



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Public Accounts Committee

## Minutes of Proceedings

**Thursday, 27 March 2025**

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

**Present:** Cheryl Brownlee, MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Diane Forsythe, MLA  
David Honeyford, MLA  
Colm Gildernew, MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Cathal Boylan, MLA  
Pádraig Delargy, MLA

**Apologies:** Daniel McCrossan, MLA  
Tom Buchanan, MLA  
Colin Crawford, MLA

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

The meeting opened in public session at 2.20 pm.

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were noted from Daniel McCrossan, MLA, Colin Crawford, MLA and Tom Buchanan, MLA.

### **2. Draft minutes**

**Agreed:** The draft minutes of the meeting on 20 March 2025 were agreed.

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

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

David Honeyford MLA declared an interest as a member of the Committee for the Economy in relation to Agenda Item 7.

Padraig Delargy MLA declared an interest as a member of the Committee for the Economy in relation to Agenda Item 7.

Diane Forsythe MLA declared an interest as a member of the Finance Committee in relation to Agenda Item 7.

Colm Gildernew MLA declared an interest as Chair of the Communities Committee and in relation to a Private Members Bill he is currently bringing in relation to homelessness.

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

The Deputy Chair advised members that she has been invited to a Café Conversations event to represent the Committee alongside the Northern Ireland Audit Office.

**Agreed:** Members agreed that it was appropriate for the Deputy Chair to attend the event.

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

#### **6. Correspondence**

Members noted correspondence from a GP offering to brief members and facilitate a visit to his practice to observe good practice.

**Agreed:** Members agreed a response to the letter.

#### **7. Treasury Officer of Accounts oral evidence on disclaimed Department for the Economy accounts.**

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.24 pm:

Stuart Stevenson, Treasury Officer of Accounts, Department of Finance;

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Members heard evidence on the disclaimed accounts of the Department for the Economy.

The Chair thanked the witnesses and Officials for attending. Witnesses left the meeting at 3.06 pm.

The meeting moved into closed session at 3.06 pm.

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.06 pm:

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Seamus Wade, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Karen Costly, Audit Manager, Northern Ireland Audit Office.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Treasury Officer of Accounts for a further update on a planned meeting with UK Treasury.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek further detail on derogation of accounts for further and higher education bodies in England and Scotland.

**Agreed:** The Committee that the Clerk would provide further advice on a response to DfE at a future meeting.

Witnesses left the meeting at 3.25 pm.

## **8. Inquiry into Major Capital Projects: Follow Up Report**

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.25 pm:

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

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 'Major Capital Projects: Follow Up Report' report at last week's meeting, 20 March 2025.

The Committee noted this is the final consideration for the report 'Major Capital Projects: Follow Up Report' and agreed the title of the report is 'Major Capital Projects: Follow Up Report'.

The Committee was presented with the agreed amendments as follows:

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the amended section title: Leadership, governance and the effectiveness of the NICS Board need urgently reviewed.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the amended section title: Northern Ireland remains without an independent oversight body.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the amended section title: The arrangements for delivery of major capital projects in Northern Ireland remain not fit for purpose.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the amended section title: The critical importance of effective collaborative and partnership working.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the amended section title: The business case process must now deliver demonstrable positive impact.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the amended section title: Regrettably the Committee repeats again that the NICS must develop the capacity and capability to successfully deliver major capital projects.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to order the report to be published.

Members considered the draft press release for the Major Capital Projects: Follow Up Report.

**Agreed:** Agreed the draft press release

**Agreed:** The Committee noted the Major Capital Projects: Follow Up Report will be published on Thursday 3 April 2025.

The Chair thanked officials for attending.

Witnesses left the meeting at 3.28 pm.

## **9. Preparation Session on Inquiry into Reducing Adult Reoffending in Northern Ireland**

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.29 pm:

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Tomas Wilkinson, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Connor McGeown, Audit Manager, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Paul Turley, Senior Auditor, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

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

Members undertook preparation for the evidence sessions scheduled for 3 and 10 April 2025.

The Chair thanked Officials for attending.

Witnesses left the meeting at 3.39 pm.

## **10. Forward Work Programme**

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

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.39 pm:

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Tomas Wilkinson, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

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

Members received a briefing on the NIAO report into Homelessness in Northern Ireland.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to retain primacy over the report pending further consideration of future inquiries.

## **11. Any Other Business**

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

The next meeting will take place in the Senate Chamber on Thursday 3 April 2025 at 2.00 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 3.56 pm.

**Cheryl Brownlee MLA**

**Deputy Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee**

**3 April 2025**