

MEETING OF THE CHAIRPERSONS' LIAISON GROUP
TUESDAY 25 MARCH 2014

Present: Mr Robin Swann MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Paul Frew MLA
Ms Anna Lo MBE MLA
Miss Michelle McIlveen MLA
Mr Alex Maskey MLA
Mr Jimmy Spratt MLA

In attendance: Mr Trevor Reaney, Director General
Mrs Nuala Dunwoody, Clerk Assistant
Mr Damien Martin, Clerk Assistant
Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon, Clerk to the Liaison Group
Mr Oliver Bellew, Assistant Assembly Clerk
Mr George McClelland, Clerical Supervisor
Mr Michael Greer, Clerical Supervisor
Mr Kevin Shiels, Politics Plus (Agenda Item 5)
Mr Paul Carlisle, Clerk (Agenda Item 4)
Mr Gavin Ervine, Assistant Assembly Clerk (Agenda Item 4)

Apologies: Mr Patsy McGlone (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Danny Kinahan MLA
Mr Mervyn Storey MLA

1.09pm The meeting opened in closed session

1. Apologies

Apologies are listed above.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 18th February 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th February 2014 were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

Review of interaction between committees and departments

Chairpersons noted a Clerk's paper on the review of the interaction between committees and departments. The review had been undertaken in response to concerns raised previously by the Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the late cancellation of briefings; late receipt of briefing papers; and correspondence being received outside agreed timescales.

Mr Spratt noted that the late provision of briefing papers impacted not only members but also committee staff and Assembly Researchers, and advised that briefings for his Committee will be cancelled in future if papers are not provided on time.

1.13pm Mr Maskey joined the meeting

Agreed: It was agreed that Chairpersons should be encouraged to adopt a stronger line when issues arise relating to the late receipt of papers and to take appropriate action, which may include cancelling briefings. It was also agreed that the Director General would share the Clerk's paper with the Head of Civil Service.

4. Improving the Profile of Committees

Chairpersons received a briefing from Paul Carlisle and Gavin Ervine, on a project that the Regional Development Committee team had undertaken to look at options for improving the profile of committees.

1.30pm Mr Frew left the meeting

1.34pm Miss McIlveen left the meeting

The Chairperson advised members that, as the decision-making quorum had been lost, the meeting would be limited to taking briefings.

5. Politics Plus – Members’ Development

Kevin Shiels from Politics Plus spoke to his paper which provided an update on the delivery of developmental sessions to Members and committees. Members were advised that a further bid for funding had been submitted and a positive outcome was anticipated. In the meantime, there are a number of training courses that members can avail of, such as financial scrutiny training and understanding primary legislation.

6. Gifts and Hospitality Policy

Damien Martin, Clerk Assistant, briefed Chairpersons on the proposed amendments to the Gifts and Hospitality Policy to reflect the nature of committee business.

7. Electronic Committee Packs

The Group received an update from the Clerk on the current position of the Electronic Committee Pack project.

8. Date, time and venue of next meeting

The next meeting of the Liaison Group is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 13 May 2014 at 1.00pm in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

1.55pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Robin Swann, Chairperson

13 May 2014