



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 29 January 2026

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Daniel McCrossan, MLA (Chairperson)
Diane Forsythe, MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Stephen Dunne, MLA
Tom Buchanan, MLA
Colm Gildernew, MLA
David Honeyford, MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference: Pádraig Delargy, MLA
Jon Burrows, MLA

Apologies: Cathal Boylan, MLA

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

Karen Barry (Clerical Supervisor)

Yannie Mahood (Clerical Officer)

The meeting opened in public session at 2.16pm.

1. Apologies

Apologies were noted from Cathal Boylan, MLA.

2. Draft minutes

Agreed: Members agreed the draft minutes of the meeting on 22 January 2026.

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 and in respect of a Private Members Bill .

Pádraig Delargy, MLA declared a former teacher and member of a Board of Governors.

David Honeyford, MLA declared an interest as a member of a Board of Governors.

Daniel McCrossan, MLA declared an interest in respect of the A5 campaign in his constituency area.

Jon Burrows, MLA declared an interest in respect of a family member working for the Strategic Investment Board.

4. Chairperson's Business

5. Matters Arising

Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Infrastructure relating to Road Openings by Utilities.

Agreed: Members agreed to share the correspondence for inclusion in the final report.

Members noted correspondence from the Department for Infrastructure following the evidence session on Road Openings by Utilities.

Agreed: Members agreed to share the correspondence for inclusion in the final report.

6. Correspondence

Members considered correspondence from a member of the public regarding concerns over governance, risk and sponsor oversight at CCEA.

Agreed: Due to the sensitive nature of the correspondence, members agreed to consider it in closed session under Any Other Business.

7. Ministerial Directions

The following witnesses and officials joined the meeting at 2.20 pm.

Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General

The Committee considered a Ministerial Direction issued by the Department of Education Accounting Officer in relation to Teachers' Pay award 2025/26.

Agreed: Members agreed to note the Ministerial Direction.

Witnesses left the meeting at 2.30 pm.

8. Memorandum of Reply and Ministerial Directions

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.30 pm.

Neil Gibson, Accounting Officer, Department of Finance;

Sharon Smyth, Deputy Secretary, Construction and Procurement

Delivery, DoF;

Scott Wilson, Head of the Strategic Investment Board.

The Chair welcomed the witnesses and thanked them for attending to brief the Committee.

The Committee took evidence on:

- delays to the Memorandum of Reply (MOR) on the Major Capital Projects – Follow Up Report and delays and inconsistencies in Memoranda of Reply (MORs);
- the operation of the Ministerial Direction process; and
- system-wide governance and accountability issues.

Members raised concerns about the delays in delivery of the MOR on Major Capital Projects – Follow Up Report due to the ongoing consideration of the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI) by the Executive. Members also emphasised the importance of timely, clear and high-quality MORs to support effective scrutiny.

David Honeyford, MLA left the meeting at 3.13 pm.

Stephen Dunne, MLA left the meeting at 3.52 pm and rejoined 3.57 pm.

The following officials joined the meeting at 4.05 pm.

Stuart Stevenson, Treasury Officer of Accounts, Dept of Finance

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for attending.

Witnesses left the meeting at 4.35 pm.

The meeting moved into closed session at 4.35 pm.

Members discussed the briefing provided.

Agreed: Members agreed to request quarterly updates from the Department of Finance and seek further clarification on the delay to the MOR.

Agreed: Members agreed to seek a single point of contact from Department of Finance to resolve issues with MOR.

Jon Burrows, MLA left the meeting at 4.40 pm.

9. Draft Forward Work Programme

Agreed: Members agreed to defer selection of the next inquiry to the next meeting.

The Clerk briefed Members on plans for the launch of the report on Homelessness in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: Members agreed to host the event in the Skainos Centre.

Pádraig Delargy left the meeting at 4.53 pm.

10. Any Other Business

Members considered correspondence from a member of the public regarding concerns over governance, risk and sponsor oversight at CCEA.

Agreed: Members agreed to forward the correspondence to the Northern Ireland Audit Office for further consideration of the issues raised.

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting will take place in the Senate Chamber on Thursday 5 February 2026 at 2.00pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.05 pm.

Daniel McCrossan

Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee

5 February 2026