

COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2014
ROOM 21, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

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

2. Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2014

Agreed: Members agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2014.

1.02pm Mr Allister joined the meeting.

3. Matters Arising

In relation to the Review of the Public Petitions Procedures, the Chairperson advised Members that it was not possible to change the size of the signposting ad that was placed in the newspapers, as the advertising contract across the

Assembly is based on a fixed size of template.

The Committee was content to note the position.

4. Review of Topical Questions

The Committee read the draft report on the Review of Topical Questions paragraph by paragraph.

Report:

Paragraphs 1 – 12, agreed

Paragraph 13, agreed, as amended

Paragraphs 14 – 44, agreed

Summary of Recommendations – agreed

Executive Summary – read and agreed

Agreed: The inclusion of the following appendices was agreed:
Appendix 1 – Minutes of Proceedings relating to the report
Appendix 2 – Minutes of Evidence
Appendix 3 – Written Submissions
Appendix 4 – Quantitative data from Topical Question Time
Appendix 5 – Comments received by the Business Office

Agreed: Members ordered the report to be printed.

Agreed: It was agreed that the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson could approve the minutes for the part of today's meeting dealing with consideration of the draft report, in order for an extract to be included in the report.

Agreed: It was agreed that the report should be embargoed until commencement of the debate of the report in plenary.

Agreed: The motion to accompany the report's introduction to Assembly was agreed, as follows: 'That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee on Procedures on its Review of Topical Questions'.

Agreed: If the report is approved by the Assembly, it was agreed that the Clerk should prepare draft amendments to Standing Orders to give effect to the report's recommendations, and to seek legal advice as necessary.

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

The Committee noted letters from the Attorney General for Northern Ireland

(AGNI) and the Principal Deputy Speaker, in relation to the procedure for consideration of the draft affirmative Statutory Rule to be laid by the AGNI.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a draft motion to be tabled by the Business Committee for the establishment of an ad hoc committee to consider the Statutory Rule. The agreed draft motion detailed the following:

- the remit of the ad hoc committee;
- its composition;
- the number of Members by party;
- the quorum;
- the date for submitting a report to the Assembly; and
- that the procedures of the Committee shall be such as the Committee shall determine.

The Committee noted that, in line with the agreed procedure, when the Statutory Rule is laid in the Assembly, the Chairperson will write to the Business Committee (including the agreed draft motion) requesting that an ad hoc committee be established.

The Committee read paragraphs 1 – 101 (paragraph by paragraph) of the draft report on ‘The extent to which Standing Orders should permit the Attorney General for Northern Ireland to participate in proceedings of the Assembly’.

Paragraphs 1 – 101, agreed

Agreed: It was agreed to give further consideration to the remainder of the draft report (relating to Statutory Rules laid by the AGNI) when an evaluation of the ad hoc committee procedure had been carried out.

1.29pm The meeting moved into public session.

6. Election of a Speaker during a mandate

The Committee considered a briefing paper which highlighted 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: It was agreed that the Clerk should seek legal advice and possible draft amendments to Standing Orders for consideration at the next meeting.

1.30pm Mr Maginness left the meeting.

7. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: It was agreed that the Clerk should prepare a briefing paper on the review of miscellaneous Standing Orders for consideration at the next meeting.

The Committee was content with the Forward Work Programme.

1.31pm Mr McCarthy left the meeting.

8. Correspondence

(a) The Committee noted correspondence from the Speaker of the House of Commons in relation to the Review of the Public Petitions Procedures.

(b) The Committee noted correspondence from the Chairs' Forum in relation to the CIPFA/Chairs' Forum Annual Governance Conference.

9. Any other Business

Mr Allister raised an issue in relation to the use of Standing Order 65 to deal with Members who persistently or wilfully disregard the authority of the Speaker, and requested that officials prepare a briefing paper on the provenance and practice used in other legislatures. Mr Allister declared an interest.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should commission research on this matter for consideration at the next meeting.

10. Date, time and place of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on 27 January 2015 at 1.00pm in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

1.36pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Gerry Kelly
Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

27 January 2015