

Public Accounts Committee

Record of Meeting

Date: 24th January 2012

Meeting No: 1

Present	Deputy T. Vallois, Chairman Senator S. C. Ferguson, Deputy S. Pitman (From item 4) Deputy R. Rondel Mr S. Haigh Mr A. Fearn Mr C. Evans
Apologies	Mr. C. Swinson O.B.E. – Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG)
Absent	
In attendance	Mr M. Robbins, Scrutiny Officer

Ref Back	Agenda matter	Action
	<p>1. Election of Vice Chairman.</p> <p>Senator S. Ferguson was elected Vice president of the Committee.</p>	
	<p>2. Records of Meetings</p> <p>The Committee noted informal records of meetings of 28th November 2011, 12th December 2011 and 14th December 2011 held in preparation for the first meeting of the Committee.</p>	
	<p>3. Schedule of meetings.</p> <p>The Committee approved the following schedule of meetings for 2012, all to be held at 12.30 pm in the Blampied Room:</p> <p>Monday February 20th, Monday March 19th, Monday April 16th, Monday May 14th, Monday June 11th, Monday July 9th, Monday September 17th, Monday October 15th, Monday November 12th and Monday December 10th.</p> <p>The Committee also noted Monday August 6th as a possible meeting date should that be required but recognized that this was in the holiday period and may not be necessary or practical. A decision on meeting on that date was to be taken nearer the time.</p>	
513/30	<p>4. Conduct of meetings</p> <p>The Committee noted Standing Order 134(1) stating that the quorum for the Public Accounts Committee was one half its membership rounded up to the next whole number, of which at least two would be members who are elected members. Standing Order 134(2-8) explained the voting and other working practices of the Committee.</p> <p>The Committee further agreed that general meetings,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be closed to the public under Standing Order 134(7) as agreed by the Chairmen's Committee; • may have private sections under the Code of Practice on Public 	

	<p>Access to Official Information, section 3,2,1, although such privacy was to be justified on an individual basis;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lunches were not to be provided at lunchtime meetings from the scrutiny budget in accordance with an amendment to the Annual Business Plan 2010; • the officer or Chairman were to be notified of anticipated absence. <p>It further agreed that all hearings;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were held in public; • Members were to dress formally and be on time; • No food was to be present; <p>It also agreed that pre-hearing meetings were to be held by the Committee and private sessions was available where necessary.</p>	
	<p>5. Communication</p> <p>The Committee agreed on methods of communication between its members, the C&AG, the officer and departments or outside agencies. Agendas and papers were to be sent to members electronically and in hard copy.</p>	
	<p>6. Minute writing</p> <p>The Committee noted Paragraphs 6.1 to 6.5 of the Code of Practice covering the arrangements for Meetings. In particular, Paragraph 6.5 referred to records and minutes. Paragraph 4.14 also had relevance and provided examples of when a formal record must be made. This applied to the PAC by virtue of paragraph 13.1 which required that the general approach of the PAC reflected that adopted by the Scrutiny Panels.</p> <p>Where matters had been discussed publicly, the minutes, once approved by the Committee and signed by the Chairman, were to be published on the website and remained a public record.</p> <p>Where the Committee had discussed an item under a private agenda, be that under Standing Orders or the Code of Practice on Public Access to Official Information it was to be recorded in private minutes. There was to be a public record that the meeting took place containing no detail of the content. Should the matter discussed be suitable for public dissemination, the minute was to be transferred to the public minutes.</p>	
	<p>7. Updates from the Comptroller and Auditor General.</p> <p>The Committee considered the nature of the information contained within updates provided to the Committee by the Comptroller and Auditor General and agreed that such briefings would be exempt from disclosure in accordance with the Code of Practice on Public Access to Official Information, provided that they fell within the list of exemptions contained within paragraph 3.2 of that Code.</p>	
	<p>8. Conflicts of Interest.</p> <p>The Committee considered members' position relating to conflict of interests in the work of the Committee. The Committee undertook to</p>	

	actively consider this area at the start of every review. It was discussed whether this could be incorporated into the scoping document to encourage formal consideration. The officer was to consider this approach.	MR
	<p>9. Training</p> <p>Training relating to the financial accountability of the States was deferred to the next meeting because the Comptroller and Auditor General was unavoidably absent.</p> <p>It was noted that the local training on Chairing Skills had been postponed due to difficulty in finding a suitable facilitator.</p>	
	<p>10. Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Public Accounts Committee workshop.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that this would be a high value workshop and that a member and officer should attend. However, it noted that the hotel in London that the workshop was being held at exceeded the States policy of £150 per night for accommodation. As the Committee would be examining and possibly raising criticism of others in the future relating to breaches of policy, it declined to approve any expenditure of more than the policy limit for accommodation. It noted that there was no request for scrutiny funds as the workshop was to be funded by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association for the Member attending and from the States Greffe training budget for the officer.</p> <p>It was further noted that there was a separation of member and officer delegates at times and therefore a separate report would be required from both the attending member and the officer on their return.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that Deputy S. Pitman would represent the Committee as the elected member.</p>	<p>SP/MR</p> <p>MR</p>
	<p>11. Training relating to questioning accounting officers.</p> <p>Matters relating to this were deferred to the next meeting because the Comptroller and Auditor General was unavoidably absent.</p>	
	<p>12. Westminster visit.</p> <p>It was agreed by the Committee that a visit to the Westminster PAC was an excellent learning opportunity that should be taken advantage of. It was good value for money to have all members of the Committee fully trained in the work of the PAC and this was recognized to be a part of the overall Scrutiny strategy. Deputy S. Pitman elected not to attend.</p> <p>There was discussion relating to the advisability of spending money sending non-elected members when they were only to be with the Committee for six months. It was decided that it was appropriate to send the elected members now and the permanently recruited non-elected members following their appointment.</p> <p>Of the two dates available for this visit, the 26th March 2012 was approved. The Committee recognized that this visit required a two night stopover as the visit day would start early and finish late. The Committee therefore approved a cost of £500 per person, namely three elected members and an officer, totaling £2,000.</p>	MR

	<p>13. Work programme.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that a key measure of success of the Committee was that it be seen by interested members of the public to be an effectual committee. To achieve that some focus was required and the Committee agreed to ensure that its work was factual rather than political.</p> <p>It was also agreed that its work should be guided to a large extent by the reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General which frequently focused on a lack of corporate governance.</p> <p>It was further agreed that there appeared to be a lack of collective responsibility which allowed those within the system allowed to blame others when there was a problem. There was a perceived disconnect between the Ministers and Civil Servants and the of accountability needed to be examined.</p> <p>Further areas of interest for members included;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">the pension deficit, oversight on the Comprehensive Spending Review, purchasing within the States of Jersey</p> <p>It was agreed that close communication with the Corporate Services Panel was required to ensure topics were fully examined. It was too early to decide when these areas would be started but this was to be researched prior to the next meeting in order that the Committee could comply with paragraph 7.1 and 7.15 of the Code of Practice. Members were to advise the officer of any areas of particular interest that were to be included in the considerations.</p>	<p>MR</p> <p>All</p>
	<p>14. Audit Committee.</p> <p>The Chairman provided the Committee with information relating to the Audit Committee following a meeting with the Treasurer of the States. The Treasurer had offered to supply any documentation relating to the Audit Committee that may be required by the PAC.</p>	
	<p>15. Pensions.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the Public Employers Contribution Retirement Scheme. It recognised that an actuarial review was due and decided to discuss the position with the Comptroller and Auditor General following publication of the review.</p>	
	<p>16. Strategic Aims of the PAC.</p> <p>The Committee, recognizing that the public expected effectiveness, trust and independence from the PAC, decided that a strategic aim was required for the next three years in order to produce a product of value.</p> <p>Consideration was given to the States Strategic Plan and the examination of what had or had not been done by departments to obtain value for money relating to the plan. It was agreed that corporate governance was a useful strategic aim to assist the Committee in working towards such an aim.</p> <p>The merits or otherwise of regular quarterly meetings with the Treasurer of the States was discussed. Whilst it was agreed that this would be a</p>	

	useful method of following up on recommendations contained within the reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General, no decision was made on the implementation of such an arrangement.	
	<p>17. Review into the Bus Contract.</p> <p>Draft Terms of Reference were presented to the Committee for consideration along with scoping documents and a time line. The Committee accepted the documents requiring they be forwarded to the Chairmen's Committee.</p> <p>Mr. Haigh declared a connection with Connex which he requested be considered by the Committee in case there was a conflict. As chairman of the La Motte Street Youth Project, a charity set up to oversee the governance and direction of the activities of La Motte Street Youth Centre, Mr. Haigh has secured an agreement that Connex would provide financial assistance to cover the transport costs of participants of a specific event in the United Kingdom. This was noted by the Committee.</p>	
	<p>18. Future Meetings</p> <p>The Committee agreed that the next meeting was to be at 12.30 pm on Monday 20th February 2012 in the Blampied Room of the States Buildings.</p>	