



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 17 September 2026

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Daniel McCrossan MLA (Chairperson)
Tom Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Colm Gildernew MLA
David Honeyford MLA
Gareth Wilson MLA

Apologies:

Cathal Boylan MLA
Jemma Dolan MLA
Stephen Dunne MLA
Mike Nesbitt 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 2.14pm.

1. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

2. Draft minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting on 25th June 2026.

3. Declaration of Interests

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

4. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's Business.

5. Matters Arising

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Justice regarding the launch of the Call for Views for the 'Reducing Offending and Reoffending Strategy'.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Accounting Officer providing further clarification on the MOR on Road Openings by Utilities.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an oral briefing from DfI officials.

The Committee considered correspondence from the former Minister of Health concerning the 'Mental Health Workforce Review Implementation and Delivery Framework Report'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Mental Health Champion to provide an oral briefing to the Committee.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department for Communities Accounting Officer regarding the MOR on Homelessness in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to continue to receive written updates on the MOR.

6. Correspondence

The Committee considered correspondence from the Clerk to the Committee for Finance on a Commercial Payments Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider a draft response at its next meeting.

7. Oral Briefing from the Department for the Economy and the Northern Regional College: Department for the Economy 2025 to 2026 Draft Group Accounts

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.20pm:

- Ian Snowden, Permanent Secretary, Department for the Economy (DfE);
- Sharon Hetherington, Finance Director, DfE;
- Mel Higgins, Principal and Chief Executive, Northern Regional College (NRC);
and
- Colm McKenna, Interim Chair, NRC.

The following officials were in attendance:

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

The Committee received a briefing from officials providing an update on the DfE 2025 to 2026 Draft Group Accounts.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish a press release on the matter.

8. Committee Inquiry on Northern Ireland Energy Strategy: Written Submissions

The Committee considered written submissions to the Committee Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the submissions would be included in papers for the Committee Inquiry.

The meeting moved into closed session at 3.40pm.

9. Committee Inquiry on A Strategic Review of the Planning Appeals Commission: Oral Evidence 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 oral evidence from officials on the NIAO report 'A Strategic Review of the Planning Appeals Commission'.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending the evidence session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a series of evidence sessions for the Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed Terms of Reference for the Inquiry and that the Committee would publish these online.

10.Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered a draft Forward Work Programme.

The Committee reviewed the programme of work organised by the Committee to host the British Islands and Mediterranean Region of the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees (BIMR CAPAC) Annual Network Conference 2026 on 24th September 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the programme of work for the conference.

11.Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12.Date, time and place of next meeting

The next Committee meeting will take place on Thursday 17th September 2026 at 2.00pm in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.34pm.

Chairperson

Public Accounts Committee

1 October 2026