



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 18 April 2024

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Daniel McCrossan, MLA (Chairperson)

Cheryl Brownlee, MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Cathal Boylan, MLA

Tom Buchanan, MLA

Diane Forsyth, MLA

Colm Gildernew, MLA

David Honeyford, MLA

John Stewart, MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Pádraig Delargy, MLA

Apologies:

In Attendance: Lucia Wilson (Committee Clerk)
Kirsten McClelland (Assistant Committee Clerk)
Karen Barry (Clerical Supervisor)
Barbara Daly (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.04 pm in closed session

The Chairperson advised members of the requirement to declare interests in any items of business on the agenda, and discussed the substantive items of business to be considered.

The meeting moved into public session at 2.07 pm.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies received.

2. Draft minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting on 11 April 2024 were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Chairperson's Business

No Chairperson's business was raised.

5. Declaration of Interests

The Chairperson reminded members of their requirement to register their interests under Standing Order 69(5).

Pádraig Delargy declared an interest as Chair of the All party group on Mental Health.

6. Correspondence

A letter dated 12 April 2024 was received from the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs regarding the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report on Water Quality in Northern Ireland's Rivers and Lakes. The Committee Clerk has responded on behalf of the Committee to advise that this report has been held pending a decision on future Public Accounts Committee inquiries.

Agreed: Members agreed to note the correspondence and update the Committee for Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs in due course.

A letter dated 15 April 2024 was received from a member of the public regarding an NIAO audit of the Northern Ireland university sector.

Agreed: Members agreed to note the correspondence.

7. Inquiry on Mental Health Services in Northern Ireland – Preparation Session

The following officials from the Northern Ireland Audit Office joined the meeting at 2.10 pm:

Ms Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Ms Collette Kane, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Mr Roger McCance, Audit Manager, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer, Northern Ireland Audit Office.

Mr Damien Prenter, Senior Auditor, NIAO

Ms Nikita White, Auditor, NIAO

The meeting moved into closed session at 2.09 pm.

The Committee received a briefing in preparation for its first inquiry on Mental Health Services in Northern Ireland.

Tom Buchanan joined the meeting at 2.11 pm.

The meeting was suspended at 2.49pm

The meeting resumed at 2.58pm in public session.

8. Inquiry on Mental Health Services in Northern Ireland: Evidence Session – Mental Health Champion for Northern Ireland

The following officials from the Mental Health Champion's Office joined the meeting at 2.58 pm

Professor Siobhan O'Neill, Mental Health Champion for Northern Ireland

Dr Nicole Bond, Research Officer

The following Department of Finance official also joined the meeting;

Mr Stuart Stevenson, Treasury Officer of Accounts

The Committee heard evidence from the Mental Health Champion

The Chairperson thanked Professor O'Neill, Dr Bond, C&AG and Mr Stevenson for attending.

Officials left the meeting at 4.39 pm.

The meeting moved into closed session at 4.39 pm.

Pádraig Delargy left the meeting at 4.39 pm.

Members discussed the evidence provided by the Professor O'Neill and Dr Bond.

The meeting moved into public session at 4.49 pm.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee was briefed on the draft Forward Work programme. The Clerk advised that a Memorandum of Reply on Planning in Northern Ireland has been received from the Department of Finance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its forward work programme.

10. Any Other Business

11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The Chairperson thanked officials for their attendance and advised members that the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 25th April, at 2.00 pm in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.51 pm.

Daniel McCrossan MLA

Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee

18 April 2024