



COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND PRIVILEGES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2021
VIRTUAL MEETING USING STARLEAF**

Present: Ms Sinéad Ennis MLA (Chairperson)
Mr William Irwin MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Dr Steve Aiken OBE MLA
Mrs Pam Cameron MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Mr Seán Lynch MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Mr George Robinson MLA

Apologies: Mr Patsy McGlone MLA

In Attendance: Mr Shane McAteer (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Marie Austin (Senior Assistant Clerk)
Mrs Clairita Frazer (Senior Assistant Clerk)
Ms Aoibheann Baker (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Alison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 12:43pm in open session.

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Declaration of Members' Interests

Members were advised of the ongoing requirement to declare relevant financial or other interests as and when they arise on the Committee.

Steve Aiken declared an interest in respect of a complaint which he has raised against another Member; and two complaints that have been made against him.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2020.

4. Matters Arising

Members noted the Committee Secretariat paper setting out the decisions made by the Committee under temporary Standing Order 115(9) since the last formal meeting on 4 November 2020. The decisions included:

- Approval of the All-Party Group (APG) on Animal Welfare;
- Approval of the APG on Carers (during the Committee's consideration of this matter, it was noted that *Mrs Cameron declared an interest in regards to being an office holder for the proposed Group*);
- Approval of the APG on Women's Health (during the Committee's consideration of this matter, it was noted that *Mrs Cameron declared an interest in regards to being an office holder for the proposed Group*); and
- Approval of the APG on Micro and Small Business (during the Committee's consideration of this matter, it was noted that *Mr Dickson and Mr McGlone declared interests in regards to being office holders for the proposed Group*).

5. All-Party Group Update

Stewart Dickson declared an interest as a member of the proposed APG on Press Freedom and Media Sustainability.

Members considered an application for a new APG on Press Freedom and Media Sustainability which had been submitted to the Committee for approval.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it is content to approve an application for an APG on Press Freedom and Media Sustainability

The meeting moved into closed session at 12:47pm

6. Discontinuation of complaints

Members received a briefing from the Committee Secretariat on this agenda item.

Members also received a briefing from the Commissioner for Standards, Dr Melissa McCullough, on her correspondence dated 2 December 2020 in relation to this agenda item.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, in accordance with sub-paragraphs 4.2 and 4.3 of the General Procedures Direction, it was content that the Commissioner for Standards discontinues consideration of the two separate complaints cases discussed.

7. Proposed Standards & Privileges Committee Member Development Programme

The Committee Secretariat outlined a proposed training programme for members in respect of the Committee's distinct role in adjudicating on individual complaint cases. Members discussed how the timings for the training sessions could be adjusted to maximise their participation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed in principle to the Committee Secretariat liaising with the Clerking and Members' Support office with a view to proceeding with the procurement of this training. Members also confirmed their commitment to participating in the proposed training.

8. Draft Committee report on Stage 1 of the Review of the Code of Conduct and Guide to the Rules

Members noted a working draft of the Committee's report on Stage 1 of the Review of the Assembly's Code of Conduct and Guide to the Rules relating to the Conduct of Members.

Members noted that a final draft report will be considered at the next Committee meeting.

Seán Lynch left the meeting at 13:27pm

9. Correspondence

- 9.1 Members noted correspondence from the Finance Committee on the Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

Steve Aiken declared an interest as the Chairperson of the Committee for Finance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission urgent legal advice on the implications for the Committee's functions arising from the provisions in clauses 5 and 10, subject to the Bill passing Final Stage.

- 9.2 Members noted correspondence from the Human Rights Commission on its Annual Statement 2020.

- 9.3 Members noted correspondence from Pivotal on the publication of its latest report.

- 9.4 Members noted correspondence from the Welsh Standards of Conduct Committee in respect of its call for evidence regarding the review of the Welsh Parliament's Code of Conduct.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that a factual response to the call for evidence will be issued, as outlined by the Clerk.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business

11. Time, date and place of next meeting

The date, time and place of the next meeting will be agreed and communicated to Members in due course.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 13:33pm

Ms Sinéad Ennis MLA

Chairperson, Committee on Standards and Privileges

24 February 2020