

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Meeting Venue: Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Meeting date: Thursday 9 September 2021

Meeting Time: 4.00 pm



Assembly Commission Members:

The Speaker
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA
Mr John O'Dowd MLA
Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA
Mr Robbie Butler MLA
Mr John Blair MLA

Officials present:

Mrs Lesley Hogg, Clerk/Chief Executive
Dr Gareth McGrath, Director of Parliamentary Services
Mr Richard Stewart, Director of Corporate Services
Mr Robin Ramsey, Adviser to the Speaker/Head of Corporate Support
Mrs Janet Hughes, Clerical Supervisor

Others in attendance:

Mr Jim Brooks, Secretariat Audit and Risk Committee (SARC) Chairperson
Mr Sebastien Mingout, Support Services Manager (Item 5)
Mr David Lynn, Building Services Manager (Item 7)
Mrs Alice McKelvey, Legal Adviser (Item 7)

The meeting commenced at 4.04 pm.

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

The Speaker noted that correspondence that had been received since the last meeting on 8 July 2021 would be dealt with at the next full meeting.

4. REVIEW OF THE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR POLITICAL PARTIES SCHEME ('FAPP SCHEME') 2016

Richard Stewart presented a paper, seeking Members agreement on the contents of a future FAPP Scheme and a draft response to the Chairperson of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC), on the report on the Review of the Adequacy and Effectiveness of the Statement of Entitlements of an Official Opposition (the Review Report).

In relation to the wider review of the FAPP Scheme, Members noted the structure of the current Scheme along with a summary of party positions on the existing Scheme and the potential content of any future Scheme.

John O'Dowd MLA advised that he was not in a position to agree the content of a future FAPP Scheme at the meeting, as he required more time to consider the proposed content. While initial views were provided by other Members it was agreed that final decisions would be taken after consideration of the Review Report and any recommendations made by the AERC in plenary.

In relation to the response to the Chairperson of the AERC, Members agreed to consider the recommendations and suggested responses presented in the paper and respond by 17 September 2021, to enable an agreed response to be issued to the Chairperson of the AERC by the requested deadline.

Sebastien Mingout joined the meeting at 4.40 pm for agenda item 5.

5. SUPPORT SERVICES CONTRACT – CONTRACT SCOPE JANUARY 2022

Mr Stewart noted that Members had considered a paper on the Support Services Contract – Optional Year 5 (2022), at the Assembly Commission meeting on 8 July 2021, when it was agreed that further consideration would be given to the catering services to be delivered under a new contract.

Mr Stewart subsequently presented a paper, seeking Members' views on the range of catering services to be provided in Parliament Buildings under a new contract. Members agreed that:

- The Blue Flax restaurant should continue to operate as a dedicated "canteen" facility within the revised opening hours proposed in the paper;
- A dining option (including public dining) should continue, provided there was no cost to the Assembly;

- Catering services should continue to be available for functions and
- events, but that weddings should no longer be offered in Parliament Buildings; and
- Vending options should be more widely used.

Mr Stewart advised that due to the complexity of the contract, the Assembly's Procurement Office had indicated that it would not be possible to complete a tender competition by the current contract end date and he sought agreement from Members to utilise a contract extension with the incumbent service provider, to extend the contract for four months. Members approved the four-month extension to the existing contract.

Sebastien Mingout left the meeting at 5.23 pm.

David Lynn and Alice McKelvey joined the meeting at 5.23 pm for agenda item 6.

6. DEFECTS IN THE ROOF OF PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS AND INVESTIGATION OF POTENTIAL LIABILITY

Following on from the paper presented to the Assembly Commission at its meeting on 8 July 2021, on the defects in the roof of Parliament Buildings and potential legal action against those responsible for undertaking the roof refurbishment works, Mr Stewart provided Members with an update on the current legal position.

Mr Stewart, sought and received authority from Members for the Assembly Commission to enter into tri-partite meditation with the roof contractors and architects along with the associated legal costs, as outlined in the paper.

Mr Stewart also strongly advised that a further survey of the roof be carried out, with any resulting remedial works undertaken as a matter of urgency, to ensure the continued health and safety of building users. Mr Stewart outlined the costs of a survey and possible remedial works and stated that the Assembly Commission would seek to recuperate the associated costs from the roof contractors and architects.

Members agreed to procure a survey and to carry out necessary remedial works in line the indicative costs outlined in the paper.

David Lynn and Alice McKelvey left the meeting at 5.34 pm.

7. AOB

The Speaker advised Members that a meeting would be arranged for October 2021, to allow for further discussion on the project to review the display of artefacts, in advance of the Open Day planned for November 2021.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Officials to liaise with Members to agree a date for the next Assembly Commission meeting.

The meeting ended at 5.35 pm.