

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 26 OCTOBER 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: Mrs 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

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to agenda item 8.

2.04 pm The meeting began in Closed Session.

1. Inquiry into Non- Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Scheme

The following NIAO officials joined the meeting:

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

Agreed: The Committee noted the additional correspondence from Dr Andrew McCormick dated 20 and 24 October 2016; the Committee agreed to seek legal advice on the issue of the non-release of information due to the Data Protection Act and to write to the Department on the same issue.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request details from the Department of who was responsible for the marketing activity for the RHI Scheme for 2014/15 for both domestic and non-domestic usage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request details of correspondence referred to in Annex A of the Department's papers which were considered at the meeting on 19 October 2016.

2.15 p.m. The meeting moved into Open Session.

2. Apologies

Noted above.

3. Chairperson's business

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from Tony O'Neill in which he advises that he is unable to respond to the Committee's request to forward information due to work commitments.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2016

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting on 19 October 2016 were agreed.

5. Matters arising

Mr Butler declared an interest that he is an ex member of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek clarification in respect of two copied letters from the Department of Health in respect of the appointment of the Chief Fire Officer and to ask who has the responsibility for the appointment.

6. Correspondence

None.

7. Inquiry into Non-domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Scheme – Evidence Session with OFGEM

The following representatives of OFGEM joined the meeting at 2.20 p.m.

Chris Poulton, Managing Director
Dr Edmund Ward, Head of Technical and Compliance RHI
Jane Pierce, Head of Policy and Communications RHI

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

2.23 p.m. Mr Clarke joined the meeting.
3.01 p.m. Mrs Lockhart left the meeting.
3.02 p.m. Mrs Lockhart re-joined the meeting.
3.08 p.m. Mr Dunne joined the meeting.
3.23 p.m. Mr Kearney left the meeting.
3.27 p.m. Mr Kearney re-joined the meeting.
3.44 p.m. Mr Butler left the meeting.
3.46 p.m. Mr Lunn left the meeting.
3.53 p.m. Mr Lunn re-joined the meeting.
3.58 p.m. Mr Butler re-joined the meeting.
4.13 p.m. Mr McMullan left the meeting.
4.15 p.m. Mr McCrossan left the meeting.
4.19 p.m. Mr McMullan re-joined the meeting.
4.20 p.m. Mr Easton left the meeting.
4.27 p.m. Mr Easton re-joined the meeting.
4.30 p.m. Mr Dunne left the meeting.
4.31 p.m. Mr Dunne re-joined the meeting.
4.43 p.m. Mrs Lockhart left the meeting.
4.48 p.m. Mr Lunn left the meeting.
4.49 p.m. Mrs Lockhart re-joined the meeting.
5.05 p.m. Mr Butler left the meeting.
5.36 p.m. Mr Butler re-joined the meeting.
5.52 p.m. Mr McMullan left the meeting.
5.53 p.m. Mr McMullan re-joined the meeting.
6.07 p.m. Mr Dunne left the meeting.
6.10 p.m. Mr Dunne re-joined the meeting.
6.11 p.m. Mr Butler left the meeting.
6.15 p.m. Mr Butler re-joined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to OFGEM on a range of issues relevant to the Inquiry.

The Committee agreed to move into Closed Session.

6.21 p.m. The meeting moved into Closed Session.

8. Inquiry into Non-domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Scheme – discussion with the NIAO

The following NIAO officials joined the meeting:

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

The Committee discussed the evidence it had taken from OFGEM with the NIAO officials.

6.25 p.m. Mr Butler left the meeting.
6.29 p.m. Mr Butler re-joined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a Press Release in respect of the Inquiry.

9. Any Other Business

None.

10. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Public Accounts Committee will take place on Wednesday 9 November 2016 at 1.00 p.m. in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 6.30 p.m.

Mr Robin Swann (Chairperson)
Public Accounts Committee