

MEETING OF THE CHAIRPERSONS' LIAISON GROUP

TUESDAY 16 JUNE 2015

Present: Mr Patsy McGlone MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Roy Beggs MLA

Ms Michaela Boyle MLA

Mr William Irwin MLA

Mr Nelson McCausland MLA

Mr Daithí McKay MLA

Ms Maeve McLaughlin MLA

Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA

In attendance: Mr Trevor Reaney, Chief Executive & Clerk

Mrs Nuala Dunwoody, Clerk Assistant

Mr Damien Martin, Clerk Assistant

Mr Trevor Allen, Senior Assistant Clerk

Mr George McClelland, Clerical Supervisor

Mr Michael Greer, Clerical Supervisor

Mr Paul Carlisle, Assembly Clerk (Agenda item 5 only)

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor, Assembly Bill Clerk (Agenda item 6 only)

Ms Eilis Haughey, Assembly Bill Clerk (Agenda item 6 only)

Apologies: Mrs Anna Lo MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Alex Maskey MLA

Mr Peter Weir MLA

12.50pm The meeting opened in closed session.

1. Apologies

Apologies are listed above.

2. Matters Arising

Mobile Phone Connectivity

Chairpersons were updated on the ongoing problems with mobile phone coverage within Parliament Buildings. The Chairperson highlighted that whilst the use of Apps has been beneficial there is still a major issue regarding EE coverage.

12.52pm Michaela Boyle and Maeve McLaughlin joined the meeting

3. Minutes of the meeting on 14th April 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th April 2015 were agreed.

4. 2014/15 budget outturn and planning for 2015/16

Chairpersons noted a paper from Nuala Dunwoody in relation to Committee Expenditure. Mr Martin advised of the 2014/15 budget outturn; of planned expenditure for 2015/16; and of ongoing suppressions of staff within Clerking and the wider Assembly which could have an impact on service provision. He also advised chairpersons that from September, due to ongoing staffing pressures, committee members will no longer have the option to receive meeting packs in hard copy.

Mr Reaney highlighted the ongoing pressures on the Assembly budget and informed chairpersons that it will not be possible to sustain the current level of service provision in the event of ongoing budget reductions.

5. Corporate project to cease printing of Committee Reports

1.01pm Daithí McKay joined the meeting

Chairpersons noted a paper from Paul Carlisle on the ceasing of printed committee reports and the ongoing project to move towards online publication from September. Mr Carlisle explained how the new system will look and advised that the Regional Development Committee is currently aiming to have a fully electronic report completed before summer recess. He also advised chairpersons that the Assembly IS Office is currently developing software for the production of electronic committee reports which

should be similar in function to the Electronic Committee Pack system currently used by committee teams.

Chairpersons noted that the system should not put additional resource pressure onto teams.

6. Legislative Scrutiny

1.06pm Mike Nesbitt joined the meeting

Ms Treanor and Ms Haughey, Assembly Bill Clerks, provided an update on the current workload facing the Assembly due to the end of mandate legislative pressures. She informed chairpersons of the potential implications for committees of such an extensive legislative programme and offered suggestions on how committees might contribute to the effective management of the programme.

Ms. Treanor advised chairpersons that, at secretariat level, the Bill Office will work with committee clerks to collect and share strategies for increased effectiveness. In addition, the office will be seeking to work closely with the Executive and Business Committee to prioritise and schedule the legislative programme to optimise management of remaining time and resource without compromising the effectiveness of legislative scrutiny.

Agreed: Chairpersons agreed that the Bill Office should continue to provide periodic updates to the Chairpersons' Liaison Group (CLG) and that a chart detailing Bills currently being progressed, both scheduled for introduction and unscheduled, will be circulated to the Liaison Group.

7. Process to Agree the Future Committee Structure in the next Assembly Mandate

Chairpersons noted a paper and received a briefing on the process to agree the future committee structure in the next Assembly mandate following the reduction of departments from 12 to 9. Mr Martin advised chairpersons that direction is required on what shape committees should be post reduction and whether CLG should have a role in

this. Mr. Martin highlighted several options on how CLG may wish to deal with this issue.

Agreed: Chairpersons agreed that a paper should issue to the main parties seeking views on this matter.

8. Forward Work Programme

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

9. Any Other Business

1.30pm William Irwin and Roy Beggs left the meeting

Mr Allen advised chairpersons that the system for publication of Members' attendance at committee meetings is being reviewed. The new system will be operational from September and will provide more current attendance figures.

Agreed: Chairpersons agreed to the proposed change.

10. Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 15th September at 12:45pm in Room 21.

1.31pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Ms Anna Lo, Chairperson

29 September 2015