



Northern Ireland
Assembly

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 29 JANUARY 2020, THE SENATE CHAMBER,
PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr William Humphrey MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr John Dallat MLA
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA
Mr David Hilditch MLA
Mr Trevor Lunn MLA

Apologies: Mr Gary Middleton MLA

In Attendance: Ms Lucia Wilson, Assembly Clerk
Ms Gillian Barker, Assistant Assembly Clerk
Ms Karen Barry, Clerical Supervisor
Mr Darren Weir, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm in closed session.

1. Arrangements for Public Accounts Committee Meetings

The Committee discussed the meeting day arrangements for the Public Accounts Committee.

Agreed: Committee agreed to defer this decision to next week's meeting as not all committee members were present.

Agreed: Committee would next meet on Wednesday 5 February 2020 at 2pm.

2. Committee Protocols

The Clerk provided a welcome briefing to the Committee.

The Committee noted the following protocol papers:

- Outcomes of an effective committee;

Agreed: The Committee noted the paper outlining the range of outcomes and achievements associated with an effective Committee.

- Committee approach to preparation and questioning;

Agreed: The Committee noted the paper outlining the range of approaches to questioning and agreed to consider this further at its first preparation meeting prior to its first inquiry.

- Committee protocol on conduct and courtesy at committee meetings;

Agreed: Members agreed to the protocol on conduct and courtesy at committee meetings as discussed.

- Committee approach to dealing with correspondence and requests;

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider correspondence on a case-by-case basis due to the specific nature of the correspondence, which usually comes before the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to receive a briefing from the Clerk on ‘whistleblowing’ at next weeks’ meeting.

- The Committee approach to social media.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the arrangements for the operation of the Committee Twitter account.

The meeting moved in to open session 2.34 pm.

3. Apologies

Apologies as above.

4. Staff Contact Details

The Committee noted the staff contact details.

5. Committee Members

Committee noted these details.

6. Declaration of Members' Interests

Committee noted that all Assembly Members are required to register relevant financial and other interests in the Register of Members' Interest. That any financial or other interests which may relate to the remit of the Committee needs to be drawn to the attention of the Committee.

Committee noted that details of registered interests are published on the Assembly website.

The Committee noted the paper on Declaration of Members' Interest.

No declaration of interests were disclosed.

7. Committee Procedures

Members noted the following documents including guidance in respect of privilege and sub-judice.

- Guide to the powers and operation of Standing and Ad Hoc Committees for Chairpersons and Members
- Guide to the role of the Chairperson
- Guide for Members on the role and functions of the Committee Office
- Introductory note on the Role of PAC

The Clerk briefed the Committee on the role of PAC.

Public Accounts Committee Legacy Report 2011–16

The Committee noted the Legacy Report paper for 2011-16 and discussed any legacy issues relating to 2016/2017 mandate.

Agreed: The Committee would write to the Department of Justice for an up-date in relation to progress regarding the Committee's recommendations on Managing Legal Aid.

The meeting moved in to Public Session at 2.49 pm

8. Northern Ireland Audit Office - First Day Brief

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, Comptroller and Auditor General, Ms Pamela McCreedy, Chief Operating Officer and Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer joined the meeting.

The Committee received a briefing from Mr Kieran Donnelly on the role of NIAO.

*Mr Hilditch left the meeting at 2.38 pm.
Mr Hilditch joined the meeting at 2.43 pm.*

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Mr Kieran Donnelly would give a further briefing at next weeks' committee meeting to help inform Members' consideration of what its initial inquiry will be.

The meeting moved into closed session at 3.22pm.

9. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Clerk briefed the Committee on the draft forward work programme for January – April 2020.

The Chairperson stressed the importance of undertaking visits to inform the inquiry process focusing on examples of good practice within the public sector.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to visit the NIAO the week commencing the 10 February 2020.

10. Any other business

There was no other business.

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 5 February 2020 at 2.00 pm in the Senate Chamber.

The meeting was adjourned at 3.37 pm

Mr William Humphrey
Chairperson
Public Accounts Committee
5th February 2020