



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Audit Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

14 May 2025

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Alan Chambers MLA (Chairperson)

Jemma Dolan MLA

In attendance by video or teleconference:

Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Apologies:

John Blair MLA

Nick Mathison MLA

In Attendance: Nick Mitford, Assembly Clerk

Ashleigh Mitford, Assembly Clerk

Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk

Alison Ferguson, Clerical Supervisor

Laura Gourley, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 10.05 a.m. in open session

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2025.

4. Matters arising

None.

5. NIAO Main Estimates 2025-26

The following officials from the NIAO joined the meeting at 10.07 a.m.

Rodney Allen, Chief Operating Officer

Brian O'Neill, Director of Corporate Services

The officials briefed the Committee and this was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their briefing.

6. NISPO Main Estimates 2025-26

The following officials from NIPSO joined the meeting at 10.11 a.m.

Margaret Kelly, Ombudsman

Sean Martin, Acting Deputy Ombudsman

The officials briefed the Committee and this was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move the meeting into closed session.

The meeting moved into closed session at 10.14 a.m.

7. Committee report on the estimates for NIAO and NIPSO for 2025-26

The Committee undertook formal consideration of the draft report on the estimates for the NIAO and NIPSO 2025-26 as follows:

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Title Page, Committee Powers and Membership, Table of Contents and List of Abbreviations stands part of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Introduction at paragraphs 6-10 stands part of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Background to the Estimates at paragraphs 11-14 stands part of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the NIAO Estimates 2024-25 at paragraphs 15-16 stands part of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the NIPSO Estimates 2024-25 at paragraphs 17-18 stands part of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Committee Consideration and Conclusion at paragraphs 19-23 stands part of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that this report be the fourth report of the Audit Committee in the 2022-2027 mandate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson will agree the minutes from the meeting today regarding agreement of the report so that it may be included in the Minutes of Proceedings appendix to the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Appendices stand part of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Audit Committee Report on the Estimates of the Northern Ireland Audit Office and the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman 2025-26 be published on the Northern Ireland Assembly website.

8. Correspondence

Noted: The Committee considered the correspondence dated 12 March 2025 from the Ad Hoc Committee on the Assembly Members (Remuneration Board Bill) and noted that the Clerk will brief the Committee on this item at the next meeting.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 13 March 2025 from the Committee for Finance on the Final Budget 2025-26 proposals.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 18 March 2025 from a member of the public which will be forwarded to NIPSO for comment.

Noted: The Committee considered the correspondence dated 24 March 2025 from the Assembly Commission on the Assembly Members (Remuneration Board Bill) and noted that the Clerk will brief the Committee on this item at the next meeting.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 28 March 2025 from the Assembly Business Office advising that the report on the Health and Social Care Imaging Services has been laid in the Business Office.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 27 March 2025 from the Committee for Finance on the Analysis of the 2024-25 Outturn and Forecast Outturn.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 1 May 2024 from the Committee for Finance on the Analysis of the 2024-25 Outturn and Forecast Outturn.

9. Any other business

There was no other business

10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Audit Committee will take on 28 May 2025 at 10.00 a.m. in Room 21.

The meeting was adjourned at 10.20 a.m.

Alan Chambers MLA

Chairperson, Audit Committee

14 May 2025