



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 11 April 2024

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Daniel McCrossan, MLA (Chairperson)

Cheryl Brownlee, MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Cathal Boylan, MLA

Tom Buchanan, MLA

Diane Forsyth, MLA

Colm Gildernew, MLA

David Honeyford, MLA

John Stewart, MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Pádraig Delargy, MLA

Apologies:

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

The meeting commenced at 2.04 pm in closed session

The 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 2.06 pm.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies received.

2. Draft minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting on 21 March 2024 were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

Members noted correspondence dated 25 March 2024 from Neil Gibson, DoF regarding his attendance at an evidence session on Public Procurement in NI.

Members noted correspondence dated 9 April 2024 from the Audit Committee regarding Draft Budgets 2024-25 for the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO), the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) and the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (NIAC). The Audit Committee has agreed that the Executive's Budget Document should make provision for NIAO having a Resource DEL Budget of £10,486K and Capital DEL Budget of £40K.

4. Chairperson's Business

No Chairperson's business was raised.

5. Declaration of Interests

The Chairperson reminded members of their requirement to register their interests under Standing Order 69(5).

Colm Gildernew, MLA declared an interest in respect of his previous work in mental health within social work.

6. Correspondence

A letter dated 22 March 2024 regarding the Meenan Square Development, Derry/Londonderry was noted. Committee staff confirmed that consent has been provided for the correspondence to be forwarded to the appropriate Committee for consideration.

Agreed: Members agreed to note the correspondence and forward it to the Committee for Communities and The Executive Office.

7. Northern Ireland Audit Office – Briefing – Inquiry on Mental Health Services in Northern Ireland

The following officials from the Northern Ireland Audit Office joined the meeting at 2.10 pm:

Ms Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Ms Collette Kane, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Mr Roger McCance, Audit Manager, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer, Northern Ireland Audit Office.

Members were reminded that the Committee's first inquiry, 'Mental Health Services in Northern Ireland' would hear its first evidence session on 25 April 2024.

The Committee moved into closed session at 2.11 pm.

The Committee received a briefing in preparation for its first evidence session on Mental Health Services in Northern Ireland, scheduled for 25 April 2024.

Mr Gildernew left the meeting at 2:28 pm.

Mr Gildernew re-joined the meeting at 2:31 pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Mental Health Champion, Professor Siobhan O'Neill to brief the Committee on her role as Mental Health Champion and to seek her views on Mental Health Services in Northern Ireland.

8. Draft Induction Plan

The Clerk outlined the Draft Induction Plan to members.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Draft Induction Plan.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee was briefed on the draft Forward Work programme and the PAC inquiry timelines.

The Committee noted the updated list of NIAO reports, and that all Committees will be notified of those NIAO reports which PAC has agreed to release from primacy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that its third inquiry will be a 'Review of the Child Poverty Strategy and that its fourth inquiry will be 'Major Capital Projects: Follow-up Report'.

The meeting moved into open session at 4.05 pm.

10. Any Other Business

The Clerk updated the Committee on a number of outstanding MORs and that work was being done to progress these.

Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The Chairperson thanked officials for their attendance and advised members that the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 18th April, at 2.00 pm in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.07 pm.

Daniel McCrossan MLA

Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee

11 April 2024