



## **COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES**

### **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Wednesday 3 February 2021  
VIDEO-CONFERENCE**

Video-Conference: Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA (Chairperson)  
Mrs Rosemary Barton MLA  
Mr Maurice Bradley MLA  
Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA  
Ms Nicola Brogan MLA  
Mr Gerry Carroll MLA  
Ms Linda Dillon MLA

In attendance: Nick Mitford (Committee Clerk)  
Emer Boyle (Committee Clerk)  
Stewart Kennedy (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Mr Paul Gill (Clerk Assistant)

Apologies: Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Gary Middleton MLA

The meeting commenced in open session at 2.35pm.

The Committee Clerk informed the Committee that he had not received any notification from Members to delegate their vote.

The Chairperson and Members began by thanking Nick Mitford, Committee Clerk, for his support to the Committee and wished him well on his new role in the Assembly. The Chairperson introduced and welcomed Emer Boyle to the Committee as the new Clerk.

The Chairperson proposed that the Committee began in closed session to receive a briefing from Legal Services and the Clerk Assistant. The Chairperson also proposed that the Committee moved again to closed session at the end of the meeting to review its strategic planning.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to move to closed session to receive the briefings from Legal Services and the Clerk Assistant and again at the end of the meeting to review its strategic planning.

The Committee moved to closed session at 2.44pm.

## **1. Standing Order 112(8) – Briefing by Legal Services**

The Chairperson reminded Members that, at the last meeting, the Committee agreed to postpone a briefing from legal Services on the 9.30am deadline to nominate a proxy vote.

However, due to a potential unintended consequence, the Chairperson proposed that the Committee defers consideration of this item of business until the next meeting.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to defer the briefing until the next meeting.

## **2. Legislative Consent Motions (LCM) – Briefing by Clerk Assistant**

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Committee had agreed to receive a briefing from Mr Paul Gill, the Clerk Assistant, on the LCM procedures in order to inform Members as part of its review into LCMs.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Gill to the meeting.

Mr Gill provided the Committee with an overview of the LCM procedures. This was followed by a question and answer session.

During discussions, the Committee acknowledged some of the issues experienced by the Assembly in relation to the LCM procedures and how some have become more apparent as legislation in relation to Brexit passes through the UK Government.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Gill for his briefing.

*Mr Gerry Carroll MLA left the meeting at 3.09pm.*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to liaise with other legislatures, including Westminster Committees and the House of Lords, to seek their views on the

current LCM procedures. In particular, whether there is scope to take more time in scrutinising LCMs.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Executive to seek its views on the LCM procedures and to ask whether it has experienced any issues with the current procedures.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Business Committee to welcome any additional resources which will provide better transparency and management of LCMs in the Assembly.

The Committee moved to open session at 3.12pm

### **3. Apologies**

As above.

Mr Gill left the meeting at 3.12pm.

### **4. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 20 January 2021.

### **5. Matters Arising**

The Chairperson informed the Committee that the motion to amend Standing Orders in respect of hybrid proceedings was agreed by the Assembly on 1st February 2021. The Committee noted a letter from the Speaker which provided an update on this issue.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Assembly's Head of Communications to seek an update on the procurement and delivery of equipment to be installed in order to enable hybrid proceedings.

### **6. Proxy Voting – Further consideration**

The Committee gave further consideration to its options in relation to introducing proxy voting on a permanent basis.

During discussions there was a consensus amongst Members that any proposal to implement proxy voting on a permanent basis should include parental leave and long-term illness.

However, some Members queried the definition of "long-term illness" and what illnesses might be recognised as "long-term". The Committee also

queried whether those who might suffer from “long-covid” symptoms would be classed as someone with a “long-term” illness.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek legal advice on its proposal to include proxy voting for parental leave and long-term illness on a permanent basis.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Assembly’s HR Department seeking clarification on any existing definition of “long-term illness.”

## **7. Correspondence**

The Committee noted the latest publication of the NI Human Rights Commission newsletter.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Finance requesting that the Committee gives consideration to setting out clear procedures in order to allow committees, if they so choose, to include the sponsor of a Private Member’s Bill (PMB) as an ex-officio member of that committee during the appropriate stages of the passage of the PMB.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note this item and to give it further consideration as part of its strategic planning session.

## **8. Forward Work Programme**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to consider its forward work programme as part of the strategic planning session.

The Committee moved to closed session at 3.23pm.

## **9. Chairperson’s Business**

There was no Chairperson’s Business.

## **10. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

## **11. Strategic Planning**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed for the Clerk to bring a paper to the next meeting outlining the potential work streams and forecast timeframes for delivery.

*Agreed:* The Chairperson agreed to meet with the Clerk to establish whether any of the work streams could be taken forward by officials while the more priority work streams are ongoing.

## **12. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

*Agreed:* It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Wednesday 17 February 2021 at 2.30pm in Room 29.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 3.34pm.

**Carál Ní Chuilín MLA**

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures  
17 February 2021