

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 18 JANUARY 2017, THE SENATE CHAMBER,
PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

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

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

2.06 p.m. The meeting began in Open Session.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Chairperson's business

None.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2017

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting on 11 January were agreed.

4. Matters arising

None

5. Correspondence

Agreed: The Committee noted “whistle-blower” correspondence in respect of Student Finance NI and agreed to forward it to the Department for the Economy. The Committee also agreed to seek an update from the NIAO.

6. Inquiry into Improving Pupil Attendance: Follow up Report

Noted: The Committee noted the further 12-month update on the Inquiry into Improving Pupil Attendance from the Department of Education.

7. Evidence Session on the RHI Inquiry

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 17 January 2017 from the Department for the Economy.

2.15 p.m. Mr McCrossan joined the meeting.

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.16 p.m.

Dr Andrew McCormick, Accounting Officer, DfE
Brendan McCann, Senior Principal, DfE

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

3.12 p.m. Mr Dunne left the meeting.

3.19 p.m. Mr Dunne re-joined the meeting.

3.23 p.m. Mr Easton left the meeting.

3.30 p.m. Mr Easton re-joined the meeting.

3.33 p.m. Mr Lunn left the meeting.

3.38 p.m. Mr Lunn re-joined the meeting.

3.46 p.m. Mr McCrossan left the meeting.

3.47 p.m. Mr Kearney left the meeting.

3.51 p.m. Mr McCrossan re-joined the meeting.

3.54 p.m. Mr Kearney re-joined the meeting.

4.00 p.m. Mr Clarke left the meeting.

4.07 p.m. Mrs Gildernew left the meeting.

4.08 p.m. Mr Clarke and Mrs Gildernew re-joined the meeting.

4.10 p.m. Mr Butler left the meeting.

4.19 p.m. Ms Lockhart left the meeting.

4.22 p.m. Ms Lockhart re-joined the meeting.

4.42 p.m. Mr McMullan left the meeting.

4.55 p.m. The meeting suspended.

5.18 p.m. The meeting resumed.

The following Members were present: Mr Butler, Mr Clarke, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mrs Gildernew, Mr Kearney, Ms Lockhart, Mr Lunn, Mr McMullan and Mr Swann.

5.31 p.m. Ms Lockhart left the meeting.
5.34 p.m. Ms Lockhart re-joined the meeting.
5.43 p.m. Mr McCrossan re-joined the meeting.
5.43 p.m. Mr Clarke left the meeting.
5.48 p.m. Mr Clarke re-joined the meeting.
6.10 p.m. Mr Lunn left the meeting.
6.14 p.m. Mr Kearney and Mr McMullan left the meeting.
6.16 p.m. Mr Kearney and Mr McMullan re-joined the meeting.
6.20 p.m. Mr Lunn re-joined the meeting.
6.27 p.m. Ms Lockhart left the meeting.
6.30 p.m. Mr Butler and Mr Easton left the meeting.
6.31 p.m. Mr McCrossan left the meeting.
6.34 p.m. Mrs Lockhart re-joined the meeting.
6.36 p.m. Mr Butler re-joined the meeting.
6.49 p.m. Mr Easton re-joined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for the Economy on a range of issues connected to the RHI Inquiry

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into Closed Session

7.16 p.m. *The meeting moved into Closed Session.*

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 17 January 2017 from the Department of Justice around aspects of the biomass energy tender for the Northern Ireland Community Safety College.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Committee for the Economy and agreed to forward the PWC report “Project Heat” to the Committee and the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 9 January 2017 from the Department of Finance in respect of the evidence session on the Voluntary Exit Scheme.

The following NIAO officials joined the meeting at 7.18 p.m.

Mr Kieran Donnelly, Comptroller and Auditor General
Mr Tomás Wilkinson, Director
Mr Brian O’Neill, Audit Manager
Ms Kerry Harkin, Assembly Liaison Officer

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

8. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme and agreed to hold a briefing with the NIAO on the RHI Inquiry.

7.18 p.m. Ms Lockhart left the meeting.
7.20 p.m. Mr Lunn left the meeting.
7.23 p.m. Mr Butler left the meeting.
7.27 p.m. Mr Easton left the meeting.

9. Any Other Business

The Chairperson reminded Members of the procedure for receipt and return of confidential packs.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson could sign off the minutes from the last meeting of the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that a standard response will issue from the committee office to any correspondence received during dissolution to advise same.

10. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Public Accounts Committee will take place on Wednesday 25 January 2017 at 2.00 p.m. in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 7.30 p.m.

Mr Robin Swann (Chairperson)
Public Accounts Committee