



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Public Accounts Committee

## Minutes of Proceedings

**Thursday, 9 May 2024**

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

**Present:**

Cheryl Brownlee, MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Tom Buchanan, MLA

Cathal Boylan, MLA

Diane Forsyth, MLA

Colm Gildernew, MLA

David Honeyford, MLA

John Stewart, MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Pádraig Delargy, MLA

**Apologies:**

Daniel McCrossan, MLA (Chairperson)

**In Attendance:** Lucia Wilson (Committee Clerk)  
Kirsten McClelland (Assistant Committee Clerk)  
Karen Barry (Clerical Supervisor)

The meeting commenced at 2.12 pm in closed session

The Deputy Chairperson advised members of the requirement to declare interests in any items of business on the agenda, and discussed the substantive items of business to be considered.

The meeting moved into public session at 2.14 pm.

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Daniel McCrossan, MLA.

### **2. Draft minutes**

**Agreed:** The draft minutes of the meeting on 2 May 2024 were agreed.

### **3. Matters Arising**

### **4. Chairperson's Business**

No Chairperson's business was raised.

### **5. Declaration of Interests**

### **6. Correspondence**

Members were advised of correspondence dated 1 May 2024 from Pivotal regarding their report on economic inactivity requesting an opportunity to brief the Public Accounts Committee.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to extend an invitation to Pivotal to brief the Committee on their report.

Members were advised of correspondence dated 2 May 2024 from the Northern Ireland Audit Office sharing their Corporate Plan, 2024-29 and Public Reporting Forward Work Programme for 2024-25.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to note this correspondence.

Members were informed of correspondence dated 2 May 2024 from Mr David Fry of the Construction Employers Federation in respect of the inquiry into Public Procurement in Northern Ireland.

David Honeyford declared an interest in this matter as a property developer.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to respond to Mr Fry.

Tom Buchanan joined the meeting at 2.16 pm.

## **7. Memorandum of Reply: Closing The Gap**

The following officials from the Northern Ireland Audit Office joined the meeting at 2.18 pm

**Ms Dorinnia Carville**, Comptroller and Auditor General, NI

**Ms Colette Kane**, Director, NIAO

**Mr Kyle Bingham**, Assembly Support Officer, NIAO

The Committee received a briefing on the Memoranda of Reply received from the Department of Finance.

The Committee discussed the Memorandum of Reply (MoR) on the Committee's tenth report of the 2017-2022 mandate, Closing The Gap - Social deprivation and links to Educational Attainment, Department for Education.

Pádraig Delargy joined the meeting at 2.21 pm.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education Accounting Officer to request attendance before the Committee to address questions around the Memorandum of Reply.

Officials were thanked for attending and left the meeting at 2.23 pm.

## **8. Memorandum of Reply: Planning in Northern Ireland**

The following officials from the Northern Ireland Audit Office joined the meeting at 2.23 pm

**Ms Dorinnia Carville**, Comptroller and Auditor General, NI

**Mr Patrick Barr**, Director, NIAO

**Mr Kyle Bingham**, Assembly Support Officer, NIAO

The Committee received a briefing on the Memoranda of Reply received from the Department of Finance.

Colm Gildernew joined the meeting at 2.29 pm.

The Committee noted the Memorandum of Reply (MoR) on the Committee's fourteenth report of the 2017-2022 mandate, on Planning in Northern Ireland, Department of Infrastructure.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department for Infrastructure Accounting Officer to request attendance before the Committee to address questions around the Memorandum of Reply. Subject to the information provided, the Committee will consider inviting SOLAS to provide evidence at a later date.

Officials were thanked for attending and left the meeting at 2.40 pm.

The meeting moved into closed session at 2.40 pm.

## **9. Inquiry on Public Procurement in Northern Ireland: Preparation Session**

The following officials from the Northern Ireland Audit Office joined the meeting at 2.40 pm

**Ms Dorinnia Carville**, Comptroller and Auditor General, NI

**Ms Suzanne Jones**, Director, NIAO

**Mr Michael Heery**, Audit Manager, NIAO

**Mr Kyle Bingham**, Assembly Support Officer, NIAO

**Mr Geoff Murphy**, Senior Auditor, NIAO (Public Gallery)

**Ms Corey Parr**, Auditor, NIAO (Public Gallery)

Members were reminded that the Committee's second inquiry, 'Public Sector Procurement in Northern Ireland' would hear its first evidence session on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

The Committee received a briefing in preparation for its first evidence session on Public Procurement in Northern Ireland, scheduled for 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024

The meeting returned to open session at 3.08 pm.

## **10. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee was briefed on the draft Forward Work programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed upon witnesses to invite to provide oral evidence to its Inquiry on Child Poverty in Northern Ireland. The Committee also agreed to consider requesting written submissions at a later date following oral evidence sessions.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed its forward work programme.

## **11. Any Other Business**

## **12. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The Deputy Chairperson thanked officials for their attendance and advised members that the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May, at 2.00 pm in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 3.15 pm.

**Cheryl Brownlee MLA**

**Deputy Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee**

**9 May 2024**