



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## COMMITTEE FOR THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

### Minutes of Proceedings

WEDNESDAY 29 JANUARY 2020

Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

**Present:** Mr Colin McGrath MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA  
Mr Fra McCann MLA  
Mr George Robinson MLA  
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA  
Ms Emma Sheerin MLA  
Mr Christopher Stalford MLA

**Apologies:** Mr Trevor Lunn MLA

**In Attendance:** Ms Marie Austin (Assembly Clerk)  
Mrs Bronagh Irwin (Assistant Clerk)  
Mrs Janet Robinson (Assistant Clerk)  
Mr Craig Mealey (Clerical Supervisor)  
Mrs Andrienne Magee (Clerical Officer)  
Mr Sean O’Rawe (Clerical Officer)

The Chairperson welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Committee for the Executive Office.

The Committee agreed to start the meeting in closed session to discuss a number of protocols and procedures.

*The meeting commenced at 2:00 p.m. in closed session.*

#### 1. Apologies

As above.

#### 2. Staff Contact Details

The Committee noted the Executive Office Committee staff contact details.

### **3. Committee Protocols**

The Committee discussed a number of protocols and procedures covering arrangements for Committee meetings, correspondence and requests for meetings not linked to its strategic priorities or statutory responsibilities, approaches to preparation for evidence sessions, outcomes of an effective Committee, Committee use of social media and an induction programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed an induction programme and an approach for dealing with correspondence and requests for meetings not specifically linked to its strategic priorities or statutory duties.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should explore opportunities for the Committee to participate in a questioning techniques session.

*The meeting moved into public session at 2:24 p.m.*

### **4. Committee Membership**

The Committee noted details of the membership.

### **5. Declaration of Interests**

The Chairperson informed Members of the requirement in Standing Order 69(5) that:

‘A Member who has

*(a) a financial interest in any matter; or*

*(b) a relevant interest in any matter,*

*must declare that interest before taking part in any proceedings of the Assembly relating to that matter.’*

The Chairperson advised that ‘proceedings of the Assembly’ included meetings of the Committee for the Executive Office and asked Members if they had any interests to declare.

No interests were declared.

### **6. Committee Procedures**

The Committee noted the following guidance documents:

- Powers and Operation of Statutory Committees for Chairpersons and Members;
- Role of the Chairperson; and
- Role and Functions of the Committee Office.

The Chairperson drew the attention of Members to the guidance on Privilege and Sub-Judice contained in the guidance paper on the powers and operation of Statutory Committees.

## **7. Guidance on Timescales for Interaction between Committees and Departments**

The Committee noted guidance on interaction between Committees and Departments which sets out the timescales for the provision of information and evidence between Departments and Committees.

The Chairperson advised Members that he met informally with the Permanent Secretary, Mr David Sterling, on 28 January 2020. At the meeting the Permanent Secretary had indicated his wish to build a good working relationship with the Committee.

The Chairperson also advised Members that both he and the Deputy Chairperson will hold an introductory meeting with the First Minister and deputy First Minister on 4 February 2020.

## **8. Subordinate Legislation: Delegation of Technical Scrutiny to the Examiner of Statutory Rules**

The Committee noted guidance on Handling Subordinate Legislation (Statutory Rules).

Agreed: That the Committee for the Executive Office resolves, under Standing Order 43, to delegate to the Examiner of Statutory Rules the technical scrutiny of statutory rules referred to the Committee under the above mentioned Standing Order.

The Committee further resolves that in carrying out this function the Examiner shall be authorised to report her technical findings on each statutory rule to the Assembly and to the relevant Department, as well as to the Committee itself, and to publish her report.

## **9. Legacy Report - Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister 2011 - 2016**

The Committee noted the Legacy Report of the 2011-16 predecessor Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

## **10. Overview Briefing on The Executive Office**

Mr David Sterling, Permanent Secretary of The Executive Office and Head of the NI Civil Service, joined the meeting at 2.35 p.m.

Mr Sterling provided an overview briefing on the structure and responsibilities of The Executive Office.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Sterling agreed to provide further information/clarification on a number of issues.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Sterling for his attendance.

## **11. Draft Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered a draft forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite additional witnesses and seek separate detailed written briefings for each of the overview sessions scheduled with departmental officials over the coming weeks.

## **12. Correspondence**

None.

## **13. Chairperson's Business**

None.

## **14. Any Other Business**

Members congratulated Mr McGrath on his appointment as Chairperson of the Committee for the Executive Office.

## **15. Date, Time and Place of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 5 February 2020 at 2.00 p.m. in Room 30 Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting was adjourned at 3:19 p.m.*

**Mr Colin McGrath MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office**