



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 15 May 2025

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Daniel McCrossan, MLA (Chairperson)

Cheryl Brownlee, MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Diane Forsythe, MLA

Colm Gildernew, MLA

Cathal Boylan, MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Pádraig Delargy, MLA

Apologies:

Colin Crawford, MLA

David Honeyford, MLA

Tom Buchanan, MLA

In Attendance: Lucia Wilson (Committee Clerk)
Kirsten McClelland (Assistant Committee Clerk)
Marion Johnson (Clerical Supervisor)
Yannie Mahood (Clerical Officer)

The meeting opened in public session at 2.09 pm.

1. Apologies

Apologies were noted from David Honeyford, MLA, Tom Buchanan, MLA and Colin Crawford, MLA.

2. Draft minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting on 8 May 2025 were agreed.

3. Declaration of Interests

The Chairperson reminded members of their requirement to register their interests under Standing Order 69(5).

Cheryl Brownlee, MLA declared an interest as a member of the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

Cathal Boylan, MLA declared an interest as a member of the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

Pádraig Delargy, MLA declared an interest as a member of the Economy Committee.

Diane Forsythe MLA declared an interest as a member of the Audit Committee.

4. Chairperson's Business

The Chair commented on the success of the Assembly's representation at the Balmoral show and suggested that the Committee consider attending next year to raise awareness of the role of the Committee.

Agreed: Members agreed to attend the Balmoral Show in 2026.

5. Matters Arising

Pádraig Delargy, MLA joined the meeting at 2.10 pm.

Members discussed an invitation from Aghalee surgery inviting members to visit as part of the inquiry into Access to General Practice.

Agreed: Members agreed a response to the Practice.

Members considered correspondence from the BMA offering site visits with GP Practices in members constituency areas.

Agreed: Members agreed a response to the BMA.

Members noted a letter from the BMA providing an update on the ongoing negotiations with the Department of Health in respect of GP contacts.

Agreed: Members agreed to note the correspondence.

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.15 pm;

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Seamus Wade, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer, Northern Ireland Audit Office.

Members considered a response from Ian Snowden, Accounting Officer for the Department for the Economy regarding the recent disclaimed accounts within the department.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Department to request further information and updates in respect of the issues raised.

Agreed: Members agreed to share a copy of the letter and response with the Economy Committee

The Chair thanked the officials for attending. Officials left the meeting at 2.35 pm.

6. Correspondence

7. Inquiry into Mental Health Services in Northern Ireland: Update on Memorandum of Reply.

The following witnesses and officials joined the meeting at 2.35 pm:

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer, Northern Ireland Audit Office.

Members considered the update provided by Peter May, former Accounting Officer for the Department of Health, and a further update from Mike Farrar, Accounting Officer for the Department of Health.

Daniel McCrossan, MLA left the meeting at 2.41 pm.

Cheryl Brownlee, MLA took the Chair.

Daniel McCrossan, MLA rejoined the meeting and resumed the Chair at 2.52 pm.

Members noted a number of issues contributing to delays in progress against actions.

Agreed: Members agreed to seek a further update.

Agreed: Members agreed that the Clerk should liaise with the Health Committee to establish what work is being done to address issues raised following the roll-out of Encompass.

Officials left the meeting at 2.53 pm.

The meeting moved into closed session at 2.53 pm.

8. Inquiry into Reducing Adult Reoffending: Initial Consideration of Draft Report.

The following witnesses and officials joined the meeting at 2.53 pm:

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Tomas Wilkinson, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Conor McKeown, Audit Manager, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer, Northern Ireland Audit Office.

Members undertook initial consideration of the draft report.

Agreed: Members agreed to provide any comments on the report to the Committee Staff Team.

Officials left the meeting at 3.06 pm.

9. Inquiry on Developing the Skills for Northern Ireland's Future: Draft Press Release

Members noted statistics from a report entitled - DfE Young People Inequalities in the Northern Ireland skills system.

Agreed: Members agreed to forward the statistics to the Northern Ireland Audit Office for inclusion in the draft report.

The following witnesses and officials joined the meeting at 3.06 pm:

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer, Northern Ireland Audit Office.

Members considered the draft press release.

Agreed: Members agreed amendments to the draft press release.

The Chair thanked officials for attending.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Clerk briefed members on the draft forward work programme,

Agreed: Members agreed the draft forward work programme.

Daniel McCrossan, MLA left the meeting at 3.26 pm.

Cheryl Brownless, MLA took the Chair.

Daniel McCrossan, MLA rejoined the meeting at 3.28pm and resumed the Chair.

The Clerk updated members on availability of Youth Assembly Members for the planned launch of the report on Developing the Skills for Northern Ireland's Future.

Agreed: Members agreed to explore further options for a launch event.

Agreed: Members agreed that the Clerk explore options for a Committee team building day.

11. Any Other Business

Members considered correspondence from the Audit Committee regarding Northern Ireland Audit Office Budget Estimates.

Agreed: Members agreed a response to the Audit Committee.

Cathal Boylan, MLA requested that the Committee seek an update from the NI Assembly Commission on plans for the use of Artificial Intelligence within the Assembly.

Agreed: Members agreed for the Clerk to make inquiries on this issue.

Date, Time, and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will take place in the Senate Chamber on Thursday 22 May 2025 at 2.00 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 3.54 pm.

Daniel McCrossan

Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee

22 May 2025