



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee on Procedures

## Minutes of Proceedings

15 December 2021

**Meeting Location:** Room 29 and Starleaf

**Present by Video-Conference:**

Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mrs Rosemary Barton MLA

Ms Nicola Brogan MLA

Ms Joanne Bunting MLA

Mr Gerry Carroll MLA

Ms Ciara Ferguson MLA

Mr William Humphrey MLA

**Apologies:**

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA (Chairperson)

Ms Sinéad Bradley

**In Attendance:**

Emer Boyle (Committee Clerk)

Paul Gill (Clerk Assistant)

Stewart Kennedy (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Sohui Yim (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Joanne Keenan (Clerical Officer)



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The meeting commenced at 2.34pm in open session.

### **1. Apologies**

As above.

*The Clerk advised the Committee that the Chairperson, Ms Carál Ní Chuilín, had delegated authority to Nicola Brogan to vote on her behalf.*

### **2. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 1 December 2021.

### **3. Matters Arising**

*Gerry Carroll joined the meeting at 2.35pm.*

Members noted a memo from the Clerk regarding the status of the Chairperson's Liaison Group (CLG) and its terms of reference.

Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to thank this Committee for its response to a query on procedural advice in respect of the potential establishment of a new Assembly Standing Committee and how that may be facilitated.

### **4. Private Members Bills (PMBs) – Oral Evidence from Colin McGrath MLA**

The Committee noted a paper from the Clerk and correspondence from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland regarding the Committee's Inquiry.



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**Agreed:** The Committee agreed for all of today's oral evidence sessions to be recorded by Hansard, to be included in the Committee's final report.

*Mr Colin McGrath joined the meeting at 2.36pm.*

The Chairperson welcomed Mr McGrath to the meeting.

Mr McGrath provided oral evidence to the Committee on his experience of the PMB process. This was followed by a question and answer session.

*Ms Rosemary Barton joined the meeting at 2.41pm.*

The Chairperson thanked Mr McGrath for his evidence.

*Mr Colin McGrath left the meeting at 3.08pm.*

**5. Private Members Bills (PMBs) – oral evidence from John O'Dowd MLA**

The Committee noted a paper from the Clerk.

*Mr John O'Dowd joined the meeting at 3.08pm.*

The Chairperson welcomed Mr O'Dowd to the meeting.

Mr O'Dowd provided oral evidence to the Committee on his experience of the PMB process. This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr O'Dowd for his evidence.

*Mr O'Dowd left the meeting at 3.24pm.*

**6. Private Members Bills (PMBs) – oral evidence from Assembly Bill Office**

The Committee noted a paper from the Clerk and a paper from the Bill Office on the PMB process at the Assembly.

*Mr Frank Geddis and James Gilsenan joined the meeting at 3.24pm.*

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Geddis and Mr Gilsenan to the meeting.



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Mr Geddis and Mr Gilsenan provided oral evidence to the Committee on the PMB process at the Assembly. This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Geddis and Mr Gilsenan for their evidence.

*Mr Geddis and Mr Gilsenan left the meeting at 4.03pm.*

### **7. Private Members Bills (PMBs) – oral evidence from the Speaker’s Office**

The Committee noted a paper from the Clerk and a written submission from the Speaker on the PMB process at the Assembly.

*The Speaker, Mr Alex Maskey joined the meeting at 4.03pm.*

The Chairperson welcomed the Speaker to the meeting.

The Speaker provided oral evidence to the Committee on the PMB process at the Assembly. This was followed by a question and answer session.

*William Humphrey left the meeting at 4.25pm.*

*Gerry Carroll left the meeting at 4.35pm.*

*Rosemary Barton left the meeting at 4.40pm.*

The Chairperson thanked the Speaker for his evidence.

*The Speaker left the meeting at 4.47pm.*

The Committee discussed the evidence to date and draft options.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider a draft report on the Inquiry in closed session at the next Committee meeting.

### **8. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted the Committee’s Forward Work Programme.



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### **9. Correspondence**

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- Memo from the Clerking and Member Support office regarding a Member development programme on 'Deaf Awareness';
- The NI Human Rights Commission E-Newsletter.

### **10. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

### **11. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

The Committee noted that next meeting of the Committee would take place on Wednesday, 19 January 2022 at 2.30pm.

The Chairperson advised members that the Committee will move into closed session for consideration of the legal advice on Official Opposition.

### **12. Official Opposition: Legal Advice**

The Committee noted a briefing note from the Clerk, updated legal advice from Legal Services; and a draft motion to amend Standing Orders.

Mr Jonathan McMillen, Assembly Head of Legal Services, joined the meeting at 4.51pm.

Mr McMillen briefed the Committee on the legal advice which was followed by a question and answer session.



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**Agreed:** Members agreed to await a further paper from officials setting out how proposed changes to Standing Orders may impact on the practical allocation of Questions in relation to Assembly Business.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to defer further discussion and decisions on this matter until the next Committee meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.28pm.

**Carál Ní Chuilín MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee on Procedures**  
**19 January 2022**