



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 21 November 2024

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Daniel McCrossan, MLA

Cheryl Brownlee, MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Diane Forsythe, MLA

Tom Buchanan, MLA

Colin Crawford, MLA

David Honeyford, MLA

Colm Gildernew, MLA

Cathal Boylan, MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Pádraig Delargy, MLA

Apologies:

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

The meeting opened in public session at 2.06 pm.

1. Apologies

2. Draft minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting on 14 November 2024 were agreed.

3. Declaration of Interests

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

Pádraig Delargy declared an interest as Sinn Féin spokesperson on Further and Higher Education, and a participant in the Skill Up Programme.

4. Matters Arising

Members noted a letter from Peter May, Accounting Officer, Department of Health, in response to queries raised by the Committee on the completion of the Royal Maternity Hospital.

Agreed: Members agreed to note the correspondence and forward to the Northern Ireland Audit Office for consideration in the inquiry into Major Capital Projects.

Members noted a letter from Jayne Brady, Head of Civil Service (HOCS) in response to the committee's request for her attendance and that of Mr Gibson (Accounting Officer, DoF) at a further evidence session in the inquiry into Major Capital Projects. Ms Brady confirmed both her availability and that of Mr Gibson's for either 16th or 30th January 2025.

Agreed: Members agreed to request HOCS and Mr Gibson to attend on 16th January 2025 to address outstanding issues around Major Capital Projects and the implementation of the RHI Public Inquiry recommendations.

5. Chairperson's Business

6. Correspondence

7. Evidence session for 'Developing the Skills for Northern Ireland's Future' inquiry.

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.11 pm.

Ian Snowden, Accounting Officer, Department for the Economy

Graeme Wilkinson, Director, Skills Division, Department for the Economy

Moira Doherty, Deputy Secretary, Skills and Education Group, Department for the Economy

Stuart Stevenson, Treasury Officer of Accounts

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General, NIAO

The Committee heard evidence from the witnesses.

David Honeyford left the meeting at 3.28 pm

David Honeyford rejoined the meeting at 3.30 pm.

Cheryl Brownlee left the meeting at 3.44pm.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Snowden, Mr Wilkinson, Ms Doherty, C&AG and Mr Stevenson for attending.

Officials left the meeting at 4.09 pm.

The meeting moved into closed session at 4.09 pm.

8. Discussions following Evidence session for ‘Developing the Skills for Northern Ireland’s Future’ inquiry.

The following officials from the Northern Ireland Audit Office joined the meeting at 4.09 pm:

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Patrick Barr, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Suzanne Murphy, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer, NIAO

Members discussed the evidence heard.

Diane Forsythe left the meeting at 4.32 pm

9. Forward Work Programme

The Clerk briefed the Committee on the final arrangements for the BiMR and CAPAC annual conference.

Agreed: Members agreed the draft Forward Work programme.

The Chairperson thanked officials for their attendance today.

NIAO officials left the meeting at 4.41 pm.

10. Any Other Business

11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The Chairperson thanked officials for their attendance and advised members that the next meeting will take place in the Senate Chamber on Thursday 5 December 2024 at 2.00 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.43 pm.

Daniel McCrossan MLA

Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee

21 November 2024