



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Public Accounts Committee

## Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 20 May 2021

**Meeting Location:** The Senate, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

**Present:** Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Harry Harvey MLA  
David Hilditch MLA  
Mr Andrew Muir MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Mr Roy Beggs MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Cathal Boylan MLA  
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA  
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)



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*The meeting commenced at 2.09 pm in Closed Session.*

The Committee agreed a draft response to Russell Smyth, Partner with KPMG, regarding his letter dated 6 May 2021 considered by the Committee at their meeting on 13 May 2021. The Committee noted KPMG had given evidence on 22 April 2021 regarding inquiry into Generating Electricity from Renewable Energy.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to issue response to Russell Smyth, Partner with KPMG.

*The meeting went into Open Session at 2.11 pm.*

**1. Apologies**

None

**2. Draft Minutes of 13 May 2021**

**Agreed:** The draft minutes of the meeting of 13 May 2021 were signed and agreed to be published.

**3. Declaration of Interest**

None



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#### **4. Matters Arising**

##### **Memorandum of Reply – Report in to ‘Major Capital Projects’**

The Committee noted the Memorandum of Reply for Major Capital Projects is still outstanding. The Committee noted Ms Sue Gray AO Door F has now taken up her new role in the UK Cabinet and her temporary replacement is Mr Colum Boyle.

**Agreed:** The Committee noted that the interim accounting officer, Mr Boyle AO DoF will now have to address this overdue MOR and that the Committee expects a reply as soon as possible.

##### **PAC Report ‘Capacity and Capability in the NICS’**

The Committee noted PAC’s fourth Report ‘Capacity and Capability in the NICS’ was formerly published today, 20 May 2021 together with a Press Release.

#### **5. Correspondence**

The following Officials joined the meeting:

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) for Northern Ireland Assembly (NIAO);  
Mr Neil Gray, Director, NIAO; and  
Mr Kyle Bingham Assembly Support Officer, NIAO joined the meeting remotely.

The Committee noted there was no correspondence for consideration.

*The Committee remained in Open Session at 2.16 pm*



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## 6. Inquiry into ‘Speeding up Justice’: Evidence Session

Witnesses who attended in person:

Mr Peter May, Permanent Secretary and Accounting Officer, Department of Justice; Mr Simon Byrne, Chief Constable of the PSNI; and Mr Stephen Herron, Director of the Public Prosecution Service.

Witnesses who attended remotely:

Mr Peter Luney, Chief Operating Office NI Courts and Tribunal Services NICTS; Mr Glyn Capper Head of Justice Performance, DOJ; Chief Superintendent Melanie Jones, PSNI (criminal justice matters); and Ms Francesca Keaney, Head of Strategic improvement team.

Also in attendance:

Mr Kieran Donnelly, Comptroller and Auditor General, Northern Ireland Audit Office, (*Attending in Person*); and Mr Stuart Stevenson, Treasury Officer of Accounts, Department of Finance (*Attending Remotely*)

The Committee noted the following papers:

- NIAO Report on Speeding Up Justice: avoidable delay in the criminal justice system; dated 27 March 2018;
- Department of Justice biographies;
- Stephen Herron, Director of Public Prosecutions biography
- Simon Byrne Chief Constable of the PSNI biography;
- NIAO Suggested Briefing Restricted Paper; and
- NIAO Suggested Areas of Questions Restricted Paper.

Mr Peter May, AO DoJ made an opening statement on behalf of the Department, the PSNI and the PPS. There then followed a question and answer session.



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*The meeting remained in Closed Session at 4.29 pm*

### **7. Inquiry into ‘Speeding up Justice’: Discussion Session**

*Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG, Mr Neil Gray, Director, Mr Michael Heery, Senior Auditor [remotely] and Mr Kyle Bingham Assembly Support Officer [remotely] joined the meeting.*

The Committee discussed with Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG and his team the evidence it had received from Mr Peter May, AO DoJ; Mr Simon Byrne, Chief Constable of the PSNI; Mr Stephen Herron, Director of PPS and witnesses, regarding the NIAO Report ‘Speeding Up Justice’.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request further information following the evidence session. The Committee agreed to forward their questions to the Clerk to ensure all queries are captured, these will then be collated and forwarded to Mr Peter May, AO DoJ for a response.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed a further evidence session on its inquiry into ‘Speeding up Justice’, may be necessary, but will be dependent on the response received from the Department.

*The meeting remained in Closed Session at 4.48 pm*

### **8. Draft Forward Work Programme**

The following officials remained in the meeting:

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



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The Committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme covering the period 15 April to the Summer Recess.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to formerly invite Ms Tracy Meharg AO DfC and Ms Antoinette McKeown, Chief Executive Sports NI to give evidence on 1 July 2021 regarding its inquiry into 'Sports NI Sustainability Funding and COVID Expenditure'.

**Agreed:** The Committee noted Mr Mike Brennan, AO DfE will be attending the Committee on 17 June 2021 regarding late Ministerial Directions, GERE inquiry and an update on the Ulster University Major Capital Project.

The meeting remained in Closed Session at 4.50 pm

### **9. Any Other Business**

None

### **10. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Public Accounts Committee will take place on Thursday 27 May 2021, at 2.00 pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 4.50 pm.

**Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA**  
**Chairperson**  
**Public Accounts Committee**  
**20 May 2021**