



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Audit Committee

### Minutes of Proceedings

**5 March 2025**

**Meeting Location:** Room 21, Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

Alan Chambers MLA (Chairperson)

Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

John Blair MLA

Jemma Dolan MLA

**Apologies:**

Nick Mathison MLA

**In Attendance:**

Nick Mitford, Assembly Clerk

Laura Gourley, Clerical Supervisor

Alison Ferguson, Clerical Officer

Caroline Byers, Assembly Legal Advisor (item 6)

**Present by video or teleconference:**

Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk

The meeting commenced at 10.03 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 29 January 2025.

**4. Matters arising**

**Noted:** The Committee noted the correspondence dated 7 February 2025 from the Department of Finance on the Spring Supplementary Estimates 2024-25.

**Noted:** The Committee noted the correspondence dated 13 February 2025 from the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission on its Budget 2024-25 Forecast Outturn and Supply Resolution for Excess Votes for 2023-24.

**Noted:** The Committee noted the correspondence dated 13 February 2025 from the Northern Ireland Audit Office on January Monitoring 2024-25.

## **5. Correspondence**

**Noted:** The Committee noted the correspondence dated 3 February 2025 from the Committee for Finance on the Analysis of 2024-25 Outturn and Forecast Outturn.

**Noted:** The Committee noted the correspondence dated 14 February 2025 from the Department of Finance on the arrangements for the Assembly Commission's Budget and Estimates.

**Noted:** The Committee noted the correspondence dated 21 February 2025 from the Committee for Finance on National Insurance Contribution Costs.

**Agreed:** The Committee noted the correspondence dated 24 February 2025 from a member of the public regarding the activities and governance of NIPSO and agreed to forward it to NIPSO for information. The Committee further agreed to write to the member of the public to advise that the Audit Committee does not scrutinise the work of NISPO or the Ombudsman.

**Noted:** The Committee noted the correspondence dated 4 March 2025 from the NIAO on the general salary arrangements for the Comptroller and Auditor General.

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

The meeting moved into closed session at 10.05 a.m.

## **6. Legal Advice on the salary arrangements for the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG)**

The Assembly Legal Advisor, Caroline Byers, joined the meeting at 10.06 a.m.

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

John Blair left the meeting at 10.37 a.m.

John Blair rejoined the meeting at 10.41 a.m.

The Chairperson thanked the legal advisor for her briefing.

The Legal Advisor left the meeting at 10.42 a.m.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to conduct a full review of the salary arrangements for the C&AG and to consider the Terms of Reference at a future meeting.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the C&AG to advise her of the decision by the Committee to conduct a review into the salary arrangements for the C&AG post.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to neighbouring jurisdictions to seek more information on the mechanisms for setting the salary of C&AGs.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to liaise with the NIAO and the Assembly Research and Information Service to establish further background information on the link between the C&AG salary and the judicial group 5 salary.

**Noted:** The Committee noted that the secretariat would recirculate the research paper on the salary of the C&AG and comparable bodies that was considered at the meeting on 29 January 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 place after Easter recess and Members will be advised of the date in due course.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.09 a.m.

**Alan Chambers MLA**

**Chairperson, Audit Committee**

**14 May 2025**