



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 23 May 2024

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Daniel McCrossan, MLA (Chairperson)

Cathal Boylan, MLA

Tom Buchanan, MLA

Diane Forsythe, MLA

Colm Gildernew, MLA

David Honeyford, MLA

John Stewart, MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Pádraig Delargy, MLA

Apologies:

Cheryl Brownlee, MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

In Attendance: Lucia Wilson (Committee Clerk)
Trevor Allen (Senior Assistant Committee Clerk)
Karen Barry (Clerical Supervisor)
Barbara Daly (Clerical Officer)

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 commenced at 2.06 pm in public session

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cheryl Brownlee, MLA.

2. Draft minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting on 16 May 2024 were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

Members noted that Goretti Horgan, Member of the Expert Panel on Child Poverty, has confirmed attendance on 20 June in respect of the Committee's Child Poverty Inquiry.

4. Chairperson's Business

No Chairperson's business was raised.

5. Declaration of Interests

Mr Honeyford MLA declared an interest as a company director and member of the Federation of Small Businesses.

Mr McCrossan MLA declared an interest as a company director.

6. Correspondence

Members noted a written submission from the Construction Employer's Federation in relation to the Inquiry on Public Procurement.

Ms Forsythe MLA joined the meeting at 2.10 pm

Agreed: Members agreed to forward the submission to the Northern Ireland Audit Office for inclusion in the evidence base of the Public Procurement Inquiry.

The meeting moved into closed session at 2.10 pm.

7. Inquiry on Public Sector Procurement in Northern Ireland: Issues Paper

The following officials from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) joined the meeting at 2.10 pm.

Ms Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General, NIAO

Ms Suzanne Jones, Director, NIAO

Mr Michael Heery, Audit Manager, NIAO

Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer, NIAO

Officials discussed the issues paper and sought Members' agreement to the proposals contained therein.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to all Centres of Procurement Expertise (CoPE) in accordance with the proposals outlined in the issues paper.

Officials left the meeting at 2.31 pm.

The meeting moved into public session at 2.31 pm.

8. Inquiry on Public Sector Procurement in Northern Ireland: Briefing from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)

Mr Neil Hutcheson of the FSB joined the meeting at 2.31 pm.

Mr Hutcheson discussed issues relating to the prompt payment of invoices for public procurement contracts.

Mr Hutcheson left the meeting at 3.23 pm.

9. Memorandum of Reply (MOR) - Sports Sustainability Fund

The following officials from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) joined the meeting at 3.23 pm.

Ms Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General, NIAO

Mr Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer, NIAO

NIAO Officials, the Committee Clerk and the Treasury Office of Accounts briefed the committee on the MOR relating to the February 2022 Inquiry Report on the Sports Sustainability Fund.

Agreed: Members agreed to refer the MOR to the Committee for Communities for its consideration, and to seek a departmental update 12 months from its consideration.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee was briefed on the draft Forward Work programme.

Agreed: Members agreed the forward work programme and to advise the Clerk of their availability to attend future meetings.

11. Any Other Business

No other items of business were raised.

12. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The Chairperson advised members that the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 30th May, at 2.00 pm in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 3.34 pm.

Daniel McCrossan MLA

Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee

23 May 2024