

COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 27 JANUARY 2015
ROOM 21, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Gerry Kelly MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Sammy Douglas MLA
Mr Samuel Gardiner MLA
Mr Kieran McCarthy MLA
Mr Barry McElduff MLA
Mr Alban Maginness MLA
Lord Morrow MLA
Mr George Robinson MLA

In attendance: Alison Ross (Clerk)
Neil Currie (Assistant Clerk)
Dee Papacosta (Clerical Officer)

1.01pm The meeting began in closed session.

1. Apologies

Mr Trevor Clarke MLA

2. Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2014

Agreed: Members agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2014.

3. Matters Arising

1.02pm Ray McCaffrey from the Research and Information Service presented his briefing paper to the Committee on the maintenance of good order and sanctions available to Speakers/Presiding Officers in other legislatures.

1.05pm Mr McElduff joined the meeting.

Mr McCaffrey answered Members' questions on his briefing paper.

1.06pm Mr Maginness joined the meeting.

1.09pm The Chairperson thanked Mr McCaffrey for his briefing and he left the meeting.

Agreed: Following further consideration of the matter, it was agreed to write to the Speaker about the interpretation and use of Standing Order 65 and the use of Speaker's rulings, and to revisit the matter once a response is received.

1.13pm Mr Gardiner joined the meeting.

4. Review of Topical Questions – Amendments to Standing Orders

The Committee considered legal advice and proposed amendments to Standing Orders to give effect to recommendation 7 in the Committee's report on the Review of Topical Questions; namely that the first Topical Question may not be asked by a Member of the same party as the Minister.

Agreed: The amendment to Standing Order 20A(4) and the motion were agreed.

5. Election of a Speaker during a mandate

The Committee considered legal advice and proposed amendments to Standing Orders to address gaps in Standing Orders around how a Speaker resigns and how an election is handled when an outgoing Speaker is in office during a mandate.

Agreed: The amendment to Standing Order 4 and the motion were agreed.
The amendment to Standing Order 6 and the motion were agreed.

1.15pm Mr Douglas joined the meeting.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Douglas to the Committee. Mr Douglas 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.

Agreed: With regard to the scheduling of the motions in plenary, it was agreed that they should be grouped with the motion to amend Standing Order 20A(4), which was agreed at item 4.

1.17pm The meeting moved into public session.

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

The Committee noted the current status of the pilot ad hoc committee to be established to consider a Statutory Rule laid by the Attorney General.

The Chairperson raised the possibility of publishing the inquiry report in two parts.

Agreed: It was agreed that a draft of a “two part” report would be considered at the next meeting when a final decision on the way forward would be made.

7. Review of Public Petitions Procedures

The Committee considered a briefing paper summarising the written submissions received for the Review of the Public Petitions Procedures, and highlighting some issues to consider in taking the review forward.

Agreed: As only one party had provided a written submission, it was agreed to write again to the parties and independent Members inviting them to respond. It was also agreed to seek the views of the Executive Committee on the review.

Agreed: It was agreed that no further oral evidence is required for the review.

Agreed: It was agreed that the correspondence from the Evangelical Alliance Northern Ireland in support of the introduction of an e-petition procedure (which was received prior to the commencement of the review) should be included in the Committee’s report.

Agreed: It was agreed to consider any further written submissions received and a full analysis of the evidence at the next meeting.

8. Review of miscellaneous Standing Orders

The Committee considered a briefing paper reviewing a number of miscellaneous Standing Orders.

Agreed: In relation to the proposed minor technical amendments to Standing Orders in which nothing substantive would be changed, the Committee agreed that (when Standing Orders are next updated) editorial amendments should be made to Standing Orders 12(2), 20C(6) and 65.

Agreed: It was agreed to obtain legal advice on the more substantive issues detailed in the briefing paper, and to consider these

issues further on receipt of the advice.

9. Forward Work Programme

Members considered a briefing paper outlining some potential implications for the work of the Committee arising from the Stormont House Agreement.

Agreed: It was agreed to add 'Implementation of the Stormont House Agreement' to the Forward Work Programme and to consider a further briefing paper on this matter at the next meeting.

The Chairperson informed Members that there had been some slippage in the introduction to the Assembly of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsperson Bill. The Committee was content to move this item of business to the list of other forthcoming business to be scheduled, and to consider the matter further when the Bill has been printed.

The Committee was content with the Forward Work Programme.

10. Correspondence

At agenda item 6 the Committee noted the draft affirmative Statutory Rule laid by the Attorney General for Northern Ireland (AGNI) and an accompanying letter from the AGNI.

There was no other correspondence.

11. Any other Business

None.

12. Date, time and place of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on 24 February 2015 at 1.00pm in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

1.41pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Gerry Kelly
Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

24 February 2015