

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 2014
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

- Present: Ms Michaela Boyle (Chairperson)
Mr John Dallat (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Trevor Clarke
Mr Alex Easton
Mr Paul Girvan
Mr Chris Hazzard
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)
- Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland
Mr Ross Hussey
Mr Daithí McKay

2.12pm *The meeting began in public session*

2.14pm *Mr Hazzard joined the meeting*

2.15pm *Mr McQuillan joined the meeting*

Chairperson's Business

Given the significant amount of business to be considered during the meeting and the need to retain quorum, the Chairperson asked those Members present to indicate when they need to leave the meeting.

The Chairperson asked those Members who still receive printed meeting packs to consider switching to receiving their pack electronically.

The Chairperson informed Members that a financial scrutiny training session for the Committee has been scheduled for 24th September at 1.30pm.

1. Apologies

Apologies are listed above. Mr Hussey recorded apologies for this meeting as he will be attending an engagement in relation to the Policing Board.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 25 June 2014

Agreed: The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

3. Correspondence

Correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel on year-end surge in Northern Ireland Departments

The Committee noted correspondence and a research paper from the Finance and Personnel Committee on year-end surges in Northern Ireland departments.

Correspondence from Mr David McNarry MLA

Agreed: The Committee considered correspondence from Mr David McNarry MLA in relation to the DETI investigation into the Northern Ireland Events Company and agreed to forward the correspondence to the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) for consideration. Members also agreed to write to Mr McNarry informing him of the Committee's decision.

4. Ministerial Direction - Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme and Transitional Support for Farmers in Disadvantaged Areas

The Committee considered notification from C&AG of a Direction from the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) in relation to the provision of transitional payments to farmers in disadvantaged areas.

Agreed: A Member requested further information on EU disallowances. The Committee agreed to request further information on this issue from the C&AG.

5. Ministerial Direction - Provision of Temporary Funding for Tier 2 Family Support Services in Greater Shankill and West Belfast (the Integrated Services for Children and Young People Project (ISCYP))

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

The Committee considered notification from C&AG of a Direction from the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) in relation to the provision of temporary funding to the ISCYP.

6. Matters Arising

Correspondence from Mr Richard Pengelly, Accounting Officer for DHSSPS, on the Memorandum of Reply (MOR) to the 'NIFRS: An Organisational Assessment and Review of Departmental Oversight and Report on Accounts 2011-12' Report

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

2.35pm *Mr Hazzard left the meeting*

2.38pm *Mr Hazzard re-joined the meeting*

2.44pm *Mr Easton left the meeting*

Agreed: Members noted correspondence from the Accounting Officer for the DHSSPS in relation to the MOR on the above report. Members agreed to write to the Accounting Officer outlining the Committee's concerns and to request an oral briefing, in 12 months, on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Committee's report.

Correspondence from Mr Will Haire, Accounting Officer for DSD, on the 'NIHE: Management of Response Maintenance Contracts' report
Members noted correspondence from Mr Will Haire updating the Committee on the MOR on the above report.

MOR update on the PAC report on 'Creating Effective Partnerships between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector'

The Committee noted and welcomed a MOR update on the Committee's report on 'Creating Effective Partnerships between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector' from Mr Will Haire, Accounting Officer for DSD.

3.02pm *Mr Eason re-joined the meeting*

Correspondence from DSD's Voluntary and Community Unit on the "Creating Effective Partnerships between Government and Voluntary and Community Sector" Report

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence from DSD's Voluntary and Community Unit on the "Creating Effective Partnerships between Government and Voluntary and Community Sector" Report, and agreed to write to the Department commending Officials on the progress and offering support on the transferring of learning and good practice.

Correspondence from David Sterling, Accounting Officer for DFP, on the MOR to the "Transfer of Former Military and Security Sites to the Northern Ireland Executive and Ilex Accounts 2010-11" Report

The Committee noted correspondence from David Sterling, Accounting Officer for DFP, on the above report.

Correspondence from the NIAO on an issue raised by the Deputy Chairperson in relation to Phoenix Gas

The Committee noted Correspondence from NIAO on the above issue.

3.16pm *The meeting moved to closed session*

Correspondence from Mr Laurence MacKenzie

Agreed: Members noted correspondence from Mr Laurence MacKenzie. Members agreed to write to Mr MacKenzie, indicating that the Committee noted the concerns raised in the correspondence, and declining the request to meet with the Chairperson.

Correspondence from Janet Sides, NIAO, regarding whistleblower concerns in relation to the Audit Office

The Committee noted the above correspondence.

Correspondence relating to Advanced Land Purchase

Agreed: Members agreed to defer consideration of the above correspondence until a later meeting.

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

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

Agreed: Members considered the Committee's draft Forward Work Programme for September to December 2014 and agreed its next inquiry.

3.47pm *Mr Girvan left the meeting*

8. Inquiry into the Future Impact of Borrowing and Private Finance Commitments and Belfast Metropolitan College's Titanic Quarter PPP Project – Correspondence and Preparation Session

3.57pm *Mr McQuillan left the meeting*

The Committee noted a number of items of correspondence received during summer recess on the above inquiry.

Members noted that, following a request, the Chairperson will meet with a representative of the Ulster Bank to discuss issues of concern in relation to this inquiry.

The Committee also concluded its preparations in advance of the evidence session on the 'Belfast Metropolitan College's Titanic Quarter PPP Project' element of the above inquiry, scheduled for 17th September 2014.

4.06pm *Mr Clarke left the meeting*

4.11pm *Mr Girvan re-joined the meeting*

4.13pm *Mr Dallat left the meeting*

4.15pm *Mr Girvan re-joined the meeting; the meeting became inquorate*

4.24pm *Mr Dallat re-joined the meeting; quorum returned*

4.28pm *Mr Girvan re-joined the meeting*

4.28pm *Mr Hazzard left the meeting*

9. Public Accounts Committee End of Session Report 2013-14

Members noted a draft copy of the Committee's End of Session Report 2013-14.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the draft report be published.

10. Inquiry in Tackling Social Housing Tenancy Fraud in Northern Ireland: Consideration of Draft Report

Agreed: Members agreed to defer consideration of the Committee's draft report on its inquiry into Tackling Social Housing Tenancy Fraud in Northern Ireland to the meeting of 24th September 2014.

11. Any Other Business

Agreed: The Committee noted a number of items of correspondence from whistleblowers in relation to issues of concerns regarding the Northern Ireland Audit Office. Members agreed to forward the correspondence to the Assembly's Audit Committee for consideration.

12. Date, time and place of next meeting

Members were advised that the next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 17th September 2014 at 1.30pm in Room 21, moving to the Senate Chamber at 2.00pm.

4.41pm The meeting was adjourned

Ms Michaela Boyle
Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee