



## COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Thursday 17 September 2020**  
**ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS AND VIDEO-CONFERENCE**

Present: Ms Linda Dillon MLA  
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mrs Rosemary Barton MLA  
Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA  
Mr Gerry Carroll MLA

Video-Conference Mr Maurice Bradley MLA  
Ms Catherine Kelly MLA  
Mr Gary Middleton MLA

In attendance: Nick Mitford (Committee Clerk)  
Stewart Kennedy (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Assembly Official Alyn Hicks (Legal Advisor)

Apologies None

The meeting commenced in open session at 2.04pm.

The Chairperson informed Members that, on 18 June 2020, her Party had nominated her to fill the vacancy of Chairperson.

Mr Alyn Hicks from Legal Services joined the meeting at 2.04pm.

#### **1. Apologies**

As above.

## **2. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 25 March 2020.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposed actions contained in the Clerk's memorandum of 17 June 2020.

## **3. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

## **4. Standing Orders: Temporary Provisions**

As Standing Orders 110-116 cease to have effect on 30 September 2020, the Committee considered a number of options in relation to the temporary provisions.

The Committee noted the following items:

- A Clerk's covering note;
- The committee motion agreed by the Assembly on 27 March 2020;
- An email response from the Alliance Party;
- A response from the Scottish Parliament's Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments;
- A response from the House of Commons Procedures Committee;
- A report from the House of Commons Procedures Committee on its review of proxy voting;
- A response from Claire Sugden MLA;
- A response from the Business Committee; and
- A draft committee motion to extend the temporary provisions

The Clerk briefed the Committee on the temporary provisions which was followed by a question and answer session.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to extend the temporary provisions to 31 January 2021

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the draft motion to amend Standing Orders.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed for the Clerk to write to his counterparts in the Assembly committees to ask whether they are content with the current provisions or whether they have any suggested amendments.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to consider any amendments to the temporary provisions at a later date.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the House of Commons Procedures Committee report on its review of proxy voting to the Speaker for information.

## **5. Correspondence**

The Committee noted the correspondence memo.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Speaker which sought an update on the Committee's approach to those parts of the New Decade, New Approach agreement in which it will have a role to play. In particular, the development of Standing Orders to enable Members to participate in Assembly business in Irish or Ulster Scots.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to consider this issue as part of its strategic planning later in the meeting.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Speaker in relation to the Assembly Commission's draft budget and the "Budget Setting Methodology".

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to consider this issue as part of its strategic planning and to write to the Speaker to advise him of any decision the Committee might agree to.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Justice regarding Westminster Acts containing provisions on devolved matters yet to be commenced.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to consider this issue as part of its review on Legislative Consent Motions and to write to the Justice Committee to inform it of the Committee's decision to include the issue in its review?

The Committee considered correspondence from the Assembly's Chief Executive in response to a request received from Ms Kellie Armstrong MLA, to the Committee, regarding accessible options to be introduced for Members with sensory impairments, in particular in the Assembly chamber.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the Chief Executive's response to Ms Kellie Armstrong MLA and to confirm that the Committee is not minded to amend Standing Orders at this stage but will do so should the Assembly agree to introduce hybrid proceedings.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed for the remaining items of correspondence to be actioned accordingly as set out in the correspondence memo

**6. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee agreed to defer this item of business until it had revisited its strategic planning later in the meeting.

**7. Chairperson's Business**

There was no Chairperson's Business.

**8. Any other Business**

There was no other business.

**9. Date, time and place of next meeting**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to defer this item of business until it had revisited its strategic planning later in the meeting.

The Chairperson moved the meeting to closed session at 2.20pm.

**10. Review of Standing 45A – Official Opposition**

The Chairperson reminded Members that, at its meeting on 25 March 2020, the Committee agreed to defer this item of business as it was required to urgently consider temporary provisions to Standing Orders as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Alyn Hicks from Legal Services.

The Committee noted the following items:

- A covering memo from the Clerk;
- Legal advice; and
- A draft motion to amend Standing Order 45A.

Mr Alyn Hicks briefed the Committee which was followed by a question and answer session.

During discussions, some Members queried the rationale behind the two year period following the formation of the Executive when a Party can enter the Official opposition.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to defer this item of business until its next meeting and to write to the Executive Office to ask for the rationale of the two year period following the formation of the Executive when a Party can enter the Official opposition.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Hicks for his briefing.

Mr Alyn Hicks left the meeting at 2.48pm.

## **11. Strategic Planning**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to consider the current status of its work topics and to revisit the Committee's strategic planning.

The Committee noted the following items:

- The Committee's report on its initial strategic planning session;
- A table setting out the current status of work previously agreed by the Committee; and
- A paper from RalsE on Members' Statements.

The Chairperson asked the Clerk to brief the Committee.

Following the Clerk's briefing, the Committee considered the status of its current work topics and a number of additional requests subsequently received since its initial strategic planning.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Speaker which sought an update on its approach and anticipated timeframe for taking forward those parts of the New Decade, New Approach agreement in which it will have a role to play.

The Committee acknowledged the importance of implementing the New Decade, New Approach agreement however, some Members expressed concern about progressing elements of the agreement without knowing the Executive's timescales.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Executive to seek an update on its timescales for bringing forward legislation which may have an impact on the current Standing Orders of the Assembly. The Committee also agreed to write to the Speaker to inform him of the Committee's decision.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to continue to progress its review of Legislative Consent Motions and to write again to all Parties and Independent Members to seek their views. The Committee also agreed to write again to NIA Statutory Committees who had not previously responded for their views on the current LCM process.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to continue to progress Members' Statements and to write again to all Parties and Independent members to seek their views on Members' Statements. The Committee also agreed to schedule a briefing from RalsE on Members' Statements at its next meeting.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to include proxy voting in its forward work programme. The Committee also requested the Clerk to provide a paper on proxy voting at its next meeting.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to include consideration of the "Budget Setting Methodology" in its forward work programme and to write to the Speaker to inform him of the Committee's decision.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to revert back to its original schedule of meeting fortnightly.

## **12. Date and time of next meeting**

It was agreed that the date and time of the next meeting would be on Wednesday 30 September at 2pm in Room 21.

3.27pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

**Linda Dillon MLA**  
Chairperson, Committee on Procedures  
30 September 2020