



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 11 June 2026

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Daniel McCrossan MLA (Chairperson)
Tom Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jon Burrows MLA
Stephen Dunne MLA
Colm Gildernew MLA
David Honeyford MLA
Gareth Wilson MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Jemma Dolan MLA

Apologies: Cathal Boylan MLA

In Attendance: Lucia Wilson (Committee Clerk)
Angela McParland (Assistant Committee Clerk)
Karen Barry (Clerical Supervisor)
Yannie Mahood (Clerical Officer)

The meeting opened in public session at 2.12pm.

1. Apologies

Apologies were noted from Cathal Boylan MLA.

2. Draft minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting on 28th May 2026.

3. Declaration of Interests

Stephen Dunne MLA declared an interest as Assembly Private Secretary (APS) to the Minister for Communities.

Colm Gildernew MLA declared an interest as Chair of the Committee for Communities and in respect of his Private Members Bill on Homelessness.

David Honeyford MLA declared an interest as a Member of the Committee for the Economy.

4. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson thanked the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) for hosting the Committee at NIAO Headquarters on 4th June 2026, where members received a highly informative training session from Mr Brian Whalley on public audit, governance and accountability.

5. Matters Arising

The Committee considered a response from the Accounting Officer (AO) of The Executive Office regarding the Inquiry into Major IT Projects in Northern Ireland, providing further information on how the development and implementation of an Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy may support delivery of Major IT Projects.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the AO and receive the following further information:

- timelines for completion of the public consultation and the stakeholder engagement programme;
- what benchmarking exercises have been carried out on where AI can add the greatest value and deliver efficiencies, either under the Chief Scientific and Technology Adviser, or by way of the Office of AI and Digital;
- a timeline for publication of the Strategy, action plan, and key performance indicators; and
- the structure that the Chief Digital Officer will carry out their role within, and the governance and accountability structure for the overall implementation of the AI Strategy.

6. Correspondence

The Committee considered further correspondence from a member of the public concerning environmental health findings and housing conditions of a Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) house.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the further correspondence from the individual and took no further action as the matter does not fall within the remit of the Committee and is not connected to any current inquiry of the Committee.

The Committee considered correspondence from a member of the public in relation to the response time to a Freedom of Information (FOI) request from the Department of Health (DoH) Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG).

Agreed: The Committee agreed that FOI requests falls outside the remit of the Committee and is subject to separate statutory processes.

The Committee agreed to write to the member of the public explaining that the Committee is not in a position to intervene in individual FOI requests, which are subject to separate statutory processes, and to advise on the appropriate organisations the individual may wish to contact.

The meeting moved to closed session at 2.17pm.

7. Memorandum of Reply on Homelessness in Northern Ireland: Oral Briefing by the Department for Communities

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.17pm:

- Grainia Long, AO, Department for Communities (DfC); and
- Caroline Connor, Interim Director, NIHE.

The Chairperson welcomed the officials to the Committee.

The Committee considered a response from DfC on recommendations 2 and 10 of the Committee's Report on its Inquiry on Homelessness in Northern Ireland.

The officials provided a briefing on the Department's response in the Memorandum of Reply (MOR) to recommendation 8 of the Committee's Report on its Inquiry on Homelessness in Northern Ireland.

The officials left the meeting at 2.48pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Department will follow up the briefing by keeping the Committee informed of developments in regards to recommendation 8.

Agreed: The officials agreed to provide additional information relating to a HMO list referred to during the briefing, together with a response on a matter raised by a member during the evidence session.

Gareth Wilson MLA left the meeting at 2.43pm.

Gareth Wilson MLA returned to the meeting at 2.48pm.

The meeting moved to open session at 2.48pm.

8. Inquiry on Northern Ireland Energy Strategy: Oral Evidence from the Department for the Economy

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.48pm:

- Ian Snowden, AO, Department for the Economy (DfE);
- Richard Rodgers, Head of Energy Group, DfE; and
- Anne-Marie McConn, Head of Energy Strategy and Corporate Services, DfE.

The following officials were also in attendance:

- Dorinnia Carville, C&AG, NIAO; and
- Stuart Stevenson, Treasury Officer of Accounts, Department of Finance (DoF).

The officials briefed the Committee on implementation of the Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland. The briefing was followed by a questions and answer session on findings of the NIAO Report 'Northern Ireland Energy Strategy', published 21st October 2025.

Jon Burrows MLA joined the meeting at 3.36pm.

Stephen Dunne MLA left the meeting at 4.00pm.

Stephen Dunne MLA returned to the meeting at 4.06pm.

The Chairperson left the meeting at 4.17pm, the Deputy Chairperson took the Chair.

The Chairperson returned to the meeting at 4.26pm, and took the Chair.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending.

The DfE officials left the meeting at 4.32pm.

The meeting moved to closed session at 4.32pm.

The following NIAO officials joined the C&AG:

- Seamus Wade, Director; and
- Gary Currie, Audit Manager.

The Committee considered the evidence received from DfE.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending.

The DoF official left the meeting at 4.46pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to DfE with follow up questions on the evidence session.

9. Draft Forward Work Programme

The following NIAO officials joined the meeting at 4.46pm:

- Dorinnia Carville, C&AG;
- Seamus Wade, Director; and

- Gary Currie, Audit Manager.

The C&AG provided an update on forthcoming reports.

The Clerk briefed Members on the Committee's forward work programme.

Agreed: Members agreed the draft forward work programme.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next Committee meeting will take place on Thursday 18th June 2026 at 2.00pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.00pm.

Daniel McCrossan

Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee

18 June 2026