

## **PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**WEDNESDAY, 14 SEPTEMBER 2016, THE SENATE CHAMBER,  
PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

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

Apologies: Ms Michelle Gildernew MLA

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

*2.00 pm The meeting began in Open Session.*

#### **1. Apologies**

Noted above.

*2.01 pm Mr Kearney joined the meeting.*

#### **2. Minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2016**

*Agreed:* The draft minutes of the meeting on 29 June 2016 were agreed.

*2.03 p.m. Ms Lockhart joined the meeting.*

### **3. Matters arising**

*Agreed:* The Committee discussed the invitation to the PAC Symposium in London on 10 and 11 October and Mr Swann and Mr Butler agreed to attend. Should any other Member wish to attend they are asked to advise the clerk by close of play Friday 16 September 2016.

*Agreed:* The clerk briefed the Committee on the summary of the outcomes of the Strategic Planning Day; Members agreed that the clerk should progress the agreed actions as discussed.

*Noted:* The Committee noted the Committee Protocols document.

### **4. Correspondence**

*Agreed:* The Committee considered correspondence from Mr B McFerran in respect of CAM Benching Marking and agreed to advise him that it had been noted.

*Agreed:* The Committee considered correspondence from Mr A Johnston in respect of EOS Works Limited and agreed to forward the correspondence to Committee for the Economy and advise Mr Johnston accordingly.

*2.10 p.m. Mr McCrossan joined the meeting.*

*2.11 p.m. Mr Clarke joined the meeting.*

### **5. Ministerial Direction: Department for the Economy Provision of Financial Assistance to United Airlines**

*Agreed:* The Committee noted the correspondence from the NI Audit Office advising of a Ministerial Direction from the Department for the Economy on the Provision of Financial Assistance to United Airlines. The Committee agreed to write to the Executive Office to seek clarification on the political rationale for the decision.

### **6. Inquiry into the Department of Education: Sustainability of Schools Memorandum of Reply**

*Agreed:* The Committee noted the correspondence received from the Department of Education in respect of clarification sought on responses to recommendations contained in its Inquiry report; the Committee agreed that it was content to await the 12 month MOR update.

### **7. Inquiry into the Government of Land and Property in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Memorandum of Reply Update**

*Agreed:* The Committee noted the correspondence received from the Department for Communities in respect of further information sought on the sponsor team set up to support the NIHE; the Committee agreed to request the names of the Grade 7 and Deputy Principals on the team. The Committee agreed to await the 6 month MOR update.

## **8. Inquiry into Managing Legal Aid: Correspondence**

*Agreed:* The Committee noted the correspondence from Mr N Perry, Permanent Secretary in respect of issues raised during the evidence session on 29 June 2016 with the Department of Justice (DOJ) and agreed that it will form part of the Inquiry report into Managing Legal Aid.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek further information on a range of issues identified in the correspondence via the NI Audit Office.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted the correspondence from the Lord Chief Justice's Office declining a request by the Committee to the Taxing Master to attend a meeting to give oral evidence in respect to Inquiry into Managing Legal Aid; the Committee agreed to write to the Taxing Master expressing its regret that the invitation has been declined and to forward a list of questions for written answer.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to copy the letter to the Taxing Master to the Justice Minister and the Lord Chief Justice.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek clarification on Section 44(4) of the NI Act 1998 with regard to who a Minister of the Crown relates to.

## **9. Inquiry into Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Scheme: Introduction to Briefing Session**

The following NI Audit Office officials joined the meeting at 2.45 p.m.

Mr Kieran Donnelly  
Ms Kerry Harkin  
Mr Tomas Wilkinson  
Mr Brian O'Neill

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

*2.55 pm the Meeting moved into Closed Session*

## **10. Inquiry into Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Scheme: Briefing Session**

The NI Audit Office officials resumed its briefing on the Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Scheme.

*3.17 pm Mr Clarke left the meeting.*

*3.20 pm Mr McMullan left the meeting.*

*3.26 pm Mr McCrossan left the meeting.*

*3.30 pm Mr McMullan rejoined the meeting.*

*3.33 pm Ms Lockhart left the meeting.*

*3.36 pm Mr Butler left the meeting.*

*3.38 pm Ms Lockhart rejoined the meeting.*

*3.39pm Mr Butler rejoined the meeting.*

*3.44 pm Mr Lunn left the meeting.*

*3.47 pm Mr Lunn rejoined the meeting.*

*3.48 pm Mr Dunne left the meeting.*

*3.51 pm Mr Dunne rejoined the meeting.*

## **11. Inquiry into Managing Legal Aid: Issues Paper**

The following NI Audit Office officials joined the meeting at 3.52 pm

Mr Kieran Donnelly

Ms Kerry Harkin

Mr Sean Beattie

The officials briefed the Committee on the Issues Paper on Managing Legal Aid; this was followed by a question and answer session.

*3.59 pm Mr Clarke rejoined the meeting.*

*4.03 pm Mr Clarke left the meeting.*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to consider the first draft of the Inquiry report at the meeting on 5 October 2016.

## **12. Forward Work Programme September-December 2016**

*Agreed:* Mr Donnelly briefed the Committee on the NI Audit Office forthcoming reports; the Committee agreed that its next Inquiry will be the Voluntary Exit Schemes in the Northern Ireland Public Sector Bodies.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme September-December 2016.

## **13. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

## **14. Date, time and place of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Public Accounts Committee will take place on Wednesday 21 September 2016 at 2.00 p.m. in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting adjourned at 4.09 p.m.*

**Mr Robin Swann (Chairperson)**  
**Public Accounts Committee**