



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Audit Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

16 March 2022

Meeting Location: Virtual Meeting via Starleaf

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Daniel McCrossan MLA (Chairperson)
Mr William Irwin MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alan Chambers MLA

Apologies:

Mr Jim Allister MLA
Ms Emma Rogan MLA

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Marie Austin (Clerk to the Committee)
Ms Karen Barry (Assistant Clerk)
Dr Simon Gallaher (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Alison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 12.42pm in open session.



1. Apologies

As noted above.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that Jim Allister had provided notification that he had delegated authority, under Standing Order 115(6), to the deputy Chairperson to vote on his behalf at today's meeting.

2. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2022.

4. Matters Arising

Response from the Minister of Finance

The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Finance advising that he is content to recommend the Audit Committee motion relating to the salary of the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) as set out in the Committee's letter of 2 March 2022.

Response from the Comptroller and Auditor General

The Committee noted a response from the C&AG welcoming the Committee's decision to propose an increase in his salary with effect from 1 April 2017, and



Northern Ireland Assembly

again from 1 April 2021, to bring it into line with the amount paid to a judge in salary group 5 for that period.

It was noted that the Committee motion on the Salary of the Comptroller and Auditor General had been listed on the Order Paper for Tuesday 22 March 2022.

Agreed: Given that the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (Commission) takes responsibility for issuing terms and conditions of appointment to the C&AG, the Committee agreed to ask the Commission to make the necessary arrangements to enable payment of the increase in the C&AG's salary from 1 April 2021, and the retrospective increases for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March, should the motion be passed by the Assembly.

Response from an individual

The Committee considered a response from an individual in relation to an ongoing complaint being investigated by the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to remind the individual of the Audit Committee's statutory function and advise that the NIPSO should be contacted directly to answer any queries.

5. Legacy Report – Consideration of draft report

The Committee considered its draft Legacy Report 2017-2022.

Title Page, Table of Contents, List of Abbreviations and Powers and Membership

The Committee considered the Title Page, Table of Contents, List of Abbreviations and Powers and Membership as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Title Page, Table of Contents, List of Abbreviations and Powers and Membership of the Committee.



Northern Ireland Assembly

Review of 2017-2022 Mandate - Committee Work Areas

The Committee considered the 'Review of 2017-2022 Mandate - Committee Work Areas' section of the report as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with 'Draft Budgets: NIAO, NIPSO, NIAC' at paragraphs 1 and 2.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with 'Estimates: NIAO, NIPSO' at paragraphs 3 and 4.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with 'Comptroller and Auditor General: Salary Arrangements' at paragraphs 5 to 11.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with 'Northern Ireland Assembly Commission: Thresholds for In-Year Monitoring' at paragraphs 12 to 16.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with 'Review of the Governance and Accountability Arrangements for the NIAO and NIPSO' at paragraphs 17 to 20.

Suggested Issues for the Successor Committee

The Committee considered the 'Suggested Issues for the Successor Committee' section of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with 'Suggested Issues for the successor Committee' at paragraph 21.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with 'Codification of the Audit Committee's role in agreeing the Draft Budgets of the NIAO, NIPSO and NIAC' at paragraphs 22 and 23

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with 'Thresholds for In-Year Monitoring: Northern Ireland Assembly Commission' at paragraphs 24 and 25.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with 'Comptroller and Auditor General: Salary Arrangements' at paragraph 26.



Northern Ireland Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with 'Membership and Quorum of the Audit Committee' at paragraphs 27 to 29.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with 'Governance and Accountability Arrangements for the NIAO and NIPSO' at paragraphs 30 to 32.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with 'Engagement' at paragraph 33.

Appendices

The Committee agreed the Appendices section of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content that the Appendices be included in the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the report as the sixth Report of Audit Committee in the 2017-22 Mandate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the 'Audit Committee Legacy Report 2017-2022' to be published.

6. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) in relation to the recruitment of a Non-Executive Director for the Northern Ireland Audit Office Advisory Board.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to nominate the Clerk/Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Assembly to sit on the recruitment panel.

The Committee noted the following:

- ii. The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman's 'Annual Report of the Northern Ireland Local Government Commissioner for Standards 2020-21'.



Northern Ireland Assembly

- iii. Correspondence from the Speaker regarding the scheduling of plenary business until the end of the current mandate.
- iv. Correspondence from the Chairpersons' Liaison Group regarding its draft report on 'Strengthening Committee Scrutiny'.

7. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

8. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The Chairperson advised Members that this was the last scheduled meeting of the Audit Committee in the current mandate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson should approve the minutes of today's meeting.

The Chairperson thanked Members for their contribution to the work of the Committee during this mandate, and put on record his thanks to the secretariat team for the support they have provided throughout.

The meeting was adjourned at 13.00pm.

Daniel McCrossan MLA

Chairperson, Audit Committee

March 2022