



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 21 October 2021

Meeting Location: The Senate, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Cathal Boylan MLA
Mr William Irwin MLA
Mr Andrew Muir MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

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

Apologies: Mr David Hilditch MLA

In Attendance: Ms Lucia Wilson (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Gillian Barker (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Suzanne Patton (Clerical Supervisor)



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Inquiry into ‘Addiction Services in NI’ – Agenda Item 6

The Committee noted a short briefing paper on NIAO’s previous 2014 report on Primary Care Prescribing and the increasing prescribing of Pregabalin from 2009 to 2013

The meeting went into Open Session at 2.14 pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to formerly write to Mr Matthew O’Toole MLA to thank him for his contributions and hard work during his time as a member of PAC.

The Committee welcomed Ms Cara Hunter MLA as a new member of PAC

The following NIAO Officials joined in the meeting:

Mr Kieran Donnelly, CB C&AG,
Mr Neil Gray, Director, and
Mr Roger McCance, Audit Manager.

The following Official joined the meeting remotely:
Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer.

1. Apologies

Mr David Hilditch MLA

2. Draft Minutes of 14 October 2021

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting of 14 October 2021 were signed and agreed to be published.

3. Declaration of Interests

No declaration of interests



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4. Matters Arising

None

5. Correspondence

The following NIAO Officials joined in the meeting:

Mr Kieran Donnelly, CB C&AG,
Mr Neil Gray, Director, and
Mr Roger McCance, Audit Manager.

The following official joined the meeting remotely:

Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer.

Whistleblower Dossier and Ms Katherine Clarke UCU

The Committee noted correspondence of a 'Whistleblower Dossier' and a letter dated 18 October 2021 from Ms Katherine Clarke UCU.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to discuss this matter in Closed Session, under Agenda Item 9.

The meeting remained in Open Session at 2.19 pm

6. Inquiry into Addition Services in NI – Evidence Session

The following Departmental Officials attended the meeting remotely:

Mr Richard Pengelly, AO DoH
Professor Sir Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer
Mr Brendan Whittle, Director of Social Care & Children HSC Board
Mr Gary Maxwell, Head of Health Policy Branch DoH

The following Officials were in attendance:



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Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG and
Mr Stuart Stevenson TOA, remotely

The Committee noted the relevant papers in their pack regarding the 'Addiction Services in NI' evidence session:

- NIAO Report 'Addictions Services in NI'
- Restricted NIAO Papers - Briefing & Preparation Paper
- Restricted NIAO Paper - Suggested Question Areas
- Biographies of the Department Officials attending
- Extract from NIAO 2014 Report 'Primary Care Prescribing' regarding Pregabalin

Mr Richard Pengelly AO DfH made an opening statement which was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee thanked the Department Officials for attending and answering questions.

Agreed: The Committee noted they may bring the Department back to give further evidence on this inquiry if required.

Mr Andrew Muir MLA left the meeting at 3.37 pm

Mr Roy Beggs MLA left the meeting at 4.05 pm

The meeting went into Closed Session at 4.05 pm

7. Inquiry into 'Addiction Service in NI' - Discussion

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting:

Mr Kieran Donnelly, CB C&AG,
Mr Neil Gray, Director, and



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Mr Roger McCance, Audit Manager.

The following NIA Officials joined the meeting remotely:

Ms Claire Turner, Senior Auditor; and
Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer.

The Committee discussed the evidences session with the NIAO Officials who agreed to produce an Issues Paper for the 4 November 2021 meeting.

The meeting remained in Closed Session at 4.17 pm

8. Draft Forward Work Programme

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting:

Mr Kieran Donnelly, CB C&AG, and
Mr Roger McCance, Audit Manager.

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 and that Dr Jayne Brady HOCS will be attending the meeting of 9 December 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed Mr Mark Browne AO DE and Ms Sara Long CE EA should attend the same meeting regarding further evidence on 'Closing the Gap – Social Deprivation and links to Education Attainment. The Committee agreed it would like an update on the implementation of 'SEN' from Ms Long, either at this meeting or a separate meeting. Both options would be offered to Ms Long.

Agreed: The Committee noted Sir Robert Chote can attend either 25 November or 2 December meeting to give evidence on the inquiry 'Strategic Review on the Budget Process'.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to amend the draft Forward Work Programme to include the further evidence sessions. The amended programme will be brought back to meeting of 4 November 2021.

The meeting remained in Closed Session at 4.19 pm

Mr Andrew Muir MLA re-joined the meeting at 4.21 pm

9. Any Other Business

The Visit to Boys Model School – 4 November 2021

The Committee noted the arrangements for the visit to Boys Model including COVID risk assessment details. The visit will begin at 9.00 am and end at 10.00 am. It is limited to 5 Members and 1 Staff member.

Agreed: The Committee noted the arrangements and were content.

Whistleblower Dossier and Ms Katherine Clarke UCU

The Committee considered the whistle blower dossier and correspondence dated 18 October from Ms Katherine Clarke UCU. The Committee noted UCU has sent the redacted documents to PAC to ensure there is a political oversight on the matter. The C&AG has also received the full Whistleblower Dossier.

Agreed: The Committee noted C&AG will examine the documents to decide if they require a formal investigation. The C&AG agreed to come back to the Committee with an update in due course.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write back to Ms Kathrine Clarke to acknowledge receipt of her letter and Whistleblower Dossier.



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10. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Public Accounts Committee will take place on Thursday 4 November, at 2.00 pm in The Senate, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 4.23pm

Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA
Chairperson
Public Accounts Committee
21 October 2021