



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee on Procedures

Minutes of Proceedings

19 May 2021

Meeting Location: Virtual Meeting (Room 29)

Present by Video-Conference:

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mrs Rosemary Barton MLA

Mr Maurice Bradley MLA

Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA

Ms Nicola Brogan MLA

Mr Gerry Carroll MLA

Mr Gary Middleton MLA

Apologies: Ms Linda Dillon MLA

In Attendance by Video-Conference:

Emer Boyle (Committee Clerk)

Stewart Kennedy (Assistant Clerk)

Joanne Keenan (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.33pm in open session.



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The Clerk informed the Committee that she had received notice from Linda Dillon MLA who had delegated authority to the Chairperson to vote on her behalf.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to closed session at the end of the meeting to consider EU Exit related issues.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 5 May 2021.

3. Matters Arising

The Committee noted a response from the Director of Parliamentary Services regarding the Wi-Fi connection in the Assembly chamber.

4. Legislative Consent Motion Inquiry – Briefing by the Institute for Government.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2.36pm:

- Mr Akash Paun, Senior Fellow, Institute for Government; and
- Ms Kelly Shuttleworth, Research Assistant, Institute for Government.

The Committee noted a paper from the Clerk and a paper from the Institute for Government on 'Legislating by Consent: How to revive the Sewel convention'.



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The Chairperson welcomed the witnesses to the meeting.

The witnesses briefed the Committee on issues to be considered as part of the Committee's ongoing Inquiry into LCMs. The oral evidence was followed by a question and answer session.

Following questions, the Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their briefing.

The witnesses left the meeting at 3.07pm.

The briefing was reported by Hansard.

5. NDNA Commitments – Simultaneous Interpretation – Further Consideration

The Chairperson reminded the Committee that, at its last meeting, the Committee sought additional information from Assembly officials regarding simultaneous interpretation in the Assembly.

The Committee noted a paper from the Clerk and a response from the Director of Parliamentary Services.

The following Assembly officials joined the meeting at 3.12pm:

- Dr Gareth McGrath, Director, Parliamentary Services;
- Mr Simon Burrowes, Editor of Debates; and
- Ms Susie Brown, Head of Communications.

The Committee discussed a number of issues in relation to potentially introducing simultaneous interpretation in the Assembly and officials answered any questions Members had. Some Members queried whether there was support from all parties in the Assembly to introduce simultaneous interpretation at this moment in time whilst other Members were of the view that it should be made available.

Mr Thomas Buchanan proposed that the issue be passed to the Party Leader's Forum for their consideration. The proposal was seconded by Mr Gary Middleton.

The Committee divided: Ayes: 4; Noes: 5.

Ayes: Mr Thomas Buchanan, Mr Maurice Bradley, Mr Gary Middleton and Mrs Rosemary Barton.



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Noes: Ms Carál Ní Chuilín, Ms Nicola Brogan, Ms Linda Dillon, Ms Sinéad Bradley and Mr Gerry Carroll.

The proposal was not carried.

Mr Thomas Buchanan also proposed for the Clerk to provide further information on any outstanding issues emerging from NDNA which may have an impact on Assembly Standing Orders. The Chairperson asked the Committee to return to this proposal later in the meeting.

Ms Nicola Brogan proposed that provision for simultaneous and passive interpretation should be made available in the Assembly. The proposal was seconded by Mr Gerry Carroll.

The Committee divided: Ayes: 5; Noes: 4.

Ayes: Ms Carál Ní Chuilín, Ms Nicola Brogan, Ms Linda Dillon, Ms Sinéad Bradley and Mr Gerry Carroll.

Noes: Mr Thomas Buchanan, Mr Maurice Bradley, Mr Gary Middleton and Mrs Rosemary Barton.

The proposal was carried.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the Clerk to bring back a draft motion for consideration at the next meeting.

The Chairperson thanked the officials.

The officials left the meeting at 3.44pm.

6. Standing Orders – Temporary Provisions

The Chairperson reminded the Committee that current temporary provisions in Standing Orders which allows for the Assembly to continue its business during the current COVID restrictions will cease to have effect after 3 July 2021.

The Committee noted a paper from the Clerk which included a number of options the Committee might wish to consider.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to undertake a short consultation with the Business Committee and the Chairperson’s Liaison Group to seek their views on whether there is support to extend the temporary provisions beyond 3 July 2021.

7. Proxy Voting – Consideration of responses

The Chairperson reminded the Committee that, at its last meeting, the Committee agreed to defer its consideration of responses in respect of whether there is support for “unforeseen circumstances” being included in the scope of the Committee’s review of Proxy Voting.

The Committee noted a further response from Sinn Féin and a response from the Alliance Party.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the Clerk to provide additional information and a summary of the responses for consideration at a future meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Speaker with an update on the Committee’s consideration.

8. Correspondence

The Committee noted the latest publication of the NI Human Rights Commission newsletter.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme.



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10. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's business.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Agreed: It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Wednesday 2 June 2021 at 2.30pm.

The Chairperson returned to the earlier proposal made by Thomas Buchanan regarding a list of outstanding commitments within NDNA which may have an impact on the Assembly's Standing Orders.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the Clerk to provide a summary of the NDNA commitments which may have impact on Assembly Standing Orders and to seek an update from the Executive.

The meeting moved to closed session at 15.54pm.

13. EU Exit Related Issues

The Chairperson reminded the Committee that, during its strategic planning (3 February 2021), the Committee agreed to a number of strategic priorities, which were referenced "Other EU exit issues" and which could potentially involve changes to Standing Orders.

The Committee considered a paper from the Clerk which provided information regarding consent decisions and other EU exit related issues.



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The Clerk provided the Committee with an overview of section 6A of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 which relates to regulations made by UK Ministers that seek to limit the legislative competence of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Committee noted a number of options it may wish to consider including whether procedures should be put in place in relation to consent decisions.

The Committee noted a draft procedure for the Assembly to signify or refuse consent to draft Statutory Instruments that UK Ministers propose under section 6A and/or Section 24(3) to (15) of the Northern Ireland Act.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Business Committee, Chairperson's Liaison Group and the Executive to seek their views on the draft procedure.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.03pm.

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

**Chairperson, Committee on Procedures
2 June 2021**