



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 13 November 2025

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present:

- Daniel McCrossan, MLA (Chairperson)
- Diane Forsythe, MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
- Stephen Dunne, MLA
- Tom Buchanan, MLA
- Colm Gildernew MLA
- Cathal Boylan, MLA
- David Honeyford, MLA
- Jon Burrows, MLA
- Pádraig Delargy, MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Kirsten McClelland (Assistant Committee Clerk)

Apologies:

In Attendance: Lucia Wilson (Committee Clerk)
Katie McMaster (Assistant Committee Clerk)
Kirsten McClelland (Assistant Committee Clerk - Remote)
Karen Barry (Clerical Supervisor)
Yannie Mahood (Clerical Officer)

The meeting opened in public session at 2.09pm.

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Draft minutes

Agreed: Members agreed the draft minutes of the meeting on 23 October 2025.

3. Declaration of Interests

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

Daniel McCrossan, MLA declared an interest as a Director of a company which owns rental properties.

Stephen Dunne, MLA declared an interest as APS to the Communities Minister.

Padraig Delargy, MLA declared an interest due to family members being GPs and BMA members.

Colm Gildernew, MLA declared an interest in respect of bringing forward a Private Members Bill relating to Homelessness, as Chair of Committee for Communities and as owner of a property from which rental income is received.

4. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson placed on record his thanks to the Jersey States Assembly for hosting the Committee at the BIMR PAC Network event last week. The chairperson advised Members the event provided lots of learning and a full report will be provided in the coming weeks.

Agreed: Members agreed that the Committee formally extend an invitation to host the next BIMR PAC Network event in the Assembly next year, subject to a business case being approved.

The Chairperson advised Members that the Department of Finance has now appointed an Expert Panel to review the procurement governance structures in response to a recommendation made in the Committee's recent report on Public Procurement; and that the Chair of the panel would like to meet with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee in the coming weeks.

Agreed: Members agreed that they were content for the Chair and Deputy Chair to meet with Prof Chris McCrudden KC.

5. Matters Arising

Agreed: Members agreed to defer correspondence from the Department of Health regarding guidance issued to GPs until agenda item 9.

Members noted further correspondence from the Department of Health confirming that Mike Farrar, Accounting Officer, will provide Members with an update on Mental Health Services in Northern Ireland at the Committee meeting on 15 January 2026.

6. Correspondence

Members considered correspondence from a member of the public regarding housing matters.

Agreed: Members agreed to respond to the member of the public advising them that the matters raised fall outside the remit of the Public Accounts Committee, and, if they wish to pursue these concerns, they might wish to raise them with NIPSO if the matter relates to maladministration.

Members noted correspondence from Denis McMahon confirming his attendance on 10 December 2025 to provide evidence on the inquiry into Road Openings.

Members noted correspondence from Jayne Byrne, Northern Ireland Civil Service Board.

Members noted correspondence from the Minister for Health to the Business Office regarding Indemnity Arrangements.

Members considered correspondence from Housing Rights requesting a copy of the Terms of Reference to the Committee's inquiry into Homelessness in NI.

Agreed: Members agreed to respond indicating the key focus areas of the inquiry are temporary accommodation, prevention, funding and supply.

7. Inquiry into homelessness in Northern Ireland – Evidence session

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.20pm.

Colum Boyle, Permanent Secretary, Department for Communities;

Paul Price, Acting Deputy Secretary for the Housing and Sustainability Group;

Grainia Long, Chief Executive, NIHE;

Catherine McFarland, Director of Finance, Audit and Assurance, NIHE;

Stuart Stevenson, Treasury Officer of Accounts, Department of Finance; and

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General, NIAO.

Members heard evidence on homelessness in Northern Ireland from the Department of Communities.

Padraig Delargy left the meeting at 3.35pm.

Padraig Delargy rejoined the meeting at 3.40pm.

Stephen Dunne left the meeting at 3.47pm.

Stephen Dunne rejoined the meeting at 3.57pm.

David Honeyford left the meeting at 4.05pm.

The Chair placed on record his well wishes, on behalf of the Committee, to Colum Boyle on his retirement.

The Chair placed on record his sincerest appreciation for those who work in the front line with homelessness, in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

The Chair thanked the officials for attending. Witnesses and officials left the meeting at 4.49pm.

Proceedings continued in closed session from 4.50pm.

Stephen Dunne left the meeting at 4.49pm.

Padraig Delargy left the meeting at 4.53pm

8. Inquiry into homelessness in Northern Ireland – Discussion following Evidence session

The following officials joined the meeting at 4.54pm.

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General, NI

Tomas Wilkinson, Director, NIAO

Barry Mitchell, Audit Manager, NIAO

Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer, NIAO

Padraig Delargy rejoined the meeting at 4.57pm

Members undertook a discussion following the evidence session.

Jon Burrows left the meeting at 5.02pm.

The Chair thanked the witnesses and officials for attending. Witnesses left at 5.14pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Department for Communities and NIHE seeking further information and clarification on a number of points raised during the evidence session.

9. Inquiry: Access to General Practice in Northern Ireland

Members noted correspondence from the Department of Health advising that the best practice guide being overseen by the GP Access Working Group, 'Making All Contacts Count', has now been finalised and was disseminated to all GP Practices on 10 October 2025.

Members considered a draft report of the Citizen Space survey results.

Agreed: Members agreed to incorporate the findings into the final report and include this document in the appendices.

Agreed: Members agreed to consider the final report at the Committee meeting of 20 November 2025.

Members considered a list of attendees and a draft invitation for the launch event for Access to General Practice in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: Members agreed to extend invitations to the Youth Assembly, Older People's Parliament, Disability People's Parliament, Age NI, Carers NI and to Members of the Committee for Health.

The Chair placed on record his thanks to the Committee team for their work and efforts on the inquiry and its associated administration.

10. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: Members agreed the draft forward work programme to December 2025.

11. Any Other Business

Cathal Boylan, MLA, advised Members that an All Party Group (APG) for General Practitioners has recently been formed.

12. Date, Time, and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will take place in the Senate Chamber on Thursday 20 November 2025 at 2.00pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.26pm.

Diane Forsythe

Deputy Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee

20 November 2025