



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Audit Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

29 January 2025

Meeting Location: The Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Alan Chambers MLA (Chairperson)

Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

John Blair MLA

Ciara Ferguson MLA

Nick Mathison MLA

Present by video or teleconference:

Ciara Ferguson MLA

In Attendance:

Nick Mitford, Assembly Clerk

Shane McAteer, Assembly Clerk

Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk

Laura Gourley, Clerical Supervisor

Rachel Keyes, Assembly Research Officer (item 5)

Rebecca Ellis, Assembly Legal Advisor (item 6)

The meeting commenced at 10.04 a.m. in open session

1. Apologies

None.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2024.

4. Matters arising

None.

5. RaISe Briefing – Relevant budget scrutiny processes in neighbouring jurisdictions in relation to their corporate bodies

The Assembly Research Officer, Rachel Keyes, joined the meeting at 10.06 a.m.

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to stakeholders, including the NIO, NIPSO, NIAC to seek their views on potential changes that would see the Audit Committee extend its role to codify their respective budgets.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Scottish and Welsh legislatures to seek information on how the codification process works in practice in relation to their corporate bodies.

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

The meeting moved into closed session at 10.22 a.m.

6. Legal Advice on codifying the Audit Committee's role in relation to the scrutiny of the draft budgets for NIAO, NIPSO and NIAC

The Assembly Legal Advisor, Rebecca Ellis, joined the meeting at 10.23 a.m.

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the NIAO, NIPSO, NIAC and DoF to seek their views on any potential changes that would result in the Audit Committee codifying their respective budgets.

7. C &AG salary arrangements

The Committee Clerk briefed the Committee on the current C&AG salary arrangements and the arrangements for comparable cases.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Terms of Reference for a future review of the options for determining the C &AG's salary in the future will be considered at a forthcoming meeting of the Committee.

Mr Blair left the meeting at 11.12 a.m.

8. Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman (NIPSO) briefing on the Pay and Grading Exercise

The following officials from NIPSO joined the meeting at 11.12 a.m.

Margaret Kelly, Ombudsman

Sean Martin, Acting Deputy Ombudsman

Kirsty McCool, Director of Governance and Support Services

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

Mr Blair rejoined the meeting at 11.18 a.m.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their briefing.

9. Correspondence

Noted: The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- I. Correspondence dated 24 October 2024 from the Committee for Finance on the Budget 2025/26 and Future Years Information Gathering.
- II. Correspondence dated 26 November 2024 from RaISe on a briefing paper on the Chancellor's Budget: Initial considerations for Northern Ireland.
- III. Correspondence dated 23 January 2025 from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) on the January Monitoring 2024/25.
- IV. Correspondence dated 23 January 2025 from the NIAO inviting the Committee to visit their premises.
- V. Correspondence dated 27 January 2025 from the Committee for Finance on the budget 2025/25 round robin exercise.

10. Any other business

There was no other business

11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Audit Committee will take place on 19 February 2025 at 10.00 a.m. in Room 21 Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.28 a.m.

Alan Chambers MLA

Chairperson, Audit Committee

5 March 2025