



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Public Accounts Committee

## Minutes of Proceedings

**Thursday, 27 February 2025**

**Meeting Location:** Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

Daniel McCrossan, MLA

Cheryl Brownlee, MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Diane Forsythe, MLA

Colin Crawford, MLA

David Honeyford, MLA

Colm Gildernew, MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Cathal Boylan, MLA

Pádraig Delargy, MLA

**Apologies:**

Tom Buchanan, MLA

**In Attendance:**

Lucia Wilson (Committee Clerk)

Kirsten McClelland (Assistant Committee Clerk)

Marion Johnson (Clerical Supervisor)

Damien Brown (Clerical Officer)

The meeting opened in public session at 2.07 pm.

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Tom Buchanan, MLA

### **2. Draft minutes**

**Agreed:** The draft minutes of the meeting on 20 February 2025 were agreed.

### **3. Declaration of Interests**

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

Daniel McCrossan, MLA declared an interest as one of the BMA witnesses is a GP at his own practice.

Pádraig Delargy, MLA declared an interest as a number of family members are GPs including one who is a former BMA representative in England.

Cathal Boylan, MLA declared an interest as one of the BMA witnesses is a GP at a practice within his constituency.

Diane Forsythe, MLA declared an interest as a member of the Finance Committee.

Colm Gildernew, MLA declared an interest as Chairperson of the Communities Committee.

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

#### **5. Matters Arising**

The following officials from the Northern Ireland Audit Office joined the meeting at 2.22 pm:

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer

Members noted correspondence from Peter May, Accounting Officer, Department for Health providing a response to questions raised by members in respect of nursing home bed procurement.

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

Members noted an update from the Minister for Finance regarding the implementation of the outstanding recommendations of the RHI inquiry.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to note this correspondence and share with the Finance Committee.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to release the reports into the Northern Ireland Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive scheme: Assessing progress with the implementation of the Public Inquiry recommendations from primacy.

Members noted correspondence from Colum Boyle, Accounting Officer, Department for Communities, sharing an update on the development of the Executive's Anti-Poverty Strategy.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to note this correspondence and agreed a draft letter to the Department.

## **6. Correspondence**

### **7. Inquiry into Access to General Practice in Northern Ireland – Oral Evidence from the Patient Client Council**

The following witnesses and officials joined the meeting at 2.25 pm:

Meadhbha Monaghan, CEO, Patient Client Council

Peter Hutchinson, Senior Policy Impact and Influence Manager, Patient Client Council

Katherine McElroy, Principal Practitioner for Advocacy, Patient Client Council

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General, NIAO

Stuart Stevenson, Treasury Officer of Accounts, Department of Finance

Members heard evidence on Access to General Practice Services in Northern Ireland.

The Chair thanked the witnesses and Officials for attending. Witnesses left the meeting at 3.17pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 3.17 pm.

The meeting resumed at 3.30 pm.

### **8. Inquiry into Access to General Practice in Northern Ireland – Oral Evidence from the British Medical Association and Royal College of General Practitioners**

The following witnesses and officials joined the meeting at 3.30 pm:

Dr Frances O'Hagan, Chairperson, BMA NI GP Committee, CEO, British Medical Association

Dr Ciaran Mullan, Deputy Chairperson, BMA NI GP Committee, CEO, British Medical Association

Dr Ursula Mason, Chairperson, Royal College of General Practitioners NI

Dr Emma Murtagh, Deputy Chairperson, Royal College of General Practitioners NI

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General, NIAO

Stuart Stevenson, Treasury Officer of Accounts, Department of Finance

Members heard evidence on Access to General Practice Services in Northern Ireland.

Diane Forsythe, MLA left the meeting at 4.18 pm.

Cathal Boylan, MLA left the meeting at 4.49 pm.

The Chair thanked the witnesses and Officials for attending. Witnesses left the meeting at 5.10 pm.

The meeting moved into closed session at 5.10 pm.

## **9. Preparation session for inquiry into Access to General Practice in Northern Ireland**

The following officials from the Northern Ireland Audit Office joined the meeting at 5.10 pm:

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Colette Kane, Director

Roger McCance, Audit Manager

Kyle Bingham, Assembly Support Officer

Members discussed the evidence heard in the inquiry into Access to General Practice in Northern Ireland.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to write to Peter May, Accounting Officer, Department of Health to request further information ahead of the evidence session scheduled for 6 March 2025.

## **10. Forward Work Programme**

**Agreed:** Members agreed to defer consideration of the forward work programme to the next meeting.

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

The next meeting will take place in the Senate Chamber on Thursday 6 March 2025 at 2.00 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.36 pm.

**Daniel McCrossan MLA**

**Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee**

**6 March 2024**