



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY, 12TH NOVEMBER 2020, ROOM 30,
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 Andrew Muir MLA – remotely
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA
Mr Matthew O’Toole MLA

Apologies: None

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

Prior to the meeting opening in public session, the Committee discussed with Mr Kieran Donnelly, C&AG, Agenda Item 6 regarding the follow up briefing from the Department on NIAO Report on Major Capital Projects: Study 9 - Regional Stadia Programme and Sub-Regional Stadia Programme for Soccer

The meeting opened in Public Session 2.15 pm.

Mr Kieran Donnelly, C&AG and Mr Kyle Donnelly, Assembly Support Officer NIAO joined the meeting.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Minutes of meeting on 5th November 2020

Agreed: The draft minutes of 5th November 2020 were agreed.

3. Declaration of Members' Interests

Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA declared that he was a member of Naomh Eoghain Caisleán na Deirge, Gaelic Athletic Association.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee agreed that the second issues paper prepared by the NIAO regarding the LandWeb Project and Digital Transformation forms part of the PAC Report.

*The meeting moved into Open Session at 2.15 pm
Mr Matthew O'Toole joined the meeting at 2.15pm.*

5. Correspondence

The Committee considered correspondence dated 30 October 2020 from Chris Murphy regarding his concerns about 'recommendation 13' of PAC's report on Major Capital Projects.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Mr Murphy to advise him that Recommendation 13 cannot be re-called as it is the agreed position by the Committee in a report that has been published and laid in the Assembly. The Committee also agreed to stress that the rationale behind the recommendation, is the need to for a balance to be achieved between having a higher bar for taking Judicial Review while not discouraging genuine concerns from being raised.

The Committee noted NIAO are currently looking into judicial review practice.

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence dated 3 November 2020 from Trevor McKee regarding CCNI and agreed to forward it to NIAO.

The Committee note a memo, dated 5 November 2020, from the Economy Committee and a briefing paper, dated 20 October from DfE regarding their briefing from the department on the NIAO Report on Generation Electricity from Renewable Energy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write back to the Economy Committee, acknowledging the correspondence while emphasising the importance of primacy to ensure that committees do not pre-empt the proceedings in which PAC has a statutory role.

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 11 November 2020, from Ms Sara Long, CE of the Education Authority in response to PAC's follow up letter of 21 October 2020.

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 11 November 2020 from Ms Sharon O'Connor, Chair of the EA Board, confirming her attendance at next week's evidence session regarding NIAO's Report on Special Educational Needs. Attending with her will be Dr Andy McMorran, Board Member of EA.

The Committee noted correspondence dated 11 November 2020 from Ms Sue Gray, AO DoF in response to a follow up letter of 26 October 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to discuss this correspondence at next week's meeting due to the substantial amount of information received too late for consideration at this meeting.

The meeting remained in Open Session at 2.21 pm

6. Briefing from Tracy Meharg, AO, DfC on Casement Park (Report on Major Capital Projects).

Ms Tracy Meharg, AO DfC; and Ms Jacqueline Fearon, Head of Capital Delivery, Department for Communities joined the meeting.

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, Comptroller and Auditor General, Northern Ireland Audit Office attended.

Mr Stuart Stevenson, Treasury Officer of Accounts, Department of Finance and Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer joined the meeting remotely.

The Departmental Officials updated the Committee on the NIAO Major Capital Projects, Case Study 9: Regional Stadia Programme and Sub-Regional Stadia Programme for Soccer.

The Departmental Officials left the meeting at 3.26 pm

The Committee discussed the evidence session with Mr Kieran Donnelly, C&AG and agreed to request information on various issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department on a range of issues and to write to Belfast City Council regarding the current planning application and status of the Blue Light Regulations.

The meeting moved into Closed Session 3.40 pm.

7. Discussions with NIAO following DfC briefing on Casement Park

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, C&AG and Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Office joined the meeting.

The Committee discussed the evidence session with Mr Kieran Donnelly, C&AG.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department and Belfast City Council on a range of issues requiring further information and clarification.

Mr Maoliosa McHugh MLA left the meeting at 3.39pm

Mr Maoliosa McHugh MLA re-joined the meeting at 3.42pm

The meeting remained in Closed Session at 3.42 pm

8. Draft Forward Work Programme

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, Comptroller and Auditor General remained at the table.

The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme covering September to the end of December 2020. The Committee noted that NIAO's Report on Capacity and Capability in NICS will be published on Wednesday 18 November 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Mr Gavin Boyd, former CE of EA, will appear before the Committee in the first evidence session and that Ms Sharon O'Connor and Dr Andy McMorran will provide evidence to the Committee after Mr Boyd's evidence has concluded.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to notify Ms O'Connor and Mr Boyd on the order of the hearings for their evidence next week.

Agreed: Committee agreed the amendments to the draft Forward Work Programme, to include a briefing from the C&AG on selecting inquiries for 2021.

9. Any Other Business

None.

10. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next committee meeting will be held, on Thursday 19th November 2020 at 2.00 pm in The Senate.

The meeting was Adjourned at 3.56 pm.

Mr William Humphrey

Chairperson

Public Accounts Committee

19th November 2020