



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 1 July 2021

Meeting Location: The Senate, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr William Irwin MLA
Mr David Hilditch MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Cathal Boylan MLA
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA
Mr Andrew Muir MLA
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA

Apologies: **None**

In Attendance: Ms Lucia Wilson (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Gillian Barker (Assistant Assembly Clerk)



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The meeting went into Open Session at 2.03 pm.

1. Apologies

None

2. Draft Minutes of 24 June 2021

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting of 24 June 2021 were signed and agreed to be published.

3. Declaration of Interest

None

4. Matters Arising

None

5. Correspondence

The following NIAO Official joined the meeting:

Mr Kieran Donnelly, CB C&AG NIAO;
Mr Tomas Wilkinson, Director NIAO; and
Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer NIAO [remotely]



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Mike Brennan, AO, DfE – Ministerial Direction query

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 24 June 2021, from Mike Brennan AO DfE regarding a Ministerial Direction query on £60 disruption payment to CAFRE students.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence and that no other payments have been replicated.

Email from Ms Claire Saunders - Sports Sustainability Fund

The Committee noted an email, dated 24 June 2021, from Claire Saunders regarding Sports Sustainability Fund. Ms Saunders is questioning the criteria of the 'fund' stating that her organisation, who were developing walking as a sport, was not recognised as a sport and did not get funding.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Audit Office and to the Committee for Communities for information.

Committee for Finance – Ministerial Directions

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 25 June 2021, from Mr Andy Monaghan DALO, DoF to the Committee for Finance, on the publication of Ministerial Directions.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence and agreed to forward it to the Audit Office.

Committee for Finance – Committee Stage of the Financial Reporting Bill

The Committee noted correspondence from Committee for Finance regarding the Committee Stage of the Financial Reporting Bill.



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Correspondence dated 25 June 2021 from UU Council

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 25 June 2021, from Professor Paul Bartholomew, Vice Chancellor, regarding the membership of the Ulster University Council. The Committee noted that Ms Jenny Pyper is the Pro-Chancellor and Chair of the Council and the Interim Head of NICS.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Professor Bartholomew to request his views, on whether there is a potential conflict of interest to hold both posts concurrently.

The meeting went into Closed Session at 2.11 pm

6. Second Report – Overview of the Northern Ireland Executive’s Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic – NIAO Briefing

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting:

Mr Kieran Donnelly, CB C&AG NIAO;
Mr Tomas Wilkinson, Director NIAO;
Mr Patrick Barr, Director NIAO [remotely]; and
Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer NIAO [remotely]

The Committee noted the relevant papers for the evidence session NIAO’s Second Report: Overview of the Northern Ireland Executive’s Response to the COVID 19 Pandemic’.

- NIAO Report ‘Second Report: Overview of the Northern Ireland Executive’s Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic’; and



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- NIAO Briefing Paper.

The C&AG and his team briefed the Committee on the key aspects of the report.

The meeting went into Closed Session at 2.18 pm

7. Inquiry into Sports Sustainability Fund – Briefing and Preparation Session

The following NIAO Official joined the meeting:

Mr Kieran Donnelly, CB C&AG NIAO; and
Mr Tomas Wilkinson, Director NIAO.

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting remotely:

Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer NIAO [remotely]
Ms Catherine O'Hagan, Audit Manager; and
Ms Rachael Curlett, Auditor.

The Committee noted the relevant papers in their pack regarding the evidence session at next week's meeting on the 'Sports Sustainability Fund'.

- NIAO Report – Sports Sustainability Fund;
- Biographies - Tracy Meharg AO DfC and Tony Murphy Head of Sports Branch;
- NIAO Suggested Questions, Restricted Paper, and
- NIAO Restricted Briefing paper.

The C&AG and his team briefed the Committee on the key aspects of the report.

The meeting went remained in Closed Session at 2.53 pm

David Hilditch MLA left the meeting at 2.54 pm

David Hilditch MLA re-joined the meeting at 3.03 pm



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8. Inquiry into Generating Electricity from Renewable Energy: Final Consideration

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting:

Mr Kieran Donnelly, CB C&AG NIAO;
Mr Tomas Wilkinson, Director NIAO; and
Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer NIAO [remotely]

FINAL CONSIDERATION OF THE REPORT:

The Committee considered the final version of their 7th report 'Generating Electricity from Renewable Energy' and any amendments. The Committee noted and agreed typos amended at paragraphs 12, 13, 58 & 59 within the report.

The Committee agreed the following paragraphs that have had words amended or added within the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the following:

Paragraph 3 - Agreed
Paragraph 16 - Agreed
Paragraph 18 - Agreed
Paragraph 27 - Agreed [Introduction Para]
Paragraph 40 - Agreed
Paragraph 51 - Agreed
Paragraph 53 - Agreed
Paragraph 63 - Agreed
Paragraph 68 - Agreed
Paragraph 70 - Agreed



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Agreed: The Committee agreed and amendment the Section Title: ‘The loan by Invest NI to the Donegal AD Plant, which has now been written off, needs to be examined in more detail’.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Final Report ‘Generating Electricity from Renewable Electricity’.

Agreed: The Committee considered KPMG correspondence dated 6 and 20 May, and agreed to seek formal legal advice before publishing the GERE Report and its associated correspondence.

The meeting remained in Closed Session at 3.11 pm

9. Draft Forward Work Programme

The following officials remained in the meeting:

Mr Kieran Donnelly, CB C&AG;
Mr Tomas Wilkinson, Director; and
Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer NIAO.

The Committee noted next week’s evidence session ‘Sport NI Sustainability Fund’ witnesses would include Antoinette McKeown, Chief Executive, SportNI, Tracy Meharg AO DfC and George Lucas, Chairperson, SportNI.

The Committee noted that Committee Clerks have been informed, of which NIAO Reports, have released from PAC Primacy, namely:

- Reducing Costs in the PSNI;
- Workforce planning for nurses and midwives;
- Managing Children who offend; and
- The management and delivery of the Personal Independence Payment contract in Northern Ireland



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The Committee noted the draft Autumn / Winter forward work programme will include the first two inquiries as agreed at last week's meeting, 'Addiction Services in Northern Ireland and 'Closing the Gap – Social Deprivation and links to Educational Attainment'.

Agreed: The Committee noted the Autumn / Winter draft forward work programme will be available at next week's meeting, 8 July 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the first meeting after summer recess will be scheduled for Thursday 16 September 2021

The meeting remained in Closed Session at 3.13 pm

10. Any Other Business

Committee input on FOI matters during summer recess.

Agreed: The Committee agreed, during summer recess, to delegate authority to the Chairperson and/or deputy Chairperson on releasing or withholding information in any non-routine / contentious FOI requests received.

Agreed: The Committee will be advised of any such requests at their first meeting after recess, 16 September 2021.

11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Public Accounts Committee will take place on Thursday 8 July, at 2.00 pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 3.14 pm.



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Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA
Chairperson
Public Accounts Committee
1 July 2021