



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix C – Correspondence

Correspondence from Mr Jim Allister MLA dated 19 March 2021

E-mailed to: committee.procedures@niassembly.gov.uk

Ref: JA/PM/Assembly/9682

Trevor Allen
Senior Assistant Clerk
Room 284A Parliament Buildings
Stormont

19th March 2021

Dear Mr Allen,

I am in receipt of your Questionnaire on strengthening committee scrutiny.

I am disappointed that the Questionnaire and the covering correspondence does not address at all whether the statutory provisions relating to scrutiny are adequate.

Though the Belfast Agreement at paragraph 9 of Strand One promised a scrutiny role for committees, when it came to the implementing legislation, the Northern Ireland Act 1998, this was dropped! Instead of being afforded the statutory function of scrutiny, Section 29 limply defines the function of committees as "to advise and assist" ministers!

Herein is a fundamental flaw which I'm disappointed the Chairmans' Liaison Group shows no interest in addressing. Maybe that is not surprising since all Chairs come from Executive parties, but, nonetheless if there is any appetite for scrutiny, then, I'd have expected this issue to be at least noted and addressed.

The need for rigorous scrutiny and related powers is, of course, all the more imperative in a system of mandatory coalition where almost every MLA comes from a governing party.

So, in my view there is little point in the CLG professing interest in the operation of "scrutiny" if they have no interest in seeking an adequate statutory basis as an essential starting point.

Yours sincerely

Jim Allister MLA

Response to Mr Jim Allister MLA dated 1 June 2021

Emailed to: Karen.cameron@party.niassembly.gov.uk

Ref: JA/PM/Assembly/9682

Mr Jim Allister MLA
38 Henry Street
Harryville
Ballymena
Co Antrim
BT42 3AH

1st June 2021

Dear Mr Allister,

CLG Questionnaire on Strengthening Committee Scrutiny

I write, on behalf of the Chairpersons Liaison Group (CLG), in relation to your correspondence to Trevor Allen of 19th March, and the response from Nick Henry of 24th March, regarding the questionnaire issued on behalf of the CLG to help inform how the scrutiny function of statutory committees at the Assembly may be strengthened.

The CLG noted your correspondence, and the concerns you raised on the scrutiny role of committees not being included in the Northern Ireland Act 1998, at its meeting of 27th May and agreed to respond to your letter advising that it noted that Standing Order 48(2) provides for the scrutiny role as described in paragraph 9 of Strand One of the Good Friday Agreement.

The CLG is progressing its review and will take your comments on board as it reports on its findings.

Yours sincerely,

Sinéad Ennis, MLA
Chairperson, Chairpersons' Liaison Group

Response from the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs dated 24 February 2022



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Room 242

Parliament Buildings

Tel: +44 (0) 28 905 21475

From: Nick Henry, Clerk, Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
To: Stella McCardle, Clerk, Chairperson's Liaison Group
Date: 24 February 2022
Subject: CLG Report on Strengthening Committee Scrutiny

Dear Stella,

I write following the meeting of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on 24 February 2022 at which the Committee considered the report and recommendations of the Chairperson's Liaison Group (CLG) on Strengthening Committee Scrutiny.

The Committee was broadly content with the proposals and makes the following observations:

- **Recommendation 1:** the Committee is content with the proposal to have the SL1/SR published on the relevant Committee's website, but would question the efficacy of posting on social media given that, in the main, regulations are technical in nature and this is an aspect of Committee work which may not be as interesting or engaging for the general public (relatively)
- **Recommendation 26:** the Committee welcomes the proposal to provide appropriate training in respect of scrutiny activities for Members as part of the induction for the 2022-27 and considers that it would be useful to include:
 - An overview of the various aspects of scrutiny work, i.e., primary legislation, regulations, policy, inquiries etc.
 - An explanation of the range of legislative vehicles Committee Members will engage with, e.g., Statutory Instruments, Regulations, Legislative Consent Motions
- The Committee values highly the input and work of the Assembly's Research and Information Service and considers it important that RaISe has sufficient staffing resource and capacity to respond to Committee requests to aid scrutiny work.

I trust that this is of use to the CLG when finalising its report.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Henry

Clerk, Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Response from the Committee for the Economy dated 28 February 2022



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Economy
Room 371
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast BT4 3XX
Tel: +44 (0)28 9052 1799

From: Peter Hall
Clerk to the Committee
Date: 28th February 2022
To: Stella McArdle
Clerk to the Chairpersons' Liaison Group
Subject: CLG Report on Strengthening Committee Scrutiny

Dear Stella,

Your memo of 16th February regarding the CLG Report on Strengthening Committee Scrutiny refers.

The Committee for the Economy Considered the Report at its meeting on 23rd February 2022, and agreed that I write offering the Committee's thanks to CLG for its work on the Report. Members noted the recommendations made in the Report and will consider the application of those recommendations that they see as relevant and appropriate to the Committee's function.

Regards,

Peter Hall
Committee Clerk

Response from the Committee for the Executive Office dated 1 March 2022



COMMITTEE FOR THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Room 375a

Parliament Buildings

Tel: 028 90521830

Email: Committee.Executive@niassembly.gov.uk

FROM: Michael Potter
Clerk to the Committee for the Executive Office

DATE: 1 March 2022

TO: Stella McArdle
Clerk to the Chairpersons' Liaison Group

DRAFT REPORT ON STRENGTHENING COMMITTEE SCRUTINY

Dear Stella,

At its meeting on 23rd February 2022, the Committee considered the draft report on Strengthening Committee Scrutiny and agreed that it was content with the 33 recommendations contained within.

Best regards,

Michael Potter

Clerk to the Committee for the Executive Office

Response from the Committee on Procedures dated 1 March 2022



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee on Procedures

Room 247

Parliament Buildings

Tel: +44 (0) 28 9052 1678

Email : committee.procedures@niassembly.gov.uk

From: Emer Boyle, Clerk to the Committee on Procedures
To: Stella McArdle, Clerk to the Chairperson's Liaison Group
Cc: Paul Gill
Date: 02 March 2022
Subject: CLG Report on enhancing Committee Scrutiny – distributed in Committee Packs

1. At its meeting on 23 February 2022, the Committee on Procedures considered the CLG correspondence and Report on Strengthening Committee scrutiny.
2. At the meeting, Members were requested to come back to the Clerk if they wished to make and comments with regard to the report and its recommendations.
3. Whilst the Committee on Procedures did not raise any issues with the recommendations in the report, the Sinn Fein members wished to take the opportunity to "*put on record their position in respect of CLG and the report*", which is as follows:
 - As raised at both the CLG and at Committee on Procedures...[the party has] no issue with greater scrutiny at Committees.
 - The CLG report does contain some useful suggestions and recommendations which should be considered by a more appropriate Statutory Committee.
 - Of the opinion that because the CLG is not recognised in standing orders and therefore has no official status that the work contained in the report will not have any formal status.
 - This report should be referred to a Statutory Committee and given the status that is due, which will not happen in the CLG.
 - The CLG itself should be reviewed in the new mandate and a decision taken on its value and effectiveness.

Emer Boyle

Response from the Business Committee dated 2 March 2022



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

Business Committee
Room 33
Parliament Buildings
Tel: +44 (0) 28 9052 1534

From: Alex McGarel, Clerk to the Business Committee
To: Stella McArdle, Clerk to the Chairpersons Liaison Group (CLG)
Cc: Paul Gill, Clerk Assistant
Date: 02 March 2022
Subject: CLG Report on Strengthening Committee Scrutiny

1. At its meeting on 22 February 2022, the Business Committee considered your correspondence seeking views on the CLG report on strengthening committee scrutiny.
2. Members noted that you have also brought the report to the attention of parties and whips and agreed that, as the Business Committee does not usually get involved in the work of Committees, they would consider the report within their parties rather than provide a Business Committee response.
3. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Kind regards,

Alex McGarel

Response from the Committee for Finance dated 4 March 2022



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

Committee for Finance

Room 373

Parliament Buildings

Tel: 028 9052 1230

From: Peter McCallion, Clerk to the Committee for Finance

Date: 4 March 2022

To: Stella McArdle, Clerk to the Chairpersons' Liaison Group (CLG)

CLG Report on Strengthening Committee Scrutiny

At its meeting on 2 March 2022, the Committee for Finance considered the CLG Report on Strengthening Committee Scrutiny. Members had no comments to make on the report.

I should be grateful if you would bring this to the attention of the Chairpersons' Liaison Group

Yours sincerely,

Peter McCallion

Clerk to the Committee for Finance

**Response from John O'Dowd MLA, on behalf of Sinn Féin, dated 18 February
2022**

Thank you for forwarding me the CLG report in relation to the scrutiny of legislation by statutory committees.

The report contains some useful suggestions and recommendations which should be considered, where appropriate, by the relevant Assembly Committees.

I am content that the report is sent to the relevant committees and on the very clear understanding that the report itself has no formal status.

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John

Response from the Committee for Health dated 4 March 2022



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

Committee for Health

Room 419

Parliament Buildings

Tel: +44 (0)28 9052 1787

E-mail: committee.health@niassembly.gov.uk

From: Keith McBride
Clerk to the Health Committee

Date: 4 March 2022

To: Kevin Pelan, Clerk Assistant

Subject: CLG Report Strengthening Committee Scrutiny

Kevin,

The Committee for Health considered the CLG Report on Strengthening Committee Scrutiny at its meeting on 24 February 2022, the Committee agreed that I should write to you to advise that it had noted the recommendations contained within the Report.

Committee Members did outline that they are supportive of the need for extra resource for Committee teams given the additional pressures that have been placed on Committees.

Thanks

Keith