



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY, 26TH NOVEMBER 2020, ROOM 30,
PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr William Humphrey MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Cathal Boylan MLA
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA
Mr Harry Harvey MLA
Mr David Hilditch MLA
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA
Mr Andrew Muir MLA
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Ms Lucia Wilson, Assembly Clerk
Ms Gillian Barker, Assistant Assembly Clerk
Ms Karen Barry, Clerical Supervisor
Mr Darren Weir, Clerical Officer

The meeting began in Open Session at 2.00 pm

*Mr Kieran Donnelly, C&AG and Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer
NIAO joined the meeting.*

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Minutes of the meeting 19th November 2020

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting on 19th November 2020 were agreed.

3. Declaration of Interests

- Mr Roy Beggs MLA declared he was a Governor of Roddensvale School, Larne;
- Mr Cathal Boylan MLA declared he was a Governor of Clea Primary School, Keady and Vice Chair of the NIA All Party Autistic Group;
- Mr William Humphrey MLA, declared he was a Governor of Edenbrooke Primary School and Governor of Belfast Model School for Girls;
- Mr Andrew Muir MLA declared he was a Governor of Priory Integrated College, Holywood;
- Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA declared he was Chairman of pre-school Naíscoil na Deirg:

4. Matters Arising

The Committee noted correspondence dated 18 November 2020 from the NI Audit Office to Steven Agnew, RenewableNI in relation to their report on ‘Generating Electricity from Renewable Energy’.

In a follow-up email to the Clerk from Belfast City Council, the Committee noted that Belfast City Council has received the Notice of Opinion from DFI and it can now proceed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Chief Executive of Belfast City Council for clarification on the Blue Light Regulations for Casement Park and whether they have been approved.

5. Correspondence

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 12-23 November 2020, from Edward Cooke in relation to Covid-19 and NI universities

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 16 November 2020 and 20 November 2020, from Professor Bartholomew in response to the Committee’s request for follow up information from the evidence session on 5 November 2020, regarding UUBC.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the University to clarify their recruitment procedure for appointments to the University Council.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to clarify if they have an input to the University Council appointments.

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 19 November, from the Committee for the Economy of a departmental response to funding of UU Belfast Campus

The Committee noted correspondence, dated 19 November 2020, from Sue Gray, AO, DoF, to confirm her attendance at the evidence session on 3 December 2020 on 'Capacity and Capability in the NICS'

6. Inquiry into 'Capacity and Capability in the NICS' – Briefing Session

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, C&AG joined the meeting.

Mr Rodney Allen, Director; Mrs Christine Burns Audit Manager; Mr Conor McGeown, Senior Auditor and Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer joined the meeting remotely.

The Committee noted the inquiry 'Capacity and Capability into NICS' will be their fourth inquiry. Mr Kieran Donnelly, C&AG and the NIAO team briefed the Committee on the NIAO report on 'Capacity and Capability in the NICS', published on 18 November 2020.

There then followed a question and answer session.

Mr Andrew Muir MLA left the meeting at 2.20 pm

Mr Andrew Muir MLA re-joined the meeting at 2.23 pm

Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA left the meeting at 3.20 pm

Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA re-joined the meeting at 3.24pm

Mr Maoliosa McHugh MLA left the meeting at 3.31 pm

Mr Maoliosa McHugh MLA re-joined the meeting at 3.33 pm

The meeting went into Closed Session at 3.33 pm

7. Inquiry into 'Capacity and Capability in the NICS' – Preparation Session.

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, C&AG joined the meeting.

Mr Rodney Allen, Director; Mrs Christine Burns Audit Manager; Mr Conor McGeown, Senior Auditor and Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer joined the meeting remotely.

The Committee discussed the forthcoming evidence session on 'Capacity and Capability in the NICS' scheduled for 3 December 2020 and key areas of questioning.

The Committee noted the following witnesses would be attending:

- Ms Sue Gray, Accounting Officer for DoF;
- Ms Jill Minne, Head of NICSHR, DoF;

- Ms Michele Woods, Director of NICSHR; and
- Ms Anne Breen, Learning & Development Lead NICSHR.

The Committee noted next week's evidence session would be held in open session.

Mr Rodney Allen, Director; Mrs Christine Burns Audit Manager; and Mr Conor McGeown, Senior Auditor left the meeting at 4.07 pm.

Mr Cathal Boylan MLA left the meeting at 4.02pm

Mr Cathal Boylan MLA re-joined the meeting at 4.17 pm

The meeting remained in Closed Session at 4.07 pm

8. Inquiry into 'Special Educational Needs' – Issues Paper 2

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, C&AG joined the meeting.

Mrs Karen Armstrong, Senior Auditor; Mrs Collette Kane, Director; Mrs Suzanne Murphy, Audit Manager; and Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Office joined the meeting remotely.

The Committee discussed the Issues Paper with Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, C&AG and the NIAO team.

Agreed: The Committee agreed Issues Paper 2 will be part of the Committee's final report into Special Educational Needs.

Mrs Karen Armstrong, Senior Auditor; Mrs Collette Kane, Director; and Mrs Suzanne Murphy, Audit Manager left the meeting at 4.18 pm

The meeting remained in Closed Session at 4.18 pm

9. NIAO Briefing on VFM Reports

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, C&AG joined the meeting.

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, C&AG briefed the Committee on new and forthcoming NIAO VFM Reports for consideration in their Forward Work Programme for January – April 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed they would include NIAO's report 'DVLA NI Annual Report and Accounts for Year Ended 31st March 2020', in their Forward Work Programme for January to April 2021.

Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA left the meeting at 4.22 pm

Mr Maoliosa McHugh MLA left the meeting at 4.30 pm

The meeting remained in Closed Session at 4.32 pm

10. Forward Work Programme – September-December 2020

The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme covering September to the end of December 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme to the end of December 2020 and to publish it.

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB, C&AG and Mr Kyle Bingham Assembly Support Officer left the meeting at 4.32 pm

11. Any Other Business

Mr Roy Beggs MLA left the meeting at 4.35 pm

The Committee noted an email received on 19 November 2020 from Mr Fergal Stewart regarding PAC’s evidence session on 12 November 2020.

The Committee noted Mr Stewart’s comments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chair write to Mr Stewart advising him of the Committee’s position on the matter, and to advise him that any further correspondence on the issue should be directed to the Standards and Privilege’s Committee.

12. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Public Accounts Committee will take place on Thursday 3rd December 2020 at 2.00p.m. in The Senate, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 4.45 p.m.

Mr William Humphrey
Chairperson
Public Accounts Committee

26 November 2020

Signed