



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 3 February 2022

Meeting Location: The Senate, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr David Hilditch MLA
Mr Andrew Muir MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Cathal Boylan MLA
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA
Ms Cara Hunter MLA
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA

Apologies: William Irwin MLA

In Attendance: Mr Peter McCallion (Clerk)
Ms Gillian Barker (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Suzanne Patton (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Marion Johnston (Clerical Officer)

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting:

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG;
Ms Colette Kane, Director.



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The following NIAO Official joined the meeting remotely:

Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer.

The meeting opened in Public Session at 2.05 pm.

1. Apologies

Mr William Irwin MLA gave his apologies and delegated his vote to Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA under temporary Standing Orders 115 and 116.

2. Draft Minutes of 27 January 2022

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting of 27 January 2022 were signed and agreed to be published.

3. Declaration of Interests

The following Members declared an interest:

Agenda Item 7, First Consideration of Sports Sustainability Fund:

Mr David Hilditch MLA declared he is a Director, Carrick Rangers Football Club; Honorary Vice President of Carrickfergus Cricket Club; and Vice President of Carrickfergus Military Band;

Mr Maolíosa Mc Hugh MLA Trustee, Naomh Eoghain Caisleán na Derige, Gaelic Athletic Association; and

Mr Andrew Muir MLA declared he is the Event Manager Crawfordsburn parkrun.

Agenda Item 8, draft Press Release of the report ‘Closing the Gap – Social Deprivation and links to Educational Attainment’:



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Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA declared he is a Governor, Edenbrooke Primary School, Governor of Girls Model Belfast; and a former pupil of Boys Model.

Mr Roy Beggs MLA declared he is a Governor of Roddensvale School, Larne and a Committee Member of SureStart.

Mr Cathal Boylan MLA declared he is a Governor, Clea Primary School, Keady.

Mr Andrew Muir MLA declared he is a Governor, Priory Integrated College, Hollywood.

Mr Maoliosa McHugh MLA declared he is a Chairman, Cathaorirleah Naíscoil na Deirge.

4. Matters Arising

None

5. Correspondence

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting room:

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG; and
Ms Colette Kane, Director.

The following NIAO Official joined the meeting remotely:

Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer.

Finance Committee

The Committee noted correspondence from the Chair of the Finance Committee dated 28 January 2022, which is a copy of their letter to Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG, regarding the repercussions of the Voluntary Exit Scheme and requesting PAC revisits its 2016 report to determine the overall impact and effectiveness.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed this would be a matter for the successor PAC to take forward owing to time constraints at the end of the current mandate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to record this matter in its Legacy Report.

23 Lisburn Alcohol Anonymous

The Committee noted correspondence, from the Chairperson of 23 Lisburn Alcohol Anonymous. The Committee noted reference to information sessions and literature which are designed to raise awareness of the growing problem of addiction.

Construction Employers Federation

The Committee noted correspondence from David Fry, Director of External Affairs, Construction Employers Federation regarding NIAO Report into 'Planning in Northern Ireland'. Mr Fry commented on NIAO's Report and the many issues raised.

Agreed: The Committee agree the correspondence to NIAO for its information.

Nuala Crilly, The Gathering

The Committee noted correspondence received 2 February 2022 from Nuala Crilly and an organisation called The Gathering. This is in relation to the forthcoming 'Planning in Northern Ireland' inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider Ms Crilly's email at Agenda Item 6, 'Planning in Northern Ireland' Briefing and Preparation Session.

***The meeting went into Closed Session at 2.14 pm
Ms Cara Hunter MLA joined the meeting at 2.38 pm***

6. Inquiry into 'Planning in Northern Ireland' – Briefing and Preparation

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting remotely:



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Mr Roger McCance, Audit Manager;
Ms Claire Turner, Senior Auditor; and

The Committee noted the relevant papers for next week's evidence session for the inquiry 'Planning into Northern Ireland'. The papers included:

- NIAO Report 'Planning in Northern Ireland',
- NIAO Restricted Briefing Paper and Potential Questions:
- Witness Biographies:
 - Ms Katrina Godfrey, AO DfI;
 - Mr Angus Kerr, Chief Planner & Director of Regional Planning, DfI; and
 - Ms Julie Thompson – Deputy Secretary, Planning, Safety & Transport Policy

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG and his team briefed the Committee on the NIAO Report 'Planning in Northern Ireland' in preparation for the evidence session.

The Committee discussed in detail the evidence session scheduled for Thursday 10 February 2022, and the key areas of questioning.

Nuala Crilly, The Gathering

The Committee noted the concerns raised by Ms Crilly, The Gathering, in her correspondence of 2 February 2022, regarding the Committee only hearing evidence from the Department and SOLACE.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that owing to time constraints it would be unable to undertake additional oral evidence sessions with stakeholders but that written submissions would certainly be considered and included in the Committee's report.

The meeting remained in Closed Session at 3.05 pm

7. First Consideration of Report 'Sports Sustainability Fund'



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Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG
Ms Thomas Wilkinson, Director; and
Ms Catherine O'Hagan, Audit Manager

The following NIAO Official joined the meeting remotely:

Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer

The Committee noted that the draft report was classified as RESTRICTED

The Committee noted this is the First Consideration for the report 'Sports Sustainability Fund' and agreed the title of the report is '**Sports Sustainability Fund**'.

The Committee agreed the section on Membership and Powers and the List of Abbreviations.

The Committee made the following decisions regarding each section and paragraphs within the report, that is – **Agreed, Agreed as amended or to be reworded.**

Section 'Introduction': Paragraphs 19 - 20

Paragraph 19: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 20: Read and Agreed

Section 'Background': Paragraphs 21 – 25

Paragraph 21: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 22: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 23: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 24: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 25: Read and Agreed



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Agreed: Section Title: 'Disconnect between the Business Case and the Scheme's application'. Paras 26 - 30

Paragraph 26: Read and Agreed
Paragraph 27: Read and Agreed
Paragraph 28: Read and Agreed
Paragraph 29: Read and Agreed
Paragraph 30: Read and Agreed

Agreed: Section Title: 'Imminent risk of failure and risk of going into administration'. Paras 31 - 34

Paragraph 31: Read and Agreed
Paragraph 32: Read and Agreed
Paragraph 33: Read and Agreed
Paragraph 34: Read and Agreed

Agreed: Section Title: 'Identification of Financial Need'. Paras 35 - 38

Paragraph 35: Read and Agreed
Paragraph 36: Agreed as amended
Paragraph 37: Agreed as amended
Paragraph 38: Agreed as amended

Agreed: Section Title: 'Lack of modelling of potential outcomes. Paras 39 - 42

Paragraph 39: Read and Agreed
Paragraph 40: Read and Agreed
Paragraph 41: Agreed as amended
Paragraph 42: Read and Agreed

Agreed: Section Title: 'Underwriting of Profits'. Para 43 - 47

Paragraph 43: Read and Agreed
Paragraph 44: Read and Agreed
Paragraph 45: Read and Agreed



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Paragraph 46: To be reworded – additional
recommendation added.

Paragraph 47: Agreed as amended

Agreed: Section Title: ‘This was not a fund to support tourism’. Paras 48 - 49

Paragraph 48: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 49: Read and Agreed

Agreed: Section Title: ‘Use of Reserves’. Para 50 - 52

Paragraph 50: To be reworded

Paragraph 51: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 52: Read and Agreed

Agreed: Section Title: ‘Additionality’. Paras 53 - 55

Paragraph 53: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 54: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 55: Read and Agreed

The Committee then returned to the Executive Summary, paragraphs 1 - 10 and agreed the following:

Paragraph 1: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 2: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 3: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 4: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 5: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 6: Agreed as amended – the last bullet point
becomes a new paragraph 7.

Paragraph 7: Agreed as amended

Paragraph 8: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 9: Read and Agreed



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Recommendations 1 - 9: Paragraphs 10 – 18

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| Recommendation 1 | Paragraph 10 | Read and Agreed |
| Recommendation 2 | Paragraph 11: | Read and Agreed |
| Recommendation 3 | Paragraph 12: | Read and Agreed |
| Recommendation 4 | Paragraph 13: | Agreed as amended in line with Para 38 |
| Recommendation 5 | Paragraph 14: | Read and Agreed |
| Recommendation 6 | Paragraph 15: | Read and Agreed |
| Recommendation 7 | Paragraph 16: | Agreed as amended in line with Para 46. |
| Recommendation 8 | Paragraph 17: | Agreed as amended |
| Recommendation 9 | Paragraph 18: | Read and Agreed |

That concluded the first consideration of the report – ‘Sports Sustainability Fund’.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Appendices of the report will include:

- Extracts from the minutes
- Hansard
- Correspondence

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bring the amended Report to next week’s Committee meeting, 10 February 2022 for final consideration.

The meeting remained in Closed Session at 3.53 pm

8. Inquiry into ‘Closing the Gap – Social Deprivation and Links to Educational Attainment’ – draft Press Release

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG;
Mr Tomas Wilkinson, Director; and
Ms Catherine O’Hagan, Audit Manager.



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The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting remotely:

Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer.

The Committee discussed the draft Press Release regarding their report 'Closing the Gap – Social Deprivation and links to Educational Attainment'. The Committee agreed to amend the draft Press Release, to include a stronger reference to a collaborative approach in addressing the issues identified in the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the amended Press Release will be circulated to Members for approval and a final sign off, before going to COMMS.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to launch the Report at the Boys Model School on 10 February 2022 at 10.00am. The 'A Fair Start' Report Expert Panel; Dr Mark Browne AO DE; and Ms Sarah Long CE EA are to be invited.

The meeting remained in Closed Session at 4.02 pm

9. Draft Forward Work Programme

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting:

Mr Kieran Donnelly, CB C&AG; and
Mr Tomas Wilkinson, Director.

The following Official joined the meeting remotely:

Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer.

The Committee noted the September 2021 to March 2022 draft Forward Work Programme which includes the following scheduled meetings:



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- Dr Jayne Brady HOCS Tuesday 8 March 2022;
- Dr Browne AO DE and Ms Sara Long Thursday 10 March regarding SEN and update on the MOR; and
- SOLACE regarding the inquiry 'Planning into Northern Ireland' on 17 February 2022.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the draft Forward Work Programme with these meetings included.

Take Note Debate

The Committee agreed the draft motion 'Take Note Debate', to bring to the House the issues coming out of PAC's recently published reports. The Committee noted the reports tabled must be inquiries that have received a Memorandum of Reply.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the signed motion and to submit the motion to the Business Office at least 2 weeks before the debate is to be heard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider which reports each Member wishes to speak on. Members will be informed of the date / time of the debate once known.

The meeting remained in Closed Session at 4.02 pm

10. Any Other Business

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting:

Mr Kieran Donnelly, CB C&AG; and
Mr Tomas Wilkinson, Director.

The following Official joined the meeting remotely:



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Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer

NIAO Members Survey

The Committee were reminded of the NIAO Members' Survey which has now gone out and for Members to complete and return.

Ministerial Directions

The Committee noted clarification in respect of a Dear Accounting Officer letter which was recently issued by the Department of Finance in respect of the approval of Ministerial Directions. It is understood that there 2 options for ministers issuing a Ministerial Direction: they can either seek the approval of the Finance Minister or seek the approval of the Executive.

11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Public Accounts Committee will take place on Thursday 10 February 2022.

The meeting adjourned at 4.05 pm

Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA
Chairperson
Public Accounts Committee
3 February 2022