



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Public Accounts Committee

## Minutes of Proceedings

**Thursday, 25 September**

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

**Present:** Daniel McCrossan, MLA (Chairperson)  
Diane Forsythe, MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Stephen Dunne, MLA  
Colm Gildernew MLA  
Cathal Boylan, MLA  
David Honeyford, MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Pádraig Delargy, MLA

**Apologies:** Tom Buchanan, MLA

**In Attendance:** Lucia Wilson (Committee Clerk)  
Kirsten McClelland (Assistant Committee Clerk)

Karen Barry (Clerical Supervisor)

The meeting opened in public session at 2.06 pm.

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from, Tom Buchanan, MLA.

### **2. Draft minutes**

**Agreed:** Members agreed the draft minutes of the meeting on 18 September 2025.

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

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

Diane Forsythe, MLA declared an interest as APS to the Education Minister.

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

Pádraig Delargy, MLA declared an interest in respect of membership of the Economy Committee, relatives in General Practice roles, as a former teacher, and as a member of a Board of Governors.

David Honeyford, MLA declared an interest as a member of the Economy Committee.

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

The Chairperson welcomed Stephen Dunne, MLA to the Public Accounts Committee and thanked Cheryl Brownlee, MLA for her support as Deputy Chairperson and service to the Committee.

## **5. Matters Arising**

## **6. Correspondence**

Members considered a report from Pivotal entitled 18 months of the Northern Ireland Executive.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to consider inviting Pivotal and other relevant organisations to present to the Committee. This matter will be considered further at the next meeting of the Committee.

Members considered a letter from a member of the public raising concerns in respect of the awarding of heritage contracts.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to refer this matter to the Communities Committee as it is not within the remit of the Public Accounts Committee.

## **7. Developing the Skills for Northern Ireland's Future: Memorandum of Reply**

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.14pm.

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Patrick Barr, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Frances Byrne, Head of Corporate Affairs, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

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

Members considered the memorandum of reply in respect of its report into Developing the Skills for Northern Ireland's Future.

Cathal Boylan, MLA left the meeting at 2.34 pm.

Cathal Boylan, MLA rejoined the meeting at 2.38 pm.

Members expressed disappointment at the memorandum of reply and the timescales provided for delivery against the recommendations of the report.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to write to the Department of Finance to seek clarification on a number of areas.

The Chairperson thanked officials for attending.

Officials left the meeting at 2.41 pm.

## **8. Disclaimed Department for Economy Accounts: Update from C&AG**

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.41pm.

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Seamus Wade, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Karen Costley, Audit Manager, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Frances Byrne, Head of Corporate Affairs, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

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

Members received a briefing from the Comptroller and Auditor General on the disclaimed accounts.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to write to the Department for the Economy to seek further information and clarification on the issues raised.

The Chairperson thanked officials for attending.

Officials left the meeting at 3.12pm.

## **9. Access to General Practice in Northern Ireland: Briefing on Citizen Space results.**

The Clerk briefed members on the quantitative results of the Citizen Space survey and ongoing analysis of the qualitative responses.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to consider briefing the Accounting Officer and representative bodies in advance of the final publication of the report.

## **10. Managing the Schools Estate: Consideration of draft report.**

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.47pm.

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General;

Patrick Barr, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Peter O'Sullivan, Audit Manager, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Geoff Murphy, Senior Auditor, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Sarah McElwee, Auditor, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

Frances Byrne, Head of Corporate Affairs, Northern Ireland Audit Office;

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

The Clerk briefed members on correspondence received from HSENI and the schools' governing bodies in response to requests made by the Committee in relation to the inquiry.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to write to the schools' governing bodies to advise them that no further information would be required.

Members received a briefing on the draft report.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to commence formal consideration of the report at its meeting on 2 October 2025.

The Chairperson thanked officials for attending.

Officials left the meeting at 4.13 pm.

## **11. Forward Work Programme**

**Agreed:** Members agreed the draft forward work programme, subject to future updates.

## **12. Any Other Business**

**Agreed:** Members agreed to commission a video update on the ongoing work of the Committee this autumn.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to provide expressions of interest to attend the BIMR PAC conference in November 2025.

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

The next meeting will take place in the Senate Chamber on Thursday 2 October 2025 at 2.00 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.19 pm.

**Diane Forsythe**

**Deputy Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee**

**2 October 2025**