

MEETING OF THE CHAIRPERSONS' LIAISON GROUP

TUESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2014

Present: Mr Patsy McGlone MLA (Chairperson)
Mrs Anna Lo MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mrs Michaela Boyle MLA
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA
Mr Chris Lyttle MLA
Mr Nelson McCausland MLA
Mr Robin Swann MLA

In attendance: Mr Trevor Reaney, Chief Executive
Dr Gareth McGrath, Director of Clerking
Mrs Nuala Dunwoody, Clerk Assistant
Mr Damien Martin, Clerk Assistant
Mr Trevor Allen, Senior Assistant Clerk
Mr Oliver Bellew, Assistant Assembly Clerk
Mr Michael Greer, Clerical Supervisor
Mr George McClelland, Clerical Supervisor
Mrs Shauna Mageean, EU Affairs Manager
Mr Kevin Shiels, Politics Plus
Ms Elaine O'Neill, Politics Plus

Apologies: Miss Michelle McIlveen MLA
Mr Alex Maskey MLA
Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA

12.53pm The meeting opened in closed session.

1. Apologies

Apologies are listed above.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 16th September 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th September 2014 were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Members Professional Development – Politics Plus update

The Chairperson welcomed Kevin Shiels and Elaine O'Neill, Politics Plus. Members extended their good wishes to Elaine in her new role in Politics Plus and expressed their gratitude to her predecessor, Eva Grossman.

Chairpersons noted an update on the various programmes of professional development and were advised that, where one-on-one training sessions were preferable, members should contact the Politics Plus team directly or through their committee clerk.

Members were advised of a proposed joint initiative involving committee chairpersons from the Northern Ireland Assembly and the National Assembly for Wales aimed at enhancing the leadership skills of chairpersons to support them in setting the strategic direction of their committee work and driving innovation in the operation of committees to increase effectiveness, public engagement and impact.

1.03pm Mr Swann joined the meeting

5. EU Scrutiny update

Chairpersons noted a briefing by Shauna Mageean, EU Affairs Manager, on enhancing the Assembly's engagement in European affairs. Chairpersons welcomed Ms Mageean's proposed forward work plan as there were concerns with the flow of information from Europe to date.

6. Budgets

Chairpersons noted an update by Nuala Dunwoody, Clerk Assistant, on the current budget position for committees.

Chairpersons discussed the effect of the budget on staffing and asked that the Clerk Assistants look at ways of providing further staff complement to some committee teams.

7. Evidence under oath

Damien Martin, Clerk Assistant, briefed Chairs on the implications for witnesses and committees giving and receiving evidence under oath. Members discussed potential guidance for chairpersons and members who may be considering taking evidence under oath.

1.40pm Mr Lyttle left the meeting

1.43pm Mr Lyttle re-joined the meeting

8. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: Chairpersons noted, and agreed, the draft forward work programme. Members also agreed that the next meeting of the Group would take place on Tuesday 9 December 2014, at 12.45pm in Room 21.

9. Any other business

Use of tablet devices in committee

Chairpersons were asked to encourage members of their committees to continue to use their tablet devices in committee.

Recording of apologies at meetings

There was some discussion around the recording of apologies at committee meetings. Members were reminded that only an apology would be recorded and not a reason for the apology.

Noise in Room 21

Chairpersons discussed problems with the acoustics and the noise from the meeting tables in Room 21 and asked that the Clerks Assistants Office consider options for reducing the noise impact.

10. Date, time and venue of next meeting

The next meeting of the Liaison Group is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 9 December 2014 at 12.45pm in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

1.51pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Patsy McGlone, Chairperson

9 December 2014