



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Audit Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

17 June 2026

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Alan Chambers MLA (Chairperson)

John Blair MLA

In attendance by video:

Emma Sheerin MLA

Apologies:

Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Nick Mathison MLA

In attendance:

Ashleigh Mitford, Assembly Clerk

Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk

Laura Gourley, Clerical Supervisor

Alison Ferguson, Clerical Officer

Maeve Corrigan, Legal Advisor (Agenda item 7)

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

The Chairperson advised the Committee that Pam Cameron MLA has been appointed to the Committee as the Deputy Chairperson and replaces Diane Forsythe MLA in that role.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared at this point in the meeting.

3. Draft minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2026.

4. Matters arising

None.

5. Correspondence

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 12 May 2026 from the Committee for Finance in respect of the 2025-26 Public Expenditure Outturn and Forecast Outturn - April (R13) Position

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 4 June 2026 from the Committee for Finance in respect of the HM Treasury Open Book Review of Northern Ireland Executive Budget.

6. AOB

None.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into Closed Session to consider agenda items 7, 8 and 9.

The meeting moved into Closed Session at 10.08 a.m.

7. Implications of the lack of an agreed Executive budget for the Audit Committee – briefing by Legal Services

The Committee Clerk briefed the Committee on this agenda item.

The Assembly Legal Advisor, Maeve Corrigan, joined the meeting at 10.15 a.m.

The Legal Advisor briefed the Committee on its requested legal advice. This was followed by a question and answer session.

John Blair left the meeting at 10.35 a.m.

John Blair rejoined the meeting at 10.41 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed Option 1 on the secretariat memo which is to write to the Accounting Officers of the NIAO, NIPSO and the NIAC to set out the Committee's understanding of the issue; to suggest that if they have not already done so, that they seek appropriate advice; and to state that it is supportive of the bodies being resourced adequately to carry out their vital work, in the context of the very difficult position all Departments and public sector bodies will be operating in, should an Executive budget not be agreed by the end of July 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the final draft of the letters to the three bodies will be approved by the Committee by correspondence, noting it has agreed the basis for the letter at the meeting, subject to legal advice.

The Chairperson thanked the Legal Advisor for her briefing.

The Legal Advisor left the meeting at 11.29 a.m.

Emma Sheerin left the meeting at 11.29 a.m.

8. Committee consideration of the codification workstream – an update

The Committee Clerk briefed the Committee on this agenda item.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the revised policy document and agreed that the Clerk will forward the updated draft of the policy to the NIAO and NISPO, along with a rationale for the changes.

Noted: The Committee noted that the formal response from the NIAC on the wider Committee position paper is anticipated early in the next session, and that it is anticipated that officials will take forward work as far as possible over the summer recess period.

9. Feasibility Study – job evaluation to determine the future salary payable for the Office of the Comptroller & Auditor General for Northern Ireland – an update

The Committee Clerk briefed the Committee on this agenda item.

Noted: The Committee noted that the Chief People Officer and Managing Director of the House of Commons has acknowledged the Committee's invitation for expressions of interest to carry out the feasibility study, and that the Clerk will be meeting with a representative from HR to provide further information on the Committee's request.

Noted: The Committee noted the progress to date on the feasibility study.

10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Audit Committee will take place on 16 September 2026 at 10.00 a.m. subject to the Department of Finance budget timetable.

The meeting was adjourned at 10.42 a.m.

Alan Chambers MLA

Chairperson, Audit Committee

30 September 2026