

*MEETING OF THE CHAIRPERSONS' LIAISON GROUP*

**Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

Present: Ms Anna Lo, MLA (Chairperson)

Ms Michaela Boyle, MLA

Mr Trevor Clarke, MLA

Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson, MLA

Mr Paul Givan, MLA

Mr Nelson McCausland, MLA

Mr Alastair Ross, MLA

Mr Peter Weir, MLA

In attendance: Mrs Nuala Dunwoody, Clerk Assistant

Mr Damien Martin, Clerk Assistant

Mr Trevor Allen, Senior Assistant Clerk

Mrs Tara McClafferty, Assistant Assembly Clerk

Mr George McClelland, Clerical Supervisor

Apologies: Mr Patsy McGlone, MLA

Mr Stephen Moutray, MLA

Mr Robin Swann, MLA

*1.13pm The meeting commenced in closed session.*

**1. Apologies**

Apologies are listed above.

**2. Minutes of the meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2015**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2015 were agreed.

### **3. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **4. Resource Planning for Committees post – Voluntary Exit Scheme**

Chairpersons noted a paper and received a briefing from Mr Damien Martin on the resource planning for committees post voluntary exit scheme.

Mr Ross raised a concern in relation to the Committee for Justice losing their researcher and expressed the view that the Committee needed access to a researcher due to the high volume of work coming through the Committee. The other chairpersons shared this concern and emphasised the importance of maintaining services to committees in the coming months.

*Agreed:* Clerk Assistants agreed to consider the Chairpersons' concerns and in particular discuss the matter raised by Mr Ross with the Head of RaSe to find possible solutions.

*1.26 pm Mr Givan, Mr Clarke and Mr Weir joined the meeting.*

### **5. Production of Committee Reports Electronically**

Chairpersons noted a paper and received a briefing from Mr Paul Carlisle on the production of committee reports electronically.

### **6. 2015-16 Committee Expenditure**

Chairpersons noted a paper and received a briefing from Mr Trevor Allen on 2015-16 committee expenditure.

In response to a question from the Chairperson, Mr Allen advised that he was confident committees should be within budget at the end of the year.

Mr Martin advised that the broadcasting contract had now been tightened which meant that if a committee has an additional meeting or meets during recess, the cost of broadcasting would have to be paid from the Clerking budget.

*1.30 pm Mrs Dobson left the meeting.*

## **7. Legislative Programme**

Chairpersons noted a paper and received a briefing from Mr Damien Martin on the legislative programme.

The Chairperson queried whether there was any danger of some Bills not being completed before the end of the mandate. Mr Martin advised that due to the delay in Bills coming forward there was indeed the risk that some Bills may not be completed before the end of the mandate.

In response to a question from Mr McCausland, Mr Martin advised that the legislative table was based only on Bills for which there is a definite timetable for introduction. Mr Martin advised that Chairpersons should liaise with the relevant Minister to identify which Bills should be prioritised.

## **8. Ad-Hoc Committees on Conformity with Equality Requirements**

Chairpersons noted a paper from Damien Martin on Ad-Hoc Committees on Conformity with Equality Requirements (ACERs).

The paper was shared with the Liaison Group by correspondence on 6<sup>th</sup> October, seeking views and comments. Mr Swann raised a concern in relation to the proposal that ACERs should not use substitutes, based on their complexity and short time frame. Mr Swann's view was that, in order to attain quorum, substitutes should be allowed. Mr Ross outlined his views on the benefit of allowing substitutes, particularly when receiving evidence. Chairpersons were advised as to the rationale for avoiding substitutes on a Committee with a specific technical role. However, it was noted that the paper represented guidance to Committees and the Ad-Hoc Committee can make its own decisions.

*Agreed: In the absence of Mr Swann, Chairpersons agreed to note the comments.*

## **9. Draft Forward Work Programme**

Agreed: Chairpersons noted, and agreed, the draft forward work programme.

## **10. Any Other Business**

Mr McCausland asked for clarity on the procedure of taking evidence for an inquiry in public session but agreeing the report in closed session.

Mrs Dunwoody clarified that this was a longstanding convention.

**11. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Liaison Group is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2015 at 1.00pm in Room 21.

1.47pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

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Ms Anna Lo, Chairperson

24<sup>th</sup> November 2015