



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

CHAIRPERSONS' LIAISON GROUP

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

TUESDAY 2 FEBRUARY 2021

The Senate, Parliament Buildings

Present: Dr Steve Aiken OBE MLA
Dr Caoimhe Archibald MLA
Ms Paula Bradley MLA
Ms Sinéad Ennis MLA, Deputy Chairperson
Mr Paul Givan MLA
Mr William Humphrey MLA, Chairperson
Mr Chris Lyttle MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Mr Colin McGrath MLA
Miss Michelle McIlveen MLA

Apologies: None.

In Attendance: Mrs Lesley Hogg (Clerk to the Assembly/Chief Executive)
Mr Gareth McGrath (Director of Parliamentary Services)
Dr Kevin Pelan (Clerk Assistant)
Mr Jim McManus (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Trevor Allen (Senior Assistant Clerk)
Mrs Bronagh Irwin (Assistant Clerk)
Mrs Diane Bergeron (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Ray McCaffrey (Research Officer)

The meeting commenced at 1.33 pm in closed session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Chairperson's Business

No items of Chairperson's business were raised.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting of 1 December 2020, as circulated and agreed by correspondence, were noted.

4. Matters Arising

Chairpersons welcomed Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA to the group following her appointment as Chairperson to the Committee on Procedures; and thanked Ms Linda Dillon MLA for her contribution to the work of the Chairpersons' Liaison Group.

Mr McGrath raised concerns in relation to the provision of video conferencing software on Assembly computer. The Clerk to the Assembly agreed to follow up on this issue and ensure that the required software is made available.

5. Strategic Priorities

1.38 pm Miss McIlveen and Dr Archibald joined the meeting

Research Briefing on Committee Scrutiny

Chairpersons received a briefing from Mr Ray McCaffrey, Research Officer, on Committee scrutiny and engagement: areas of good practice and innovation in other legislatures.

The Chairperson thanked Mr McCaffrey for his briefing.

Agreed: Chairpersons agreed that the paper should be included in the Group's work-stream on strengthening committee scrutiny.

Strategic Priorities Briefing on Improving Scrutiny in Committees

Chairpersons received a briefing from Mr Trevor Allen, Senior Assistant Clerk to the CLG, on the Groups considerations to date and next steps on its work-stream in relation to improving scrutiny in committees.

Due to technical difficulties, conclusion of this briefing was deferred to later in the meeting.

6. Correspondence

- i. Chairpersons considered a response from the Speaker in relation to extra space for committees to meet and noted that the Speaker will keep the CLG updated on developments; and
- ii. Chairpersons considered a letter from the Committee for Finance expressing concerns in respect of difficulties pertaining to the sound and/or video quality that have arisen during the course of recent committee meetings.

Agreed: Chairpersons noted that advice had been issued from the IS Office and agreed that the Clerk should consider further measures to address concerns and facilitate witnesses joining meetings as well as Members who experience connectivity issues whilst in Parliament Buildings. The advice will be reissued

to members and the Clerk will report back to the Group at its next meeting on the issues raised.

1.55 pm Miss McIlveen left the meeting
2.01 pm Mr Givan left the meeting
2.02 pm Ms Ennis and Dr Archibald left the meeting

5. Strategic Priorities (Continued)

Strategic Priorities Briefing on Improving Scrutiny in Committees (continued)

Chairpersons discussed the next steps in the work-stream.

Agreed: Chairpersons agreed that the Clerking and Members Support Office should request a further research paper on the issues raised in the briefing and that the office would take forward consultation with members, party support staff and secretariat staff and report back at the CLG meeting in April 2021.

Chairperson and Committee Development

Chairpersons received a briefing from Mr Trevor Allen, Senior Assistant Clerk to the CLG, on the interim Members' Development Plan 2020-21 and development of the Members' Development Plan 2020-21 and the alternative methods of delivery that have been sought to take forward the immediate priorities; and agreed this work should continue to be taken forward.

7. Any Other Business

Chairpersons noted that on 25 January 2021, the Executive launched the public consultation on its Programme for Government draft Outcomes Framework. The Group discussed how committees should take forward responding to the consultation.

Mr Lyttle queried the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on the Programme for Government.

2.08 pm Dr Aiken left the meeting

Agreed: Chairpersons agreed to write to the Committee for the Executive Office to request how it plans to consider the responses to the consultation.

Agreed: Chairpersons agreed that the Clerk should revert back outlining procedural considerations for setting up an Ad Hoc Committee at the next meeting.

8. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Chairpersons' Liaison Group will be 2nd March 2021 at 1:30pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings. The meeting will be the AGM of the group.

The meeting was adjourned at 2.16 pm.

William Humphrey MLA
Chairperson, Chairpersons' Liaison Group