



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Public Accounts Committee

## Minutes of Proceedings

**Thursday, 22 May 2025**

**Meeting Location:** Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

**Present:** Daniel McCrossan, MLA (Chairperson)  
Diane Forsythe, MLA  
Tom Buchanan, MLA  
Colm Gildernew, MLA  
Cathal Boylan, MLA  
Pádraig Delargy, MLA  
David Honeyford, MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:** Colin Crawford, MLA

**Apologies:** Cheryl Brownlee, MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

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

The meeting opened in public session at 2.06 pm.

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were noted from Cheryl Brownlee, MLA

### **2. Draft minutes**

**Agreed:** The draft minutes of the meeting on 15 May 2025 were agreed.

Pádraig Delargy, MLA joined the meeting at 2.07 pm

David Honeyford, MLA joined the meeting at 2.07 pm

### **3. Declaration of Interests**

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

Tom Buchanan, MLA declared an interest in respect of a family member employed by DVA at an MOT Centre.

Cathal Boylan, MLA declared an interest as a member of the Board of Governors for Clea Primary School, Keady, and the Policing Board.

Diane Forsythe, MLA declared an interest as a member the Board of Governors of Kilkeel Nursery School and, Assembly Private Secretary to the Minister for Education.

David Honeyford, MLA declared an interest as a member of the Board of Governors of Dromara Primary School and in respect of a relative employed by the Education Authority.

Pádraig Delargy, MLA declared an interest as a member of Board of Governors of Holy Child Primary School, Creggan, Derry, and a former teacher.

#### **4. Chairperson's Business**

#### **5. Matters Arising**

Members noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Policing Board in respect of the recent NIAO report into PSNI Fleet Management.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to note the correspondence.

#### **6. Correspondence**

Members noted a memo from the Infrastructure Committee regarding DVA contracts.

**Agreed:** Members agreed a response to be issued from the Clerk of the Committee to the Clerk of the Infrastructure Committee.

The meeting moved into closed session at 2.12 pm.

#### **7. Developing the Skills for Northern Ireland's Future: Final consideration of draft report.:**

The following witnesses and officials joined the meeting at 2.12 pm:

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Patrick Barr, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Suzanne Murphy, Audit Manager, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

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

The Committee noted the draft report is classified as RESTRICTED for Members' attention and therefore should not be published more widely.

The Committee noted it had a first formal consideration of the 'Developing the Skills for Northern Ireland's Future' report at its meeting of 8 May 2025.

The Committee noted this is the final consideration for the report 'Developing the Skills for Northern Ireland's Future' report and agreed the title of the report is 'Developing the Skills for Northern Ireland's Future'.

The Committee was presented with the agreed amendments as follows:

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the amended section title: DfE, working with DE, needs to do more to ensure provision, and incentivise uptake, of courses that reduce the skills gap in Northern Ireland.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword paragraph 22.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword Recommendation 4.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword Recommendation 6.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword Recommendation 7.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword Recommendation 8.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword Recommendation 9.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword Recommendation 10.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword Recommendation 12.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword paragraph 43.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword paragraph 52.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword paragraph 53.

- Agreed:** More must be done to identify and remove barriers to education, training and employment, especially for those with SEN and disabilities.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword paragraph 57.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword paragraph 59.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword paragraph 61.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword paragraph 63.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword paragraph 67.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword paragraph 68.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword paragraph 71.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword paragraph 77.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword paragraph 79.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword paragraph 80.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reword paragraph 87.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to order the report to be published.

## **8. Developing the Skills for Northern Ireland's Future: Consideration of Draft Press Release**

Members considered the draft press release for the report on Developing the Skills for Northern Ireland's Future.

**Agreed:** Agreed the draft press release.

**Agreed:** Agreed the production of a video and script to publicise the launch.

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 the format of a launch event to include the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly.

**Agreed:** The Committee noted the Developing the Skills for Northern Ireland's Future report will be published on Thursday 29 May 2025.

The Chair thanked officials for attending.

Officials left the meeting at 3.36 pm.

### **9. Inquiry on Reducing Adult Reoffending in Northern Ireland: Initial Consideration of draft report.**

The following witnesses and officials joined the meeting at 3.36 pm:

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Tomas Wilkinson, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Conor McKeown, Audit Manager, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Paul Turley, Senior Auditor, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

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

Members reviewed the draft report and noted changes suggested by members.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to make changes ahead of first formal consideration of the report.

The Chair thanked officials for attending.

Officials left the meeting at 3.52 pm.

### **10. Managing the Schools Estate: Briefing**

The following witnesses and officials joined the meeting at 3.36 pm:

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Patrick Barr, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Peter O'Sullivan, Audit Manager, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Geoff Murphy, Senior Auditor, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

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

Members received a briefing ahead of the commencement of the inquiry into Managing the Schools Estate.

The Chair thanked officials for attending.

Officials left the meeting at 4.33 pm.

### **11. Forward Work Programme**

The Clerk briefed members on the draft forward work programme,

**Agreed:** Members agreed the draft forward work programme.

Members discussed their availability to attend practice visits as part of the inquiry into Access to General Practice in Northern Ireland.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to advise practices of potential dates for visits.

The Clerk briefed members on the potential Committee Development Day,

**Agreed:** Members agreed to hold a Committee Development Day on 3 July 2025.

### **12. Any Other Business**

### **13. Date, Time, and Place of the next meeting**

The next meeting will take place in the Senate Chamber on Thursday 29 May 2025 at 2.15 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.43 pm.

**Daniel McCrossan**

**Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee**

**29 May 2025**