

## **PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH 2015  
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Ms Michaela Boyle (Chairperson)  
Mr Roy Beggs  
Mr Trevor Clarke  
Mr Alex Easton  
Mr Paul Girvan  
Mr Daithi McKay  
Mr Adrian McQuillan

In Attendance: Ms Lucia Wilson (Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Jack Peel (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mrs Danielle Saunders (Clerical Supervisor)  
Mr Darren Weir (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr John Dallat (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Phil Flanagan  
Mr Ross Hussey  
Mr Sean Rogers

*2.09pm The meeting began in open session*

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mr Dallat, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hussey and Mr Rogers.

#### **2. Minutes of the Meeting of 25 February 2015**

*Agreed:* The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

#### **3. Correspondence**

*Agreed:* The Committee noted the correspondence from Val McGovern regarding the NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme. The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Committee for Finance and Personnel as it is the Department for Finance and Personnel that are responsible for the scheme.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted the correspondence from Mr Andrew Hamilton and agreed to grant the Department for Social Development a further two weeks to return additional information requested on the inquiry into DSD: Advanced Land Purchases.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted correspondence from a whistleblower regarding the setting up of the new “super” councils. The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Local Government Auditor and to the Committee for the Environment, who have responsibility for scrutinising councils.

#### **4. Matters Arising**

There were no new matters arising.

#### **5. Inquiry into Managing Criminal Legal Aid**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence from the Department of Justice outlining progress on responses to the PAC report on Managing Criminal Legal Aid.

#### **6. Inquiry into the Future Impact of Borrowing and Private Finance Commitments and Belfast Metropolitan College’s Titanic Quarter PPP Project.**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the Memorandum of Reply from the Department of Finance and Personnel. The Committee also agreed to request an update in 12 months’ time on the implementation of the recommendations.

#### **7. Inquiry into the Cross Border Broadband Initiative – the Bytel Project – Introduction to Briefing Session**

The C&AG gave the Committee an introduction to the briefing on the Bytel project in Open Session.

*2.45pm The meeting moved into closed session*

#### **8. Inquiry into the Cross Border Broadband Initiative – the Bytel Project – Briefing Session**

The Committee received briefing from the NIAO team on the Bytel project in closed session.

*2.21pm Mr McKay joined the meeting*

*2.41pm Mr Clarke left the meeting*

*Mr Girvan declared an interest as having worked as a sub-contractor for the company Nortel, who had manufactured equipment for which Bytel claimed grant funding.*

*3.09pm Mr McKay left the meeting*

*3.25pm Mr McKay re-joined the meeting*

*3.29pm Mr McQuillan left the meeting*

*3.30pm Mr McQuillan re-joined the meeting*

*3.35pm Mr McQuillan left the meeting*

*3.38pm Mr McQuillan re-joined the meeting*

**9. Inquiry into the Cross Border Broadband Initiative – the Bytel Project – Preparation Session**

*Agreed:* Members agreed on the specific topics that each would take for their questioning during the evidence session. It was agreed that the Clerk would contact those Members not present to allocate topics for questioning to them.

**10. Inquiry into DOJ: Managing and Protecting Funds Held in Court – Issues Paper**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the C&AG should produce the first draft of the Committee report for consideration.

**11. Forward Work Programme**

*Mr Easton declared an interest in the discussion of NIAO Health reports as he is the Assembly Private Secretary to the Minister for Health.*

*3.49pm Mr Easton left the meeting*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed on a number of specific topics from the NIAO General Health report to focus on in their inquiry after Easter recess.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health to request a progress report on the implementation of recommendations made in the NIAO Safer Births report.

*Agreed:* *Mr McQuillan left the meeting. The Committee lost its decision-making quorum. In the absence of a decision-making quorum proceedings continued in line with Standing Order 49(5).*

**12. Any Other Business**

The Chair informed Members that they were all invited to attend the launch of the NIAO Conflict of Interest Guide on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March at 8.30am in Malone House.

**13. Date, time and place of next meeting**

Members were advised that the next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at 2.00pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

*4.16pm The meeting was adjourned.*

**Ms Michaela Boyle**  
**Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee**