



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Audit Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

28 May 2025

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Alan Chambers MLA (Chairperson)

Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Nick Mathison MLA

In attendance by video or teleconference:

John Blair MLA

Jemma Dolan MLA

In Attendance:

Ashleigh Mitford, Assembly Clerk

Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk

Laura Gourley, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 10.02 a.m. in open session

1. Apologies

None.

2. Declaration of Interests

Diane Forsythe declared an interest in respect of an item of correspondence for consideration at agenda item 5 from the Public Accounts Committee, in that she is a member of that Committee.

3. Draft Minutes

Noted: The Committee noted that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2025 had been previously agreed by the Chairperson following delegation of authority by the Committee to do so, in order that the minutes could be included in a Committee report published on 14 May 2025.

4. Matters arising

The Committee Clerk briefed members on the Assembly Members (Remuneration Board) Bill regarding and a potential role for the Audit Committee to scrutinise Delegated Legislation in the future.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Ad Hoc Committee and the Assembly Commission, on the Assembly Members (Remuneration Board) Bill. These items of correspondence advised that the Assembly Commission had proposed that Audit Committee would be responsible for the scrutiny of any Statutory Rule (SR) related to a Delegated Power under Clause 4 of the Bill. The Committee agreed to write to the Assembly Commission to advise that Assembly Standing Orders do not permit the Audit Committee, as a Standing Committee, to scrutinise SRs and to suggest that, if required, the

scrutiny role could be undertaken by The Executive Office Committee, given that it has scrutinised Assembly Commission Delegated Legislation in the past.

5. Correspondence

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Public Accounts Committee dated 16 May 2025 on the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Main Estimate 2025-26.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence from the NIAO dated 2 May 2025 on the designation of a new Local Government Auditor and agreed to write to the NIAO to seek clarification on the proposed process, which included an internal competition.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Committee for Finance dated 22 May 2025 on the 2025-25 June Monitoring commissioning letter. The Committee further noted that the Committee Clerk will liaise with NIAO, Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman and the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission to request sight of their June monitoring returns.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Assembly Business Office advising that the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Annual Reports and Accounts 1 April 2023- 31 March 2024 have been laid in the Business Office.

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

The meeting moved into closed session at 10.13 a.m.

6. C&AG salary arrangements

The Committee Clerk briefed the Committee on its review of the arrangements in relation to the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) salary.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Terms of Reference for the review subject to a minor change under the scope of the review.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the Terms of Reference with NIAO for information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed not to include consideration of an interim arrangement for a salary uplift as part of its review. This was on the basis that this would risk pre-empting the outcome of the review without full consideration of all relevant matters. The Committee further agreed to conduct the review in a robust manner and at a reasonable pace.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Assembly Commission to ask if it would be content to arrange for a role evaluation and benchmarking exercise to be undertaken independently and professionally, on behalf of the Committee.

Noted: The Committee noted that the Clerk will prepare and present a review of evidence and issues paper for consideration at its meeting on 25 June 2025.

7. Any other business

There was no other business

8. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Audit Committee will take on 25 June 2025 at 10.00 a.m. in Room 21.

The meeting was adjourned at 10.37 a.m.

Alan Chambers MLA

Chairperson, Audit Committee

25 June 2025