

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 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
Ms 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

1.23 pm The meeting began in Closed Session.

1. Preparation Session for Inquiry into the Non Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Scheme

Noted: The Chairperson advised the Committee that an informal meeting had taken place with a concerned member of the public on 27 October 2016 to discuss the RHI Scheme which Mr Kearney, Mr Lunn and he had attended. The Committee noted the timeline of information provided by the member of the public.

1.25 p.m. Mr Easton joined the meeting.

Noted: The Committee noted the Guide to the Scrutiny of Public Expenditure and Osmotherly Rules 2005.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from Dr McCormick, Department for the Economy dated 4 November 2016 in relation to RHI issues.

1.50 p.m. Mrs Gildernew joined the meeting.

1.51 p.m. Ms Lockhart left the meeting.

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

Agreed: The Committee noted the requested information from OFGEM following the evidence session on 26 October 2016; the Committee agreed to invite Dr McCormick in request that he attends a further evidence session in light of the information provided by OFGEM.

The Committee discussed and agreed the allocation of questions for the evidence session.

2.08 p.m. The meeting suspended.

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

The following Members were in attendance: Mr Butler, Mr Clarke, Mr Easton, Mrs Gildernew, Mr Kearney, Mr McMullan, and Mr Swann.

2. Apologies

None.

3. Chairperson's business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to sponsor an event in the Long Gallery in March 2017 for the NIAO.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2016

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting on 26 October 2016 were agreed.

5. Matters arising

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 8 November 2016 from the Department of Health advising of the appointment of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer.

6. Correspondence

None.

7. Evidence Session on the Inquiry into Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Scheme – Department for the Economy

The following departmental officials joined the meeting at 2.18 p.m.

Dr Andrew McCormick, Accounting Officer
Heather Cousins, Deputy Secretary, Education and Investment

The officials briefed the Committee on the RHI Scheme; this was followed by a question and answer session.

2.29 p.m. Mr McCrossan joined the meeting.

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

3.44 p.m. Mr Dunne joined the meeting.
3.49 p.m. Mr McCrossan left the meeting.
3.50 p.m. Mr Kearney left the meeting.
3.59 p.m. Mr Butler left the meeting.
4.04 p.m. Mr Lunn and Mr McMullan left the meeting.
4.06 p.m. Mr McMullan re-joined the meeting.
4.08 p.m. Mr Lunn re-joined the meeting.
4.10 p.m. Mr Kearney re-joined the meeting.
4.18 p.m. Mr Butler re-joined the meeting.
4.21 p.m. Mr Clarke left the meeting.
4.30 p.m. Mr Dunne left the meeting.
4.37 p.m. Mr Dunne re-joined the meeting.
4.42 p.m. Mr Easton left the meeting.

4.47 p.m. The meeting suspended.
5.06 p.m. The meeting resumed in Closed Session.

The following Members were in attendance: Mr Butler, Mr Dunne, Ms Lockhart, Mr Kearney, Mr Lunn, Mr McMullan and Mr Swann.

5.08 p.m. Ms Lockhart left the meeting.
5.10 p.m. Ms Lockhart re-joined the meeting.

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

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

The following departmental officials re-joined the meeting:

Dr Andrew McCormick, Accounting Officer
Heather Cousins, Deputy Secretary, Education and Investment

The evidence session questions and answers continued.

6.07 p.m. Ms Lockhart left the meeting.
6.10 p.m. Ms Lockhart re-joined the meeting.
6.14 p.m. Mr Kearney left the meeting.
6.20 p.m. Mr Kearney re-joined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department on a range of issues in respect of the inquiry and to alert Dr McCormick to the possibility of a further evidence session to deal with the OFGEM correspondence.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into Closed Session.

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

9. Inquiry into Non-domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Scheme: Discussion with NIAO

The following NIAO officials joined the meeting:

Kieran Donnelly, Comptroller and Auditor General

Kerry Harkin, Assembly Liaison Officer

Tomas Wilkinson, Director
Brian O'Neill, Audit Manager

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

10. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme.

11. Any Other Business

None.

12. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Public Accounts Committee will take place on Wednesday 16 November 2016 at 2.00 p.m. in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 6.46 p.m.

Mr Robin Swann (Chairperson)
Public Accounts Committee