



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 1 May 2025

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Daniel McCrossan, MLA (Chairperson)

Cheryl Brownlee, MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Diane Forsythe, MLA

David Honeyford, MLA

Colm Gildernew, MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Colin Crawford, MLA

Cathal Boylan, MLA

Pádraig Delargy, MLA

Apologies:

Tom Buchanan, MLA

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

The meeting opened in public session at 2.04 pm.

1. Apologies

Apologies were noted from Tom Buchanan, MLA.

2. Draft minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting on 10 April 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 and Cathal Boylan MLA declared an interest as members of the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

Daniel McCrossan MLA declared an interest as a former member of the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

Diane Forsythe MLA declared an interest as a relative sits on Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

4. Chairperson's Business

The Chair thanked Cheryl Brownlee MLA and Colm Gildernew MLA for Chairing recent meetings in his absence.

The Chair thanked the support staff and welcomed Stephen Magee, providing cover to the meeting this week.

The Chair commented on the success of the recent Café Conversations event.

5. Matters Arising

Members revisited a letter from the British Medical Association regarding evidence to the inquiry into Access to General Practice in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: Members agreed a response to be issued to the BMA.

Members noted further correspondence from Maine Medical Practice regarding a potential site visit to their practice.

Agreed: Members agreed that the Clerk would continue to engage with the practice and members to identify a suitable date for the visit.

Members noted a further update to the MOR on Mental Health Services in Northern Ireland from Mike Farrar, Accounting Officer, Department of Health.

Agreed: Members agreed to defer consideration of the update until 15 May 2025.

6. Correspondence

Members noted a letter from a Member of the Public raising concerns about Major Capital Projects within Newry and Mourne District Council and the independence of the Comptroller and Auditor General and a member of the Northern Ireland Audit Office staff.

Agreed: Members agreed to discuss this item in closed session due to the nature of the concerns raised.

Agreed: Members agreed a response to the Member of the Public.

Members noted a letter from the FDA Trade Union raising concerns following publication of the Major Capital Projects – Follow-Up Report.

Agreed: Members agreed to bring a draft response forward for consideration on 8 May 2025.

Members noted a letter from Chris Quinn, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, submitting evidence to the inquiry into Access to General Practice in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: Members agreed to forward the evidence provided to the Northern Ireland Audit Office for inclusion in the final report.

Members noted a letter from the British Medical Association regarding ongoing contractual negotiations with the Department of Health.

Agreed: Members agreed to discuss this matter in closed session due to the ongoing contractual negotiations and live inquiry into Access to General Practice in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: Following discussions in closed, Members agreed to note this correspondence.

The meeting moved into closed session at 2.15 pm.

7. Inquiry into Reducing Adult Reoffending in Northern Ireland: Issues Paper

The following witnesses and officials joined the meeting at 2.44 pm:

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Tomas Wilkinson, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Conor 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 received a briefing on the issues identified in the evidence session.

Agreed: Members agreed the issues to be included in the draft report.

The Chair thanked officials for attending.

Officials left the meeting at 3.23 pm.

8. Inquiry into Developing the Skills for Northern Ireland's Future: Survey Results

The Assistant Assembly Clerk briefed members on the report outlining the results of the recent Citizen Space survey.

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

9. Inquiry into Developing the Skills for Northern Ireland's Future: Initial Consideration of draft report.

The following witnesses and officials joined the meeting at 3.26 pm:

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Patrick Barr, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Suzanne Murphy, Audit Manager Senior Auditor, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Karen Armstrong, Senior Auditor, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

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

Members discussed the draft report.

Pádraig Delargy, MLA left the meeting at 3.31 pm.

Agreed: Members agreed to bring the report forward for first consideration.

Agreed: Members agreed to share the draft report with the Communications Team

The Chair thanked officials for attending.

The Officials left the meeting at 3.38 pm.

10. Northern Ireland Audit Office Survey

The following witnesses and officials joined the meeting at 3.38 pm:

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

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

Members were briefed on the survey being circulated by the Northern Ireland Audit Office.

Agreed: Members agreed to complete the survey following the meeting.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Clerk briefed members on the draft forward work programme,

Agreed: Members agreed to amend the publication schedule for the inquiry into Access to General Practice to allow for the additional work to be undertaken, as a result of the unprecedented response to the survey on Access to GPs.

Agreed: Members agreed to explore a media update on the inquiry into Access to General Practice prior to summer recess.

Agreed: Members agreed to amend the forward work programme to allow for additional consideration of draft reports.

Agreed: Members agreed to consider a round-up video on the work of the Committee in this mandate to date.

Members received a briefing on the NIAO report into PSNI Fleet Management.

Agreed: Members agreed to release primacy over the report.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Northern Ireland Policing Board seeking an update on any actions they take arising from the report.

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 7 May 2025 at 2.00 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 3.31 pm.

Daniel McCrossan

Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee

8 May 2025