



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee on Procedures

Minutes of Proceedings

9 February 2022

Meeting Location: Room 29 and Starleaf

Present: Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Nicola Brogan MLA
Ms Joanne Bunting MLA

Present by Video-Conference:
Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA

Apologies: Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA (Chairperson)
Mrs Rosemary Barton MLA
Mr Gerry Carroll MLA
Ms Ciara Ferguson MLA
Mr William Humphrey MLA

In Attendance: Emer Boyle (Committee Clerk)
Paul Gill (Clerk Assistant)
Frank Geddis (Clerk Assistant) – for agenda item 2



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James Gilsenan (Clerk of Bills) – for agenda item 2

Sohui Yim (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Kevin Marks (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.38pm in closed session.

The Clerk advised the Committee that the Chairperson, Ms Carál Ní Chuilín, Gerry Carroll and Ciara Ferguson had delegated authority to Nicola Brogan to vote on their behalf.

The Clerk advised the Committee that William Humphrey, had delegated authority to the Deputy Chairperson, Tom Buchanan, to vote on his behalf.

1. Official Opposition – Draft motion for revisions in Standing Orders

Members discussed the draft motion for revisions previously agreed to Standing Orders in relation to the Entitlements for an Official Opposition, in line with the recommendations of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee report which was agreed by the Assembly on 9th November 2021.

There was no division, however, Ms Joanne Bunting requested that her concerns in relation to the proposed new arrangements for the allocation of questions in Plenary be put on the record.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the motion to be submitted to the Business Office for debate in Plenary.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request the standard time for debate in relation to a Committee motion which is 90 minutes.

Sinéad Bradley left the meeting at 2.55pm.



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2. Private Members' Bill Inquiry – draft report

Members discussed the draft report on the Committee's Private Members' Bill Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content that the discussions from this item are reflected in a further draft report to be circulated for members' consideration in advance of the next Committee meeting, with a view to considering a final version of the Committee report on 23 February 2022.

3. Legislative Consent Motions Inquiry – draft report

Members discussed the draft report sections on the Committee's Legislative Consent Motion Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content that the discussions from this item are reflected in a further draft report to be circulated for members' consideration in advance of the next Committee meeting, with a view to considering the final Committee report on 23 February 2022.

The meeting moved into public session at 3.33pm.

4. Apologies

Apologies as above.

5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 19 January 2021.



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6. Matters Arising

Members considered a Clerk's memo in relation to a visit from the House of Commons (HOC) Procedures Committee on 23 February 2022 which includes a meeting with the Assembly Committee on Procedures in the afternoon.

Members noted that the final Business Committee meeting to which motions can be submitted in order for them to be scheduled for debate in Plenary on 14/15 March is the Business Committee meeting of 1 March 2022.

The Chairperson proposed to the Committee that, in light of the fact that the Committee must consider 2 final reports at the next meeting and to give officials enough time to incorporate necessary amendments into those reports, to cancel the next scheduled meeting on 16 February and instead meet on 23 February 2022 at 3pm after the meeting with the HOC Procedures Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to cancel the next meeting on 16 February and instead meet on 23 February 2022 at 3pm.

7. Temporary Provisions for Standing Orders – consideration of options

Members considered a Clerk's memo in relation to the Temporary Provisions for Standing Orders. Members discussed the options for extending the Temporary Provisions beyond the end of the mandate, as currently, they are set to expire at the end of the mandate.

Members discussed a potential issue with Standing Order (3) in relation to the first meeting of a new Assembly and the possibility of an MLA being unable to attend in person (due to self-isolation or other exceptional circumstance) and therefore unable to designate.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to extend the Temporary Provisions for Standing Orders into the next mandate with an understanding that they will be reviewed immediately after the start of the new mandate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek legal advice on amendments to Standing Order (3) to allow for a member who is unable to physically attend the first sitting to be able to designate “other than in person”.

8. Northern Ireland (Ministers, Elections and Petitions of Concern) Bill – Update

Members considered a Clerk’s memo in relation to the Northern Ireland (Ministers, Elections and Petitions of Concern) Bill. Members noted the following:

- The further change in status of the passage of the Bill;
- The shortened timeframe for the Bill to come into effect; and
- That no responses have been received to the questions asked in the issues paper previously circulated to Party Whips and Party Leaders.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to urge responses from Party groups to the questions posed in the issues paper.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek legal advice on the implications of the Bill to be provided at the next available opportunity following the completion of the passage of the Bill.

9. Proxy Voting – Update

Members considered a Clerk’s memo on the issue of the permanent arrangements for proxy voting in Standing Orders. Members discussed including “unforeseen circumstances”, “parental leave” and “long-term illness” in the permanent proxy voting arrangements.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed that SO 27(11) which makes provision for proxy voting should be extended to include parental leave and long-term illness, with the specific criteria to be developed by the next Committee on Procedures, in the new mandate.

Agreed: Committee agreed to recommend that a full review should be undertaken in the next mandate, which should include an examination of further exceptional circumstances, to include bereavement and caring emergencies as well as arrangements for the Member holding the proxy votes and the timeframes in which they must be transferred in the event that they (the Member holding the proxy votes) may be unable to attend a vote.

10. Electronic Voting – correspondence from the Assembly Commission

Members considered a Clerk's memo on the issue of Electronic Voting in the Assembly and correspondence from the Assembly Commission on the issue.

Agreed: Members agreed to add this issue to the Committee's Legacy Report and refer it to the next Committee on Procedures as a matter of urgent priority for consideration and review.

11. Correspondence

There were no items of correspondence.

12. Any Other Business

The Deputy Chairperson raised the issue of poor internet connectivity in Parliament Buildings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for Assembly Officials to investigate the matter and report back to the Committee at a later date.



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13. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that next meeting of the Committee would take place on Wednesday, 23 February 2022 at 3pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.14pm.

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA
Chairperson, Committee on Procedures
23 February 2022