

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 27 JANUARY 2016, ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr John Dallat (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs
Mr Trevor Clarke
Mr Ross Hussey
Mr Conor Murphy
Mr Edwin Poots

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

Apologies: Ms Michaela Boyle (Chairperson)
Mr Paul Girvan
Mr Jim Wells

2.07pm The meeting began in open session.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Ms Boyle (Chairperson), Mr Girvan and Mr Wells.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 20 January 2016

Agreed: The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

There were no new matters arising.

4. Correspondence

Correspondence received from NASUWT regarding continued suspension of a teacher

Mr Beggs, declared an interest as a member of the Board of Governors of Glynn Primary School.

Mr Clarke, declared an interest as a member of the Board of Governors of Creavery Primary School, Groggan Primary School and Randalstown Primary School.

Agreed: Members agreed to note the correspondence received on 18 January 2016.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Department of Education to highlight the Committee's concern over the length of teacher suspensions and the incurring cost to the public purse. The Committee agreed to seek clarification with the Department around what action is being taken to address this issue. Members agreed to copy the Education Committee into this correspondence.

Agreed: Members agreed to write back to NASUWT, to thank them for their letter and to advise them of current action being taken by the Committee around the general issue of teacher suspensions.

Correspondence received from an anonymous whistle-blower regarding a Parades Commission employee

Agreed: Members agreed to note the correspondence received on 18 January 2016 which raises concern over a public sector employee who they state left employment under the Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES) in October, and has now been re-employed by the same organisation under a consultancy role.

NIAO advised that they will be carrying out a full audit of the Voluntary Exit Scheme and will update Members on its findings once completed.

Agreed: Members agreed to write the Department of Finance to highlight the Committee's concerns around this matter and to identify if this is a wider issue.

2.45pm: Mr Hussey joins the meeting

Correspondence received from Professor Austin Smyth regarding proposed timetable changes by Irish Rail.

Agreed: Members agreed to note the correspondence received on 18 January 2016.

Agreed: Members agreed that the Clerk should contact the Clerk of the Regional Development in order to seek an update on this matter and if needs be report back to the Committee.

Agreed: Members agreed to write back to Professor Smyth thanking him for his correspondence and to advise him that the Regional Development Committee is currently looking into this matter.

Correspondence received from David Hutchinson, former Head of Land and Property in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, in relation to the Inquiry into The Governance of Land and Property in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Agreed: Members agreed to note the correspondence received on 21 January 2016 and to consider it during Agenda Item 7 (Issues Paper).

5. Inquiry into Invest to Save funding in Northern Ireland – Introduction to Briefing

The Committee received an introduction to the briefing on The Governance of Land and Property in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive from the C&AG and his team.

**Mr Poots declared an interest in this inquiry as the former Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety*

2.45pm Mr Poots left the meeting

2.45pm The meeting moved into closed session.

The Committee received a full briefing from the NIAO team on Invest to Save funding in Northern Ireland

6. Inquiry into Invest to Save funding in Northern Ireland – Preparation Session

The Committee agreed the sections of the inquiry that they wished to focus on during the evidence session.

7. Inquiry into The Governance of Land and Property in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive – Correspondence and Issues Paper

Correspondence received from David Hutchinson, former Head of Land and Property in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, in relation to the Inquiry into The Governance of Land and Property in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence received on the 21 January 2016.

The Committee received briefing on the contents of the issues paper from the NIAO.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that they were content for the C&AG to produce the first draft of the Committee report for consideration.

8. Inquiry into the Northern Ireland Events Company

Correspondence received from Andrew McCormick, DETI Accounting Officer, dated 27 January 2016

Agreed: The Committee deferred consideration of this correspondence to allow Members more time to consider the letter in more detail.

Correspondence received from the PSNI dated 4 December 2015

Agreed: The Committee agreed to postpone consideration of the letter from the PSNI, until the previous correspondence from Andrew McCormick has been considered in more detail.

9. Inquiry into the Northern Ireland Events Company – Final consideration of draft report

Agreed: The Committee agreed to postpone this agenda item until the correspondence received from Andrew McCormick (Agenda Item 8) has been considered.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business to discuss.

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

Members were informed that the next meeting of the Committee would be at 2.00pm on Wednesday 3 February 2016 in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

3.22pm *The meeting adjourned.*

**Mr John Dallat (Deputy Chairperson)
Deputy Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee**