

## COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2013  
ROOM 144, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Gerry Kelly MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Jim Allister MLA  
Ms Paula Bradley MLA  
Mr Samuel Gardiner MLA  
Mr Barry McElduff MLA  
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA  
Mr Kieran McCarthy MLA  
Mr Alban Maginness MLA  
Lord Morrow MLA

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

**1.04pm** The meeting opened in public session.

**1. Apologies**

Mr George Robinson MLA

**2. Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2013**

*Agreed:* Members agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2013.

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

**1.06pm** Lord Morrow joined the meeting.

The Committee considered a briefing paper and discussed a number of issues relating to the Terms of Reference for the inquiry.

There was general agreement on the approach that the inquiry should take and the key principles regarding participation by the Attorney General for Northern Ireland in proceedings of the Assembly.

*Agreed:* It was agreed that Members should obtain the views of their parties on each of the issues, for consideration at the meeting scheduled for 28 January 2014.

*Agreed:* It was agreed that the Clerk should prepare a first draft report reflecting the key principles, plus an accompanying briefing paper, for consideration at the meeting in January 2014.

**1.35pm** Mr McElduff left the meeting.

#### **4. Emergence of new political parties/groupings during a mandate**

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

*Agreed:* It was agreed that Standing Orders do not need to be amended.

**1.40pm** Lord Morrow left the meeting.

The Committee also considered the issue of having an Assembly grouping of independent Members and single party Members, or Technical Group, as this issue had arisen in a recommendation of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC) report on the Review of D'Hondt, Community Designation and Provisions for Opposition.

*Agreed:* In view of the recommendation in the AERC report, it was agreed to write to the Party Whips to seek confirmation on where each of the five main parties stand in relation to the establishment of Technical Groups, and to discuss the matter further at the meeting scheduled for 28 January 2014.

#### **5. Review of Topical Questions**

The Committee noted the updated statistical data on the Topical Questions process since its introduction.

*Agreed:* It was agreed to continue the review of Topical Questions at the meeting scheduled for 28 January 2014. It was also agreed that a draft letter to stakeholders, inviting their views on the Topical Questions process, should be prepared by the Clerk for consideration at the meeting in January 2014.

#### **6. Review of the current organisation of the business week**

*Agreed:* It was agreed to defer consideration of the written submissions

until the next meeting. It was also agreed that the Chairperson could follow up any Party Whips that have not replied by the deadline for responses.

#### **7. Amending Bills after Further Consideration Stage**

The Committee considered the response from OFMDFM on the draft Standing Order to provide for an Exceptional Further Consideration Stage.

*Agreed:* It was agreed that the OFMDFM response should be forwarded to the Bill Office, asking for its views on the amendment suggested by OFMDFM to the draft Standing Order.

#### **8. Review of the Committee System**

The Committee noted the recommendations in the Committee Review Group report on the Review of the Committee System, none of which require any changes to Standing Orders at this time.

#### **9. Public Petition Procedures**

The Committee noted that the Committee Review Group report on the Review of the Committee System indicated that, while greater use of online forums by committees to engage the public is recommended, no specific consideration is given to, or mention made of, the use or value of public petition procedures.

The Chairperson advised Members that public petition procedures may be included for review in the Engagement Strategy currently under development in the Outreach and Education section of the Secretariat.

The Chairperson also advised Members that the Alliance Party had tabled a motion (currently on the no day named list) calling on the Committee on Procedures to undertake a review of the public petition procedures.

*Agreed:* It was agreed that public petition procedures should be added to the Forward Work Programme.

#### **10. Budget Scrutiny**

The Chairperson advised Members that it is likely to be February 2014 before it is known whether Standing Orders need to be amended in relation to the Assembly's input to the budget process.

*Agreed:* It was, therefore, agreed to consider this matter further in February 2014, unless developments mean that attention is required sooner.

#### **11. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee was content with the Forward Work Programme.

**12. Correspondence**

*Agreed:* Members agreed the draft reply to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee of the Scottish Parliament in relation to the consideration of EU legislation in devolved legislatures.

**13. Any other Business**

None.

**14. Date, time and place of next meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on 28 January 2014 at 1.00pm in Room 144, Parliament Buildings.

**1.56pm** The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Gerry Kelly  
Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

28 January 2014