



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

## **PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

THURSDAY, 22<sup>ND</sup> OCTOBER 2020, ROOM 30,  
PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr William Humphrey MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Cathal Boylan MLA  
Mr Harry Harvey MLA  
Mr David Hilditch MLA  
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA  
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA

Attending Remotely: Mr Roy Beggs MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA  
Mr Andrew Muir 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

*The meeting moved into Public Session 2.07pm.*

#### **1. Apologies**

None

#### **2. Minutes of meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

The draft minutes of 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020 were agreed.

### 3. Declaration of Members' Interests

- Mr Roy Beggs MLA declared he was a Governor of Roddensvale School, Larne;
- Mr Cathal Boylan MLA declared he was a Governor of Clea Primary School, Keady and Vice Chair of the NIA All Party Autistic Group;
- Mr William Humphrey MLA, declared he was a Governor of Edenbrooke Primary School and Governor of Belfast Model School for Girls;
- Mr Andrew Muir MLA declared he was a Governor of Priory Integrated College, Holywood;
- Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA declared he was Chairman of pre-school Naíscoil na Deirg;

### 4. Matters Arising

The Committee noted that its first report, 'Report on Major Capital Projects' was officially published today, 22 October 2020, accompanied by a press release.

The Committee noted a press release dated 22 October 2020, issued by the Construction Employers Federation in relation to the report on Major Capital Projects.

### 5. Correspondence

*Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, Comptroller and Auditor General, NIAO and Mr Rodney Allen, Director joined the meeting*

The Committee noted correspondence dated 14 & 18 October 2020 from Edward Cooke regarding Covid-19 issues.

*Agreed:* Committee agreed to forward the correspondence dated 14 October 2020 to NIAO in relation to a specific issue raised by Mr Cooke and to notify Mr Cooke of this action.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted Mr Cooke's correspondence of 18 October 2020.

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 14 October 2020, from the Health Minister in regards to Covid-19 Indemnity Arrangements (Winter 2020/Spring 2021).

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 16 October 2020, from Michael Bennett regarding NIHE.

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 19 October 2020, from Katrina Godfrey, AO, DfI in regards to membership of the planning forum.

The Committee noted correspondence received on 19 October 2020, from Marie McCue with regards to CCNI.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward Mrs McCue’s correspondence to NIAO and to notify Mrs McCue.

The Committee discussed the Ministerial Direction on the ‘Extension of the Financial Assistance Scheme’ and requested further information on why the directions were sought.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek further information from Mr Kieran Donnelly C&AG.

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 21 October 2020, received from Sue Gray, AO DoF in response to the Committee’s letter of 2 October 2020 requesting further information from the evidence session of 24 September 2020.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to return to this correspondence at its next meeting, due to the lateness of the department’s response.

*Matthew O’Toole MLA joined the meeting at 2.14 pm*

***The meeting moved into Open Session at 2.19 pm***

## **6. Evidence on NIAO Reports on the ‘LandWeb Project and Digital Transformation’**

*Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, Comptroller and Auditor General, NIAO and Mr Rodney Allen, Director joined the meeting. Mr Stuart Stevenson, Treasury Officer of Accounts, DoF attended remotely.*

*Ms Sue Gray, AO DoF; and Mr Ian Snowden, Chief Executive Land & Property Services joined the meeting to discuss the LandWeb Project Report.*

The departmental officials briefed the Committee for a second time on the NIAO LandWeb Report, followed by a question and answer session.

*Mr Matthew O’Toole MLA left the meeting at 2.56 pm*

*Mr Matthew O’Toole MLA re-joined the meeting at 3.03 pm*

*Mr David Hilditch MLA left the meeting at 3.02 pm*

*Mr David Hilditch MLA re-joined the meeting at 3.11 pm*

*Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA left the meeting at 3.15 pm*

*Mr Maolíosa Mc Hugh MLA re-joined the meeting at 3.20 pm*

*The meeting was suspended at 3.35 pm*

*The meeting reconvened at 3.45 pm*

*Ms Sue Gray, AO DoF; and Mr Paul Duffy, Deputy Secretary, DoF joined the meeting to discuss the Digital Transformation Report.*

The departmental officials briefed the Committee for a second time on ‘NIAO Report on the Digital Transformation Project’, followed by a question and answer session.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Finance on a range of issues which arose from the two evidence sessions.

*Mr Cathal O’Boylan MLA re-joined the meeting at 3.50 pm*

***The meeting went into Closed Session at 4.25 pm***

## **7. Inquiry into the ‘LandWeb Project and Digital Transformation’**

*Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, Comptroller and Auditor General, NIAO, Mr Rodney Allen, Director; and Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Office joined the meeting.*

The Committee discussed the evidence it had taken from the departmental officials regarding the ‘NIAO Reports on the LandWeb Project and Digital Transformation’, with the Audit Office Officials.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed a second issues paper would be prepared by the Audit Office Officials to be considered for the final report.

*Mr Matthew O’Toole MLA left the meeting at 4.25 pm  
Mr Matthew O’Toole MLA re-joined the meeting at 4.31 pm*

***The meeting remained in Closed Session at 4.41 pm***

## **8. Inquiry into Special Educational Needs – Issues Paper**

*Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, Comptroller and Auditor General and Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer joined the meeting. Ms Collette Kane Director, Ms Suzanne Murphy; Ms Karen Armstrong, Senior Auditor joined the meeting remotely.*

The Committee noted a memo and a ‘restricted’ paper dated 21 October 2020, from the Chair of the Education Committee regarding a closed briefing the Committee received

from the Education Board on 21 October 2020 on ‘SEN Statementing Governance Issues’. The Committee noted the issues raised in the ‘restricted’ paper.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to invite to officials from the Education Authority including the Chairperson of the Education Authority Board to give further evidence on SEN.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the SEN issues paper would form part of the report on Special Needs Education.

*The meeting remained in Closed Session 5.01 pm*

## **9. 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 end of December 2020.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to hold an inquiry into NIAO ‘Report on Generating Electricity from Renewable Energy.’

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the C&AG will brief the Committee in November on his reporting programme and that YouTube presentations of some reports are available on NIAO website.

*Agreed:* Committee agreed the amendments to the draft Forward Work Programme.

*The meeting remained in Closed Session at 5.09 pm*

## **10. Any Other Business**

Committee noted correspondence dated 21 October 2020, from Department of Education regarding a number of indemnities for childcare providers and school settings; to support schools as a result of the impact of COVID 19.

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

The next committee meeting will be held, on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020 at 2.00 pm in the Senate.

*The meeting was Adjourned at 5.10 pm.*

**Mr William Humphrey**

**Chairperson**

**Public Accounts Committee**

**22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020**