



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 3 March 2022

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 David Hilditch MLA
Mr William Irwin MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA
Ms Cara Hunter MLA
Mr Andrew Muir MLA

Apologies: Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA

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



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The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting:

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG;
Mr Rodney Allen, Chief Operating Officer;
Ms Colette Kane, Director; and
Mr Roger McCance

The following NIAO Official joined the meeting remotely:

Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer.

The meeting commenced in public session at 2.06 pm.

1. Apologies

Mr Maolíosá McHugh MLA

2. Minutes of 24 February 2022

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 24 February 2022 were an accurate and complete record of proceedings and should be published.

3. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Correspondence

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting room:

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



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The following NIAO Official joined the meeting remotely:

Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer.

Ms Katrina Godfrey AO DfI

The Committee noted correspondence from Ms Katrina Godfrey AO DfI dated 2 March 2022, in response to the inquiry 'Planning in Northern Ireland'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to discuss this further at Agenda Item 7 Inquiry into 'Planning in Northern Ireland'.

Take Note Debate – 1 March 2022

The Chairperson noted that the Take Note Debate had taken place in the House on Tuesday 1 March 2022 and thanked Members for their contributions. The Committee also thanked Mr Donnelly CB C&AG, his team and the PAC team for their support.

The Committee noted that the debate was an important opportunity for Members to highlight the cross-cutting issues in the Committee's 14 published reports. These issues included the need for: accountability, strong leadership, appropriate skill sets and joined-up government as well as the importance of a positive NICS culture.

The Committee noted that Ms Jayne Brady HOCS was to appear in front of the Committee on Tuesday 8 March 2020 regarding progress that has been made in these matters and in respect of the reform of the NICS.

Proceedings continued in private session from 2.11pm

6. Final Consideration Report into 'Broadband Investment in Northern Ireland'

The following NIAO Official joined the meeting room:



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Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG;

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting remotely:

Ms Tomas Wilkinson, Director;
Mr Conor McGeown, Audit Manager; and
Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer

The Committee noted the draft report is classified as RESTRICTED and therefore should not be published.

Órlaithí Flynn joined the meeting at 2:12pm

The Chairperson noted that the Committee's first consideration of the 'Broadband Investment in Northern Ireland' report was at last week's meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the amendments to the following paragraphs:

9,10 ,13 34, 35, 36, 41, 43, 45 47, 48, 50 and 51.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the amendment to the Section Title 'Departmental disclosure of details of the LPS Data'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to order the report to be published.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider a related draft press release at the meeting of Thursday 10 March 2022.

Proceedings remained in private session at 2.13 pm

The Committee adopted a revised order of agenda items

7. Inquiry 'Planning in Northern Ireland' – 2nd Issues Paper

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting room:



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Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG;
Mr Rodney Allen, Chief Operating Officer;
Ms Colette Kane, Director; and
Mr Roger McCance, Senior Auditor

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting remotely:

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

The Committee discussed the 2nd Issues Paper regarding the evidence session with NILGA. Members noted concerns in respect of: the absence of consistency in planning decision-making across the district councils; the absence joined-up working in respect of district councils and the Department; the operability of PPS21 and its tendency to lead to very different interpretations. Members referred to the proposed Regional Planning Commission and the value of a number of related Task & Finish workstreams which might address these issues, including the reported requirement for new legislation.

William Irwin joined the meeting at 2.27pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed the 2nd Issues Paper with these additions and for these to be included in the Committee's final report.

The Gathering

The Committee noted that the Chairperson had received further communications from The Gathering, requesting that the Committee hears its evidence regarding the inquiry into 'Planning in Northern Ireland'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an oral evidence session with The Gathering.



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Katrina Godfrey AO DFI

The Committee noted a response from Katrina Godfrey AO DfI regarding further information relating to planning applications and call-ins. The Committee noted the absence of clarity in respect of the 12,500 applications processed annually and the number of these applications which were successful / unsuccessful.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write back to Ms Godfrey to request clarity on the question of the number of successful/unsuccessful planning applications.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the relevant correspondence to the NIAO.

Letter to Minister for Infrastructure from both PAC Chairperson and Infrastructure Chairperson

The Committee considered a draft letter to be issued to the Minister for Infrastructure from both the Chairperson of PAC and the Chairperson of the Committee for Infrastructure regarding the planning inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the letter to the Chairperson of the Committee for Infrastructure, Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA for his Committee's consideration and sign off. Subject to this, the Committee agreed that the letter will be issued to the Minister.

Proceedings remained in private session at 2.43pm

8. Ms Jayne Brady HOCS – Preparation Session

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting room:

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG; and
Ms Rodney Allen, Chief Operating Officer.

The following NIAO Official joined the meeting remotely:

Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer



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The Committee noted the relevant papers and witnesses for the evidence session on Tuesday 8 March 2022, with Ms Brady HOCS. The Committee noted this is a follow-up session and may prove to be of value to the successor PAC in its consideration of NICS reform.

The Committee noted the relevant papers:

- Memo dated 3 March 2022 with suggested questions
- Hansard dated 9 December 2021
- Biographies of the witnesses for Tuesday 8 March 2022.
 - Ms Jayne Brady, HOCS;
 - Ms Jill Minne, Department of Finance;
 - Mr David Hughes, Department of Finance; and
 - Mr Brett Hannam, Strategic Investment Board.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would give consideration on 8 March 2022 to the allocation of question to Members at the start of the meeting.

Proceedings remained in private session at 2.51pm

9. Draft Forward Work Programme

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting:

Mr Kieran Donnelly, CB C&AG and
Mr Rodney Allen, Chief Operating Officer

The following Official joined the meeting remotely:

Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer.



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The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme to the end of the mandate with the additional evidence session from 'The Gathering' on Thursday 10 March 2022.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, subject to review, the Committee would not meet on Thursday 24 March 2022.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the Forward Work Programme, as agreed.

Mr Kieran Donnelly, CB C&AG

The Committee noted the NIAO Report '*COVID Pandemic: Supply and Procurement of Personal Protective Equipment to local healthcare providers*', published 1 March 2022. Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG briefed the Committee on this report and its findings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed this report will be noted in its Legacy Report.

PAC draft Legacy Report

The Committee considered its draft Legacy Report - noting each section and any amendments.

Section: Remit, Powers, PAC Process and Membership of the Committee
Read and agreed

Section: Review of 2017 – 2022 Mandate
Read and Agreed

Section: Inquiries
Paragraph: Excess of Votes 2016 – 2017
Read and Agreed
Paragraph: Major Capital Projects



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Read and Agreed

Paragraph: Joint Report on Management of the NI Direct Strategic Partner Project – Digital Transformation and the LandWeb Project.

Read and Agreed

Paragraph: Impact Review of Special Educational Needs

Read and Agreed

Paragraph: Capacity and Capability of NICS

Read and Agreed

Paragraph: Generating Electricity from Renewable Energy

Read and Agreed

Paragraph: Speeding Up the Justice System

Read and Agreed

Paragraph: Addiction Services in NI

Read and Agreed

Paragraph: Closing the Gap – Social Deprivation and links to Educational Attainment

Read and Agreed

Paragraph: Sports Sustainability Fund

Read and Agreed

The Committee noted that further text would be added in respect of the reports on: Review of NI Budget Process; Broadband Investment in NI; and Planning in NI.

Section: Ministerial Directions
Agreed as amended



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Section: Head of Northern Ireland Civil Service
Read and Agreed

Section: Visits
Read and Agreed

Section: Take Note Debate
Read and Agreed

Section: Suggested Issues for the Successor Committee'
Agreed as amended including further explanatory text relating to the need for collegiality and cross-cutting action by departments.

The Committee noted the information tables, appendices, will be completed once PAC meetings have ended 22 March 2022.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bring the amended Legacy Report back to Committee on Thursday 10 March 2022.

Proceedings continued in private session at 3.13pm

10. Any Other Business

Chairpersons' Liaison Group – Witness Diversity

The Committee noted correspondence dated 18 February 2022 from the Chairpersons' Liaison Group, regarding Increasing the Diversity of Witnesses before Assembly



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Committees and the recent work undertaken by the Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights in this regard.

Agreed: The Committee noted this correspondence.

11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Public Accounts Committee will take place on Tuesday 8 March 2022 at 3.00pm in Room 30.

The meeting adjourned at 3.15 pm

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