



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 12 June 2025

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Daniel McCrossan, MLA (Chairperson)

Cheryl Brownlee, MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Diane Forsythe, MLA

Tom Buchanan, MLA

Colm Gildernew, MLA

Cathal Boylan, MLA

David Honeyford, MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Pádraig Delargy, MLA

Apologies:

Colin Crawford, MLA

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

The meeting opened in public session at 2.03 pm.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Colin Crawford, MLA.

2. Draft minutes

Agreed: Members agreed the draft minutes of the meeting on 5 June 2025.

3. Declaration of Interests

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

Cheryl Brownlee declared an interest as a member of the Northern Ireland Policing Board, a member of the Education Committee and a member of a Board of Governors of Sunnylands Primary School, Carrickfergus.

Diane Forsythe, MLA declared an interest as a member of the Board of Governors of Kilkeel Nursery School and Assembly Private Secretary to the Minister for Education.

David Honeyford, MLA declared an interest as a member of the Board of Governors of Dromara Primary School and in respect of a relative employed by the Education Authority.

Pádraig Delargy, MLA declared an interest as a member of the Board of Governors of Holy Child Primary School, Creggan, and former teacher.

Cathal Boylan, MLA declared an interest as a member of the Board of Governors of Clea Primary School, Keady.

4. Chairperson's Business

The Chair noted the visit to Aghalee Surgery as part of the inquiry into Access to General Practice in Northern Ireland, undertaken by David Honeyford, MLA and Cathal Boylan, MLA supported by Committee staff. The Chair placed on record his thanks to the practice for facilitating the visit and noted that a report would be delivered to members in due course.

Pádraig Delargy, MLA joined the meeting at 2.05 pm.

5. Matters Arising

6. Correspondence

Members noted a letter from a member of the public raising concerns around systemic exclusion, financial misuse and lack of post-19 support for adults with complex severe learning difficulties.

Agreed: Members agreed to forward the correspondence to the Economy Committee.

7. Managing the School's Estate: Evidence Session

The following witnesses and officials joined the meeting at 2.08 pm:

Ronnie Armour, Acting Permanent Secretary, Department of Education;

Stephen Creagh, Deputy Director of Investment and Infrastructure, Department of Education;

Richard Pengelly, Chief Executive, Education Authority;

Paul Crooks, Assistant Director of Facilities Management, Education Authority

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Stuart Stevenson, Treasury Officer of Accounts, Department of Finance

Members heard evidence in the inquiry into Managing the Schools Estate.

Cathal Boylan, MLA, left the meeting at 4.00 pm

Cathal Boylan, MLA, rejoined the meeting at 4.03 pm

The meeting was suspended at 4.04 pm

The meeting resumed at 4.14 pm

Due to technical difficulties, Pádraig Delargy, MLA left the meeting at 4.45 pm.

The Chair thanked the witnesses and Officials for attending. Witnesses left the meeting at 4.54 pm.

The meeting moved into closed session at 4.54 pm.

8. Managing the School's Estate: Discussion Following Evidence Session

The following officials joined the meeting at 4.54 pm:

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Patrick Barr, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Peter O'Sullivan, Audit Manager, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

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

Members discussed the evidence heard.

Pádraig Delargy, MLA rejoined the meeting at 5.14 pm.

Agreed: Members agreed to request further information from the Department for Education in writing.

Agreed: Members agreed to seek additional written evidence from the Health and Safety Executive and the school sectors not under EA management.

The Chair thanked the Officials for attending. Witnesses left the meeting at 5.23 pm.

9. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: Members agreed the draft forward work programme noting the expected delay to the Memorandum of Reply in respect of the Major Capital Projects: Follow-up Report.

10. Any Other Business

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

The next meeting will take place in the Senate Chamber on Thursday 19 June 2025 at 2.00 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.24 pm.

Cheryl Brownlee

Deputy Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee

19 June 2025