



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 10 February 2022

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

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

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Cathal Boylan MLA
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA
Ms Cara Hunter MLA
Mr William Irwin MLA
Mr Maolíosá McHugh MLA

Apologies: Mr David Hilditch MLA

In Attendance: Ms Stella McArdle (Clerk)
Ms Gillian Barker (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Marion Johnston (Clerical Officer)
Remotely: Ms Suzanne Patton (Clerical Supervisor)

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting:

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



Northern Ireland
Assembly

The following NIAO Official joined the meeting remotely:

Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer.

The meeting Opened in Public Session at 2.08 pm.

1. Apologies

Mr David Hilditch MLA

2. Draft Minutes of 3 February 2022

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting of 3 February 2022 were signed and agreed to be published.

3. Declaration of Interests

The following Members declared an interest regarding Agenda Item 7, First Consideration of Sports Sustainability Fund:

Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA declared he was Vice President of Woodvale Cricket Club;

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

Mr Andrew Muir MLA declared he is a member of NI Athletics Club.

4. Matters Arising

None

5. Correspondence

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting room:

Mr Kieran Donnelly CB C&AG; and



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Ms Colette Kane, Director.

The following NIAO Official joined the meeting remotely:

Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer.

Correspondence from Minister of Finance, Mr Conor Murphy MLA

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Finance dated 3 February 2022, in response to PAC's letter of 26 January 2022 requesting more detail on LPS address data base regarding the inquiry into 'Broadband Investment in NI'. The correspondence details the Pointer Lifecycle Database and how the 'Building Status' and 'Address Status' changes at each stage.

Mr Donnelly CB, C&AG stated the response was helpful outlining how the system works and would be factored into the final report.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence.

Launch of PAC Report at Boys Model School

The Committee noted the report 'Closing the Gap – Social Deprivation and links to Educational Attainment' was launched that morning, at the Boys Model School.

This coincided with pupils receiving their GCSE results, the first results since COVID 19 closed schools. The guests included The Expert Panel who published the 'Fair Start Report' in May 2021; Dr Mark Browne Perm Sec DE and Ms Sara Long CE EA. Ms Mary Montgomery Principal of Boys Model, member of the Expert Panel, hosted the event.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Ms Montgomery to thank her for hosting the event and to congratulate her on how her school is tackling social deprivation.

The meeting remained in Public Session at 2.14 pm



Northern Ireland
Assembly

6. Inquiry into 'Planning in Northern Ireland' – Evidence Session

The following Departmental Officials joined the meeting:

Ms Katrina Godfrey, AO Dfl;
Mr Angus Kerr, Chief Planner & Director of Regional Planning, Dfl; and
Ms Julie Thompson – Deputy Secretary, Planning, Safety & Transport Policy

In attendance:

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

The Committee noted the relevant papers for the 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; and
- Witness Biographies.

The Committee also noted the submissions received in relation to the inquiry:

- Mr George McLaughlin, Natures Keepers International;
- Ms Olga Harper, on NIAO's Report, Planning in NI;
- Friend of Knock Iveagh, on NIAO's Report; Planning in NI;
- Mr Dean Blackwood, on NIAO's Report; Planning in NI
- Additional information from Nuala Crilly, The Gathering; and
- Portaferry Save the Trees Campaign Group.

Ms Katrina Godfrey, AO Dfl made an opening statement which was followed by a question and answer session.

The meeting adjourned at 4.13 pm

The meeting went into Closed Session at 4.20 pm



Northern Ireland
Assembly

7. Inquiry ‘Planning in Northern Ireland’ – Discussion

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting:

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

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting remotely:

Mr Roger McCance, Audit Manager;
Ms Claire Turner, Senior Auditor; and
Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer

The Committee discussed the evidence session with the NIAO Officials who agreed to produce an Issues Paper for next week, 17 February 2022.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request some further information.

The meeting remained Closed Session at 4.31 pm

8. First Consideration of Report ‘Review of Northern Ireland Budget Process’

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

The following NIAO Official joined the meeting remotely:

Ms Karen Beattie, Audit Manager;
Ms Pamela Dugdale, Senior Auditor and
Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer



Northern Ireland
Assembly

The Committee noted the draft report is classified as RESTRICTED and therefore until published for Members use only.

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

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 15

Paragraph 15: Read and Agreed

Section 'Background': Paragraphs 16 – 22

Paragraph 16: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 17: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 18: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 19: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 20: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 21: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 22: Read and Agreed

Agreed: Section Title: 'Engagement' Paras 23 - 28

Paragraph 23: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 24: Read and Agreed

Recommendation Paragraph: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 25: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 26: Read and Agreed



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Paragraph 27: Agreed as amended

Paragraph 28: Read and Agreed

Recommendation Paragraph: Read and Agreed

Agreed: Section Title: 'A Joined up Approach'. Paras 29 - 31

Paragraph 29: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 30: Read and Agreed

Recommendation Paragraph: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 31: Read and Agreed

Recommendation Paragraph: Read and Agreed

Agreed: Section Title: "Sustainability". Paras 32 - 36

Paragraph 32: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 33: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 34: Read and Agreed

Recommendation Paragraph: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 35: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 36: Read and Agreed

Recommendation Paragraph: Read and Agreed

Agreed: Section Title: 'Capital Projects'. Paras 37- 39

Paragraph 37: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 38: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 39: Read and Agreed

Agreed: Section Title: 'Barriers to Change'. Para 40 - 45

Paragraph 40: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 41: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 42: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 43: Read and Agreed

Paragraph 44: Read and Agreed



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Recommendation Paragraph: Read and Agreed
Paragraph 45: Read and Agreed
Recommendation Paragraph: Read and Agreed

The Committee then returned to the Executive Summary and Recommendations, paragraphs 1 – 14 and agreed the following:

Executive Summary: Paragraphs 1 - 4

Paragraph 1: Read and Agreed
Paragraph 2: Read and Agreed
Paragraph 3: Read and Agreed
Paragraph 4: Read and Agreed

Recommendations 1 - 10: Paragraphs 5 – 14

Recommendation 1	Paragraph 5	Read and Agreed
Recommendation 2	Paragraph 6:	Read and Agreed
Recommendation 3	Paragraph 7:	Read and Agreed
Recommendation 4	Paragraph 8:	Read and Agreed
Recommendation 5	Paragraph 9:	Read and Agreed
Recommendation 6	Paragraph 10:	Read and Agreed
Recommendation 7	Paragraph 11:	Read and Agreed
Recommendation 8	Paragraph 12:	Read and Agreed
Recommendation 9	Paragraph 13:	Read and Agreed
Recommendation 10	Paragraph 14:	Read and Agreed

That concluded the first consideration of the report – ‘Review of the Northern Ireland Budget Process’.

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

- Extracts from the minutes
- Hansard
- Correspondence



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bring the amended Report to next week's committee meeting, 17 February 2022 for final consideration.

The meeting remained in Closed Session at 4.51 pm

9. Final Consideration of Report 'Sports Sustainability Fund'.

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

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting remotely:

Mr Tomas Wilkinson, Director;
Ms Catherine O'Hagan, Audit Manager; and
Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer.

The Committee noted the draft report is classified as RESTRICTED for Member's attention and therefore should not be published more widely.

The Committee noted this is the Final Consideration for the report 'Sports Sustainability Fund'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the following paragraphs to be amended from last week's meeting:

Paragraphs: 8, 14, 18, 19, 38, 39, 40, 48, 49, and 52.

This concluded the Final Consideration of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Report is to be Ordered to Print.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agreed: The Committee noted at next week's meeting a draft Press Release will be available to discuss. The proposed publishing date is 24 February 2022.

The meeting remained in Closed Session at 4.56 pm

10. Draft Forward Work Programme

The following NIAO Officials joined the meeting:

Mr Kieran Donnelly, CB C&AG; and
Mr Neil Gray, 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 to the end of the mandate. The following sessions are confirmed:

- SOLACE evidence session next week, 17 February 2022;
- Dr Jayne Brady HOCS Tuesday 8 March 2022; and
- Dr Browne AO DE and Ms Sara Long Thursday 10 March regarding SEN and update on the MOR.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the draft Forward Work Programme from December 2021 to the end of the Mandate.

Take Note Debate

Agreed: The Committee agreed to table the signed motion 'Take Note Debate' requesting a 2-hour debate.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agreed: The Committee noted the list of reports. Mr Muir MLA stated he would speak on Major Capital Projects and Capacity and Capability in NICS; Mr Humphrey MBE MLA agreed to open the debate with an overview; and Mr Beggs MLA will wind the debate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to discuss the debate further at next week's meeting.

The meeting remained in Closed Session at 4.59 pm

11. Any Other Business

None

12. 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 4.59 pm

**Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA
Chairperson
Public Accounts Committee
10 February 2022**