



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee on Standards and Privileges

Minutes of Proceedings

23 March 2022

Meeting Location: Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Linda Dillon MLA (Chairperson)

Ms Pam Cameron MLA

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA

Mr Patsy McGlone MLA

Ms Áine Murphy MLA

Apologies: Dr Steve Aiken OBE MLA

Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA

Mr Declan McAleer MLA

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Shane McAteer (Assembly Clerk)

Ms Karen Barry (Assistant Clerk)

Dr Simon Gallaher (Clerical Supervisor)

Ms Alison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to commence the meeting in closed session.

The meeting commenced at 12.40pm in closed session.

1. Apologies

As noted above.

The Clerk advised the Committee that Áine Murphy and Declan McAleer had provided notification previously that they had delegated authority, under Standing Order 115(6), to the Chairperson to vote on their behalf, in their absence, until further notice.

The Clerk advised the Committee that Sinéad Bradley had provided notification that she had delegated authority, under Standing Order 115(6), to Patsy McGlone to vote on her behalf at today's meeting.

2. Declaration of Interests

Members were advised of the ongoing requirement to declare relevant financial or other interests as and when they arise on the Committee.

There were no interests declared.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2022.



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4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Complaint against a Member – Consideration of draft Committee report

Members considered a draft Committee report on a complaint against a Member, which had been developed in line with the Committee's decisions on the complaint case taken at the meeting on 2 March 2022.

Members undertook formal consideration of the draft report as follows:

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Title Page, Committee Powers and Membership page and Table of Contents page.

Introduction

The Committee considered the 'Introduction' section of the report as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with paragraphs 1 and 2.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the 'Role of the Committee' subsection at paragraphs 3 to 5.

Background

The Committee considered the 'Background' section of the report as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with paragraphs 6 to 9.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the 'Allegations' subsection at paragraphs 10 and 11.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the 'Relevant rules in the Members' Code of Conduct' subsection at paragraphs 12 and 13.



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The Commissioner's investigation

The Committee considered 'The Commissioner's investigation' section of the report as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with paragraph 14.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with 'The Commissioner's reasoned decisions' subsection at paragraph 15.

The Committee's considerations and conclusions

The Committee considered 'The Committee's considerations and conclusions' section of the report as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with paragraph 16.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the 'Considerations in advance of deliberation' subsection at paragraphs 17 to 19.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the 'Factual background and context' subsection at paragraphs 20 and 21.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the 'Examination of the issues and allegations' subsection at paragraphs 22 to 43.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with 'The Respect and Leadership Principles' subsection at paragraphs 44 and 45.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the 'Sanctions' subsection at paragraphs 46 to 48.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the 'Future improvements' subsection at paragraphs 49 and 50.

Appendices

The Committee considered the appendices to the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content that the appendices be included in the report, subject to making further redactions of personal data in



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appendices 1 and 3, which were identified as necessary by Assembly Legal Services.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that this report be the Sixth Report of the Committee on Standards and Privileges in the 2017-22 Mandate.

Áine Murphy left the meeting at 12.52pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson will approve today's minutes of proceedings, given that this is the last Committee meeting in the mandate and to enable the record of agreeing the report to be included in the appended Minutes of Proceedings relating to the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the report be published on-line on the Assembly's webpages.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the report be embargoed until noon on Friday, 25 March 2022 to provide time for it to be uploaded to the Assembly webpages.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to provide the complainant and the respondent with a copy of the embargoed report in advance of publication.

Áine Murphy re-joined the meeting at 12.54pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, if there are any media queries in relation to the report, the Committee will respond to say that it will not be making any further comment.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that the Assembly Communications Office issues a public notification on Twitter of the publication of the report, which provides a link to the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, in line with protocol, a copy of the report will be laid in the Assembly Business Office within 24 hours (the Committee noted that it will be made available for viewing by Members once the embargo has expired and a link to the Report will also be emailed to all MLAs following publication).



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6. Report on development of an Unacceptable Behaviours Policy

The Committee considered the Report on the development of an Unacceptable Behaviours Policy, which had been made by a working group comprising members of the Committee and members of the Assembly Commission.

Agreed: The Committee agreed, in principle, the applicable recommendations contained in the report and further agreed to refer these to the successor Committee to consider implementing early in the new mandate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the report as part of the Committee's Legacy Report.

7. Legacy Report – Consideration of draft report

The Committee considered its draft Legacy Report 2017-2022.

Title Page, Table of Contents, List of Abbreviations and Powers and Membership

The Committee considered the Title Page, Table of Contents, List of Abbreviations and Powers and Membership as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Title Page, Table of Contents, List of Abbreviations and Powers and Membership of the Committee.

Review of 2017-2022 Mandate - Committee Work Areas

The Committee considered the 'Review of 2017-2022 Mandate - Committee Work Areas' section of the report as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the 'Consideration of complaints against Members' subsection at paragraphs 1 to 3.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the 'Review of the Code of Conduct' subsection at paragraphs 4 to 7.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the 'Unacceptable Behaviours Policy' subsection at paragraphs 8 to 10.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the 'Register of Members' Interests' subsection at paragraphs 11 and 12.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the 'All-Party Groups' subsection at paragraphs 13 to 15.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the 'Appointment of lay members to the Committee' subsection at paragraphs 16 and 17.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the 'Complaints against Ministers' subsection at paragraphs 18 to 20.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the 'Review of procedural practices for adjudication role' subsection at paragraphs 21 and 22.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the 'Other Business' subsection at paragraphs 23 and 24.

Suggested Issues for the successor Committee

The Committee considered the 'Suggested Issues for the successor Committee' section of the report as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the 'Suggested Issues for the successor Committee' section at paragraphs 25 and 26.

Appendices

The Committee considered the appendices to the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content that the appendices be included in the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the report as the Seventh Report of the Committee on Standards and Privileges in the 2017-22 Mandate.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the 'Committee on Standards and Privileges Legacy Report 2017-2022' to be published.

8. Referral of a complaint to the Committee for further consideration

Members were briefed by the Committee Clerk on the applicable procedures in relation to this agenda item.

The Commissioner for Standards, Dr Melissa McCullough, joined the meeting at 1.17pm.

The Committee received a briefing from the Commissioner for Standards on her correspondence dated 18 February 2022 and accompanying papers in relation to this agenda item.

The Commissioner for Standards left the meeting at 1.33pm.

The Committee considered the complainant's request, under sub-paragraphs 3.13 and 3.14 of the General Procedures Direction, that it further considers the decision by the Commissioner for Standards that the complaint was inadmissible.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, in accordance with sub-paragraph 3.14 of the General Procedures Direction, it considered the complaint to be inadmissible as per the Commissioner's decision.

9. Correspondence

The Committee noted the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman's 'Annual Report of the Northern Ireland Local Government Commissioner for Standards 2020-21'.



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10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

As this was the last scheduled meeting of the Committee in the current mandate, the Chairperson thanked members for their contribution to the work of the Committee during the mandate and also thanked the secretariat team for their work in supporting the Committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.39pm.

Linda Dillon MLA,

Chairperson, Standards and Privileges Committee

March 2022