



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 1 October 2026

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Daniel McCrossan MLA (Chairperson)
Tom Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Cathal Boylan MLA
Stephen Dunne MLA
Mike Nesbitt MLA
Gareth Wilson MLA

Present by video conference:

Áine Murphy MLA

Apologies: Colm Gildernew MLA
David Honeyford MLA

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

The meeting opened in public session at 2.03pm.

1. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

2. Draft minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting on 17th September 2026.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

4. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson referred to the Committee hosting the British Islands and Mediterranean Region of the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees (BIMR CAPAC) Network Event 2026 on Thursday 24th September 2026.

The Chairperson thanked the Members and the Network for their participation in the event and thanked the Clerk and the Committee Office for their work in organising the event.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Network, to acknowledge the success of the event, and thank the delegates for their participation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Speaker and thank him for meeting with delegates and welcoming them to Parliament Buildings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Dame Sandra Dawson and thank her for her key speech and participation in the questions and answer session for delegates.

5. Matters Arising

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Finance providing an update on the Memorandum of Reply on Public Procurement in Northern Ireland and progress made against the committee's recommendations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a further update to be received at the end of February 2026.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department for the Economy on the Review of the Northern Ireland Skills Council which the Committee had recommended in the report for the Inquiry into Developing the skills for Northern Ireland's future.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to welcome completion of the Review and seek clarification on the status of the skills strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that longer-term scrutiny of the Council's effectiveness will be recommended by the Committee to its successor.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department for the Economy providing further information requested by the Committee with regards to the Committee's Inquiry on Northern Ireland Energy Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the correspondence in its written evidence for the Inquiry.

6. Correspondence

The Committee noted correspondence from the Audit Committee concerning proposals for the budget for the Northern Ireland Audit Office.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding a short ceremony to mark Baby Loss on Monday 12th October 2026 on the steps of Parliament Buildings.

The meeting moved into closed session at 2.16pm.

7. Formal Consideration of the Draft Report on the Inquiry into Northern Ireland Energy Strategy

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.17pm:

- Dorinnia Carville, Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG);
- Seamus Wade, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO); and
- Gary Currie, Audit Manager, NIAO.

The Committee formally considered its draft report on its Inquiry into Northern Ireland Energy.

Title Page

Title Page: Read and Agreed.

Committee Powers and Membership

Committee Powers and Membership: Read and Agreed.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms: Read and Agreed.

Executive Summary

Introduction: Read and Agreed.

Background: Read and Agreed as amended.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Read and Agreed.

Recommendation 2: Read and Agreed.

Recommendation 3: Read and Agreed.

Recommendation 4: Read and Agreed as amended.

Recommendation 5: Read and Agreed.

Recommendation 6: Read and Agreed as amended.

Recommendation 7: Read and Agreed.

Recommendation 8: Read and Agreed.

Recommendation 9: Read and Agreed.

Recommendation 10: Read and Agreed.

Recommendation 11: Read and Agreed.

Introduction

Paragraph 25: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 26: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 27: Read and Agreed.

Background

Paragraph 28: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 29: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 30: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 31: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 32: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 33: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 34: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 35: Read and Agreed.

Section titled 'Better communication and engagement is needed to improve stakeholder confidence in the delivery of the Energy Strategy and to educate and assist consumers'

The Committee Read and Agreed the above title.

Paragraph 36: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 37: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 38: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 39: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 40: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 41: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 42: Read and Agreed as amended.

Paragraph 43: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 44: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 45: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 46: Read and Agreed.

Section title ‘The pace of delivery needs to accelerate significantly over the remaining four years to deliver on the 2030 energy savings and renewables targets’

The Committee Read and Agreed the above title as amended.

Paragraph 47: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 48: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 49: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 50: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 51: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 52: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 53: Read and Agreed as amended.

Paragraph 54: Read and Agreed as amended.

Paragraph 55: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 56: Read and Agreed.

Section titled ‘Better cross-departmental collaboration is needed to create the right market conditions to maximise economic investment and achieve the energy strategy targets’

The Committee Read and Agreed the above title.

Paragraph 57: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 58: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 59: Read and Agreed as amended.

Paragraph 60: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 61: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 62: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 63: Read and Agreed as amended.

Paragraph 64: Read and Agreed as amended.

Paragraph 65: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 66: Read and Agreed.

Section titled ‘Action planning and delivery discipline still need urgent improvement’

The Committee Read and Agreed the above title as amended.

Paragraph 67: Read and Agreed as amended.

Paragraph 68: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 69: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 70: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 71: Read and Agreed as amended.

Paragraph 72: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 73: Read and Agreed.

Section titled ‘Governance landscape and reporting arrangements still require review’

The Committee Read and Agreed the above title.

Paragraph 74: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 75: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 76: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 77: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 78: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 79: Read and Agreed.

Paragraph 80: Read and Agreed.

Agreed: A final report will be considered at the meeting on 15th October.

The Committee noted the draft report is classified as restricted for Members’ attention and therefore should not be published more widely until the embargoed date of Thursday 22nd October 2026.

The Chairperson thanked the C&AG for attending the Committee’s consideration of the draft report.

8. Committee Inquiry on A Strategic Review of the Planning Appeals
Commission: Oral Briefing by the Northern Ireland Audit Office

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.40pm:

- Dorinnia Carville, C&AG, Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO);
- Tomas Wilkinson, Director, NIAO;
- Conor McGeown, Director, NIAO; and
- Claire Turner, Audit Manager, NIAO.

The Committee received a briefing from officials on the NIAO report 'A Strategic Review of the Planning Appeals Commission'.

9. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered a draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

10. Any Other Business

The Committee considered a news release following the oral briefing from the Department for the Economy and the Northern Regional College on 17th September 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the new release.

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next Committee meeting will take place on Thursday 8th October 2026 at 2.00pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.01pm.

Chairperson

Public Accounts Committee

8 October 2026