidence on 22 October and 19 November respectively. The Committee also provisionally selected the 'report on 'GP Prescribing.' .

4.21pm *Mr Copeland left the meeting; the meeting became inquorate*

8. Any Other Business

Motion in relation to Unauthorised Absence from School

Members were advised that a motion on unauthorised absence from school, scheduled for debate on 1 July 2014, has been withdrawn from the Order Paper to allow the Committee to consider the Memorandum of Reply to the report.

FOI requests received during summer recess

Members were advised that, as is normal practice, authority to consider non-routine / contentious requests for information pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act 2000, received during summer recess, will be delegated to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson.

Internal Audit Recommendation

Members received an update briefing from the Clerk Assistant in relation to the recommendations of a report of the Assembly's Internal Audit Unit on administrative practices and support provided to the PAC.

Procurement Practices in the Northern Ireland Audit Office

Members were advised of anonymous correspondence received by the Committee in relation to procurement practices in the Northern Ireland Audit Office, which falls to the Assembly's Audit Committee to consider.

9. Date, time and place of next meeting

Members were advised that the next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 10 September 2014 at 2.00 pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

4.42pm *The meeting was adjourned*

Ms Michaela Boyle
Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee