



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Audit Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

25 June 2025

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Alan Chambers MLA (Chairperson)

Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Nick Mathison MLA

In attendance by video or teleconference:

Jemma Dolan MLA

Apologies:

John Blair MLA

In Attendance:

Ashleigh Mitford, Assembly Clerk

Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk

Alison Ferguson, Clerical Supervisor

Laura Gourley, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 10.01 a.m. in closed session

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

Nick Mathison joined the meeting at 10.03 a.m.

3. Committee review of the arrangements in relation to the Comptroller & Auditor General salary

The Committee Clerk briefed the Committee on a review of evidence and issues paper, for the Committee Review in relation to the Comptroller & Auditor General Salary.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk will present a detailed options paper reflecting the discussion today, alongside a timetable for the review at the meeting on 17 September 2025.

Agreed: The Clerk will seek legal advice, as required, in relation to issues identified in the review.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk will liaise with the relevant Assembly staff on the next steps in relation to the role evaluation and salary benchmarking exercise for the review; to provide the relevant research and evidence gathered to the individual leading the review; and, if applicable, to seek permission from relevant stakeholders for the research and evidence to be shared with any external suppliers for the benchmarking exercise.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an agenda item on 1 October 2025 to consider the previous Committee's 'Review of the Governance and Accountability Arrangements for the NIAO and the NIPSO'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the Terms of Reference for the review with the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and to keep it updated as appropriate.

Diane Forsythe declared an interest that she is a member of the PAC.

The meeting moved into open session at 10.33 a.m.

4. Draft minutes of the meeting on 28 May 2025

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2025.

5. Matters arising

Noted: The Committee noted a budgeting timetable and responses from the NIAO, NIPSO and NIAC in relation to the June monitoring round.

Agreed: The Committee noted the budgeting timetable and agreed to schedule an additional Committee meeting on 10 September 2025 to receive evidence from NIAO, NIPSO and NIAC.

6. Correspondence

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Committee for Finance, dated 29 May 2025, on the analysis of the 2024-25 outturn and forecast outturn.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Department of Finance, dated 23 June 2025 on the power to appoint an external auditor of the NIAO.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Committee for Finance, dated 24 June 2025, on the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill and agreed that it is content to undertake scrutiny of Clause 20 of the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the NIAO to confirm that it is content with the proposed transfer of legislative responsibility for appointing an external auditor to the NIAO from DoF to the Assembly.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Committee for Finance, dated 24 June 2025, on the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council Bill and agreed to consider a draft response at a future meeting.

7. Designation of a new Local Government Auditor

The Committee Clerk briefed the Committee on the response received from the NIAO providing further clarification on the recruitment process for the designation of a new Local Government Auditor.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 10.46 a.m.

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller & Auditor General

Rodney Allen, Chief Operating Officer, NIAO

The witnesses briefed the Committee, and this was followed by questions from Members.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the C&AG to advise that it has noted its proposed approach to the designation of a new Local Government Auditor.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek clarity on the legislative implications in relation to the proposed single auditor for the public sector for Northern Ireland, as recommended in the previous Committee's review in 2022 'Review of the Governance and Accountability Arrangements of the Northern Ireland Audit Office and the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman'. This would include clarity on how this may affect existing Departmental responsibilities.

8. Any other business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to delegate authority to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to submit views on the releasing or withholding of information on any non-routine or contentious Freedom of Information requests received by the Committee during the summer recess period.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that any urgent correspondence received over the summer recess period would be circulated to the Committee and actioned by the Chairperson accordingly, with more routine correspondence considered by the Committee at the meeting on 10 September 2025.

9. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Audit Committee will take on 10 September 2025 at 10.00 a.m. in the Senate.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.00 a.m.

Alan Chambers MLA

Chairperson, Audit Committee

17 September 2025