



COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday 18 November 2020
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS AND VIDEO-CONFERENCE

Video-Conference: Ms Linda Dillon MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mrs Rosemary Barton MLA
Mr Maurice Bradley MLA
Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA
Mr Gerry Carroll MLA
Mr Gary Middleton MLA

Assembly Official Raymond McCaffrey (RaISe)

In attendance: Nick Mitford (Committee Clerk)
Stewart Kennedy (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Joanne Keenan (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr John O'Dowd MLA

The meeting commenced in open session at 2.38 pm.

Mr Raymond McCaffrey joined the meeting at 2.38pm.

The Committee Clerk informed Members that he had received notification from Mr John O'Dowd MLA that he had nominated the Chairperson to vote on his behalf.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 4 November 2020.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 The Committee considered a response from the Speaker regarding hybrid proceedings in the Assembly chamber.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the Clerk to contact other legislatures to take account of any technological and procedural difficulties they might have encountered since introducing hybrid proceedings. The Committee also agreed for the Clerk to liaise with the Assembly's IS Department to ascertain the possibility of introducing the technology.

3.2 The Clerk provided further information regarding the 9.30am deadline for nominating a proxy vote.

During discussions, the Committee acknowledged that the introduction of proxy voting in the temporary Standing Orders was initially introduced so Members could adhere to socially distancing when a vote was called during Assembly business and that the 9.30am deadline was set to enable Assembly officials to manage the notifications of proxy votes.

The Committee noted that a number of MLAs, including Executive Ministers, recently had to leave Parliament Buildings at short notice due to either receiving notification to self-isolate via the StopCovidNI App, or displaying symptoms of COVID-19. During occasions like this, the Committee felt there may be the need for a Member to nominate a proxy after 9.30am. In particular, those smaller political parties and independent Members.

The Committee were of the view that more flexibility should be given by the Speaker in his rulings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Speaker to inform him of the Committee's deliberations and views.

4. Proxy Voting

The Committee noted a Clerk's memo and the responses received from political parties and independent Members.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Raymond McCaffrey from RaISe and asked him to brief the Committee.

Mr Raymond McCaffrey briefed the Committee which was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr McCaffrey for his briefing.

Mr McCaffrey left the meeting at 15.25pm.

Mr Gerry Carroll provided the views of People Before Profit regarding proxy voting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the Clerk to bring an options paper to the next meeting for consideration.

5. Members' Statements

The Committee noted a covering memo from the Clerk and responses received from political parties.

During discussions, the Committee noted that most parties were keen on the idea of introducing new procedures in some form or another. However, there were widespread concerns in introducing them in the current circumstances surrounding COVID-19.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to put its consideration of Members' Statements on hold for now and return to it when there's a more appropriate time to do so. The Committee also agreed to write to the Speaker to inform him of the Committee's decision.

6. Legislative Consent Motions

The Committee noted a covering memo from the Clerk and a number of responses from statutory committees and political parties.

Agreed: Following discussions, the Committee agreed to defer its consideration of responses and to give the remaining political parties the opportunity to provide their responses for the next meeting.

7. Correspondence

There was no correspondence other than the Speaker's letter which was considered under Matters Arising.

8. Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson advised Members that, at its next meeting, the Committee will consider responses received regarding the review of Legislative Consent Motions and will also consider its options regarding proxy voting.

The Chairperson also advised Members that hybrid proceedings could take priority in the Committee's work programme as progress is made.

9. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's Business

10. Any other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

Agreed: It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Wednesday 2 December 2020 at 2.30pm in Room 29.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 3.42pm.

Linda Dillon MLA
Chairperson, Committee on Procedures
2 December 2020