

COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 23 JUNE 2015
ROOM 21, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Gerry Kelly MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Samuel Gardiner MLA
Mr Paul Givan MLA
Mr Kieran McCarthy MLA
Mr Barry McElduff MLA
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA
Mr Alban Maginness MLA
Lord Morrow MLA
Mr George Robinson MLA

In attendance: Alison Ross (Clerk)
Neil Currie (Assistant Clerk)
Sharon Young (Clerical Supervisor)

1.04pm The meeting opened in public session.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2015

Agreed: Members agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2015.

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

The Committee considered correspondence from the Chairperson of the Committee on Standards and Privileges regarding the review of Standing

Orders 69 and 70.

Agreed: As the correspondence could impact on the amendments to Standing Orders currently being drafted to implement the recommendations in Part 1 of the AGNI inquiry report, it was agreed to forward the information to the legislative draftsman.

Agreed: It was agreed to defer consideration of the management of Statutory Rules laid by the AGNI subject to the draft affirmative and negative resolution procedures to the next meeting.

4. Review of Public Petitions Procedures

The Committee considered a briefing paper outlining the proposed four phase model for submitting petitions electronically.

1.14pm Mr McCarthy joined the meeting.

1.14pm Mr Allister joined the meeting.

The Committee considered the proposed admissibility criteria to be met before a petition is considered valid.

Mr Clarke proposed that the proposer of an e-petition must be on the Northern Ireland electoral register, and that the new process should be reviewed after a six month trial period.

The Committee divided on the proposal. Ayes 7; Noes 4

Ayes

Jim Allister
Trevor Clarke
Samuel Gardiner
Paul Givan
Kieran McCarthy
Lord Morrow
George Robinson

Noes

Gerry Kelly
Barry McElduff
Oliver McMullan
Alban Maginness

The proposal accordingly was agreed to.

Mr Allister proposed that the threshold number of signatures required to action an e-petition should be set at 100.

The Committee divided on the proposal. Ayes 7; Noes 4

Ayes

Jim Allister
Trevor Clarke
Samuel Gardiner
Paul Givan
Kieran McCarthy
Lord Morrow
George Robinson

Noes

Gerry Kelly
Barry McElduff
Oliver McMullan
Alban Maginness

The proposal accordingly was agreed to.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed the following:

- a) the remainder of the admissibility criteria for the proposed e-petitions process;
- b) petitions from organisations would also require 100 signatures to action an e-petition;
- c) the model for all four phases of the e-petitions process;
- d) the current process for MLA sponsored public petitions should remain unchanged, however, this should be reconsidered as part of the six month review;
- e) the facility to submit petitions electronically should come into operation in September 2016.

Agreed: It was agreed that the Chairperson should write to the Chairpersons' Liaison Group to advise it of the Committee's preferred model for e-petitions, and to also write to the junior Ministers seeking their views on the emerging findings of the Committee.

Agreed: It was agreed to consider the review further at the next meeting.

5. Female representation within the team of Speaker, Principal Deputy Speaker and Deputy Speakers

1.45pm Mr Maginness left the meeting.

Agreed: Having considered the information in relation to female representation within the team of Speaker, Principal Deputy Speaker and Deputy Speakers, it was agreed that the way forward on this matter is to actively encourage equality within the Speaker's team. The Committee agreed that the parties and the nominations they make have a part to play in this issue, and noted that the Speaker had also written to party leaders in this regard. The Committee also agreed that it was not practical to codify any procedural mechanism in Standing Orders in relation to this matter.

Agreed: It was agreed that the Chairperson should write back to the Speaker to advise him of the Committee's views on this matter.

6. Review of Standing Order 65 – Good Order

The Committee noted the response from the Speaker in relation to sanctions and the use of Standing Order 65.

1.48pm Lord Morrow left the meeting.

1.49pm Mr McMullan left the meeting.

Agreed: It was agreed not to propose any amendments to Standing Orders in relation to this matter.

1.56pm Mr McCarthy left the meeting.

7. Review of the time allocated to Topical Questions

The Chairperson advised Members that it was time to commence the further review of the time allocated to Topical Questions, as recommended in the Review of Topical Questions report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the list of stakeholders who should be invited to submit their views on this matter, and also agreed the draft letters to stakeholders.

Agreed: It was agreed to consider the review further at the next meeting.

8. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the response from the First Minister and deputy First Minister in relation to the Stormont House Agreement and implications for the Committee's work programme.

The Committee was content with the Forward Work Programme.

9. Correspondence

2.00pm Mr Maginness rejoined the meeting.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Clerk to the Business Committee regarding the number of Members not in place for listed oral and Topical Questions, and asking the Committee to consider ways in which Members' interest in Question Time might be stimulated.

Agreed: In light of the Committee's inquiries which led to the introduction of Topical Questions and the recent review of the process, it was agreed that the Committee would have very little in the way of extra views to add at this point.

It was also agreed that Committee's review of the time allocated to Topical Questions could have some role to play in increasing Members' interest in Question Time, and that, if appropriate, the Committee could write to the Business Committee when the outcome of the review is known.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a draft letter to the Business Committee covering the above points.

10. Any other Business

The Committee was content to delegate authority to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson in relation to submitting views on releasing or withholding information in any non-routine or contentious Freedom of Information requests received during summer recess.

There was no other business.

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on 22 September 2015 at 1.00pm in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

2.02pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Gerry Kelly
Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

22 September 2015