



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

## **PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

THURSDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 2020, THE SENATE CHAMBER,  
PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr William Humphrey MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Roy Beggs MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Cathal Boylan MLA  
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA  
Mr Harry Harvey MLA  
Mr David Hilditch MLA  
Mr Trevor Lunn MLA  
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Ms Lucia Wilson, Assembly Clerk  
Ms Gillian Barker, Assistant Assembly Clerk  
Ms Karen Barry, Clerical Supervisor  
Mr Sean O’Rawe, Clerical Officer

*The meeting commenced at 2.03 pm in public session.*

#### **1. Apologies**

None

#### **2. Minutes of meeting on 20 February 2020**

The draft minutes of 20 February 2020 were agreed.

*Mr Beggs joined the meeting at 2.06 pm*

#### **3. Matters Arising**

The Committee noted Kieran Donnelly CB, Comptroller and Auditor General, has no remit in relation to auditing the NI Electoral Office rather this is the responsibility of the National Audit Office (NAO).

#### **4. Declaration of Members' Interests**

There was no declaration of members' interests declared at the commencement of the meeting.

#### **5. Correspondence**

- The Committee noted correspondence from Stuart Stevenson, the Treasury of Accounts, dated 21 February 2020.
- The Committee noted correspondence from Northern Ireland Audit Office, dated 24 February 2020 in relation to emails from Dr Edward Cooke dated 15, 16 & 22 January 2020.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward NIAO's response to Dr Cooke.

- The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Audit Office, dated 24 February 2020 in relation to correspondence from Paul Sayers, date 28 January 2020.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward NIAO's response to Mr Sayers.

#### **6. Inquiry into Major Capital Projects - RaISe research paper.**

*Mr Colin Pidgeon, NIA Research Officer joined the meeting.*

Mr Pidgeon presented a tabled paper from RaISe – 'Centralisation Reforms of Public Procurement in the Republic of Ireland and Scotland'.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Pidgeon for his briefing.

*Agreed:* Mr Pidgeon would ask CPD if calculations had been made to determine a potential savings figure akin to the type of savings that have been made in Scotland and the Republic of Ireland from the centralisation of procurement.

*The meeting moved in to open session at 2.28 pm*

## **7. Inquiry into Major Capital Projects – Introduction to Briefing Session**

*Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, Comptroller and Auditor General; Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer; and Tomas Wilkinson, Director, joined the meeting.*

The Chairperson informed the Committee that the ‘Major Capital Projects’ is the first inquiry of this Public Accounts Committee.

The Audit Office then briefed the Committee followed by a question and answer session.

*The meeting moved in to closed session at 3.08 pm*

## **8. Inquiry into Major Capital Projects – Briefing Session**

*Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, Comptroller and Auditor General; Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer; and Tomas Wilkinson, Director, joined the meeting.*

The Audit Office briefed the Committee on the ‘Major Capital Projects’ report. This was followed by a question and answer session.

*Mr Boylan left the meeting at 3.27 pm.*

*Mr Boylan re-joined the meeting at 3.29 pm*

*Mr Lunn left the meeting at 3.28 pm.*

*Agreed: The NIAO agreed to report back to the Committee with the total overspend of the 11 major projects, effective from the date of publication of the Major Capital Projects Report on 19 December 2019.*

*The meeting moved into open session at 3.29 pm.*

## **9. Inquiry into Major Capital Projects – Briefing from Construction Employers Federation (CEF)**

*Mr Mark Spence, Assistant Director of CEF and Mr Jonathan Caughey, Federation Manager of CEF joined the meeting.*

Mr Spence and Mr Caughey presented a paper on issues affecting the timely delivery of major capital projects from the industry’s point of view. This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Spence and Mr Caughey for their briefing.

*Mr David Hilditch left the meeting at 4.03 pm*

*Mr David Hilditch re-joined the meeting at 4.11pm*

*The meeting moved into closed session at 4.30pm*

## **10. Inquiry into Major Capital Projects – Preparation Session.**

The Committee discussed its preparation for the Inquiry into Major Capital Projects and agreed lines of questioning for the evidence session next week, 5 March 2020.

Members noted the witnesses for the evidence session:

- David Sterling, Head of NI Civil Service
- Sue Gray, Permanent Secretary, DoF
- Des Armstrong, CPD DoF
- Brett Hannam, Chief Executive, SIB

*The meeting moved into closed session at 4.42pm*

## **11. Draft Forward Work Programme**

The Clerk briefed the Committee on the current draft forward work programme

*Agreed:* An amended draft forward work programme will be presented at next weeks' meeting.

*Agreed:* The draft forward work programme will be published on the website.

## **12. Any Other Business**

*Agreed:*

## **13. Date, time and place of next meeting**

The next committee meeting will be held, on Thursday 5 March 2020 at 2.00 pm in the Senate Chamber.

*The meeting was adjourned at 4.50 pm*

**Mr William Humphrey**  
**Chairperson**  
**Public Accounts Committee**  
**27<sup>th</sup> February 2020**