

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2016, THE SENATE CHAMBER,
PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Robin Swann MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Robbie Butler MLA
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA
Mr Gordon Dunne MLA
Mr Alex Easton MLA
Ms Michelle Gildernew MLA
Mr Declan Kearney MLA
Ms Carla Lockhart MLA
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA

Apologies: Mr Daniel McCrossan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Trevor Lunn MLA

In Attendance: Ms Lucia Wilson, Assembly Clerk
Ms Elaine Farrell, Assistant Assembly Clerk
Ms Karen Barry, Clerical Supervisor
Mr Darren Weir, Clerical Officer

Agreed: The Committee agreed to open the meeting in Closed Session.

2.10 pm The meeting began in Closed Session.

The following departmental officials joined the meeting at 2.10 p.m.

Dr Andrew McCormick, Accounting Officer, Department for the Economy
Heather Cousins, Deputy Secretary, Department for the Economy
Alison Caldwell, Treasury Officer of Accounts, Department of Finance

The following NIAO officials joined the meeting at 2.10 p.m.

Kieran Donnelly, Comptroller and Auditor General
Kerry Harkin, Assembly Liaison Officer
Tomas Wilkinson, Director
Brian O'Neill, Audit Manager

2.13 p.m. Mr Clarke joined the meeting.

The departmental officials briefed the Committee and this was followed by a question and answer session.

2.52 p.m. Ms Lockhart left the meeting.

2.56 p.m. Ms Lockhart rejoined the meeting.

2.58 p.m. Mr Butler left the meeting.

3.03 p.m. Mr Butler rejoined the meeting.

3.16 p.m. Mr McMullan left the meeting.

3.18 p.m. Mr McMullan rejoined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Accounting Officer to request the Terms of Reference and all other relevant documents relating to the internal investigation currently being conducted by PWC in respect of the Non-domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Accounting Officer to express dissatisfaction with the level of redaction in recent correspondence and to request that the correspondence is forwarded again with redactions only applying to staff below the grade of Deputy Principal.

3.20 p.m. The departmental officials left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer Agenda items 6 and 7; the Committee further agreed to issue a Press Statement to explain the rationale for the decision.

3.29 p.m. The meeting suspended.

3.43 p.m. The meeting resumed in Open Session.

The following Committee Members were in attendance:

Mr Butler, Mr Clarke, Mr Easton, Mrs Gildernew, Mr Kearney, Ms Lockhart, Mr McMullan and Mr Swann.

The following departmental officials rejoined the meeting:

Dr Andrew McCormick, Accounting Officer, Department for the Economy
Heather Cousins, Deputy Secretary, Department for the Economy
Chris Stewart, Deputy Secretary, Department for the Economy

The Chairperson advised the officials that the evidence session has been deferred until 26 October 2016.

1. Apologies

Noted above.

2. Chairperson's business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Mr Tony O'Neill, Chairman of the Agri Food Strategy Board to ask him to supply specific examples of where and when he has felt that PAC has held back or hindered projects going forward.

3.49 p.m. Mr Dunne rejoined the meeting.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2016

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting on 5 October 2016 were agreed.

4. Matters arising

None

5. Correspondence

None

6. Evidence Session on the Inquiry into the Non-domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Scheme

Agenda item deferred.

7. Inquiry into the Non Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Scheme

Agenda item deferred.

8. Any Other Business

None.

9. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Public Accounts Committee will take place on Wednesday 19 October 2016 at 2.00 p.m. in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 3.50 p.m.

Mr Robin Swann (Chairperson)
Public Accounts Committee