

COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 22 OCTOBER 2013
ROOM 144, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Gerry Kelly MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Paula Bradley MLA
Mr Samuel Gardiner MLA
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA
Mr Kieran McCarthy MLA

In attendance: Alison Ross (Clerk)
Neil Currie (Assistant Clerk)
Jennifer Breslin (Clerical Officer)

1.10pm The meeting opened in public session.

1. Apologies

Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA
Mr Alban Maginness MLA
Lord Morrow MLA
Mr George Robinson MLA

The Chairperson welcomed Mr McCarthy to the Committee. Mr McCarthy confirmed that he had no financial or other interests, relevant to the work of the Committee, to declare. The Chairperson reminded Members of the on-going need to declare any interests which are relevant to the work of the Committee.

2. Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2013

Agreed: Members agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2013.

3. Inquiry into the extent to which Standing Orders should permit the Attorney General to participate in proceedings of the Assembly

Agreed: As only five Members were present, it was agreed to defer consideration of this item to the next meeting.

4. Scheduling of parliamentary business

Agreed: The Committee agreed:

- a) The Terms of Reference for the inquiry and that it would be entitled 'Review of the current organisation of the business week of the Northern Ireland Assembly'.
- b) The programme of work, and that a notice publicising the review would appear on the Assembly website only.
- c) The list of stakeholders who should be invited to submit written evidence.
- d) The draft letter to stakeholders.

The Committee considered statistics on the number of late sittings in the last mandate and so far in this mandate. The Committee was content to note the statistics as this issue will be considered as part of the review.

5. Emergence of new political parties/groupings during a mandate

The Chairperson declared an interest as a member of the Business Committee. Mr McCarthy declared that he had recently attended the Business Committee as a substitute member.

The Committee noted the response from the Speaker in relation to the interim speaking arrangements agreed by the Business Committee.

The Committee considered a briefing paper on what impact the emergence of new political parties/groupings during a mandate would have on Standing Orders.

Agreed: In relation to speaking arrangements, it was agreed that there should be no change to the role of the Speaker and the Business Committee, as set out in Standing Order 17.

Agreed: It was agreed to give further consideration to the other issues in the briefing paper at the next meeting.

6. Interim evaluation of Topical Questions

The Committee considered statistical data and commentary on the Topical Questions process since its introduction.

The Committee also considered a letter from the Speaker which outlined some issues in relation to the Topical Questions process. The Chairperson informed Members that he had met with the Speaker, at the Speaker's request, to discuss

the matter.

Agreed: It was agreed that some of the concerns about the Topical Questions process could be addressed by changing the order in which Topical Questions are taken in the Chamber, i.e. after Oral Questions, and that Standing Order 20A(1) should, therefore, be amended.

The Committee considered legal advice on this matter along with a draft motion to amend Standing Order 20A(1).

Agreed: The Committee agreed the amendment and the motion to amend Standing Order 20A(1).

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson writes back to the Speaker to advise him of the Committee's decision.

7. Committee Stage of Bills

The Committee considered a briefing paper and statistical data regarding requests to extend the Committee Stage of Bills during this mandate.

Agreed: It was agreed that there should be no change to the period of 30 working days for committee consideration of a Bill, as set out in Standing Orders 33(2) and 88(3).

8. Review of the Committee System

Agreed: As the Committee Review Group report on the Review of the Committee System had not yet been signed off, it was agreed to defer consideration of this item to the next meeting.

9. Public Petition Procedures

Agreed: As Public Petition Procedures was part of the Terms of Reference for the Review of the Committee System project, and the report had not yet been signed off, it was agreed to defer consideration of this item to the next meeting.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee was content with the Forward Work Programme.

11. Correspondence

The Committee considered correspondence from Helen Eadie MSP, Deputy Convener of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee of the Scottish Parliament in relation to the consideration of EU legislation in devolved legislatures.

The Clerk was asked to check the position on this matter and prepare a draft reply for consideration at the next meeting.

12. Any other Business

None.

13. Date, time and place of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on 26 November 2013 at 1.00pm in Room 144, Parliament Buildings.

1.34pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Gerry Kelly
Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

26 November 2013