

## COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2015  
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Gerry Kelly MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Jim Allister MLA  
Mr Paul Givan 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)  
Christopher Jeffrey (Clerical Officer)

**1.00pm** The meeting began in closed session.

**1. Apologies**

Mr Oliver McMullan MLA

**2. Draft minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2015**

*Agreed:* Members agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2015.

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

**1.01pm** Jonathan McMillen from the Legal Services Office joined the meeting and briefed the Committee and answered Members' questions on his legal advice in relation to the draft amendments to Standing Orders relating to Part 1 of the AGNI inquiry report, and the new Code of Conduct and the Guide to the Rules Relating to the Conduct of Members.

**1.04pm** Mr McCarthy joined the meeting.

**1.15pm** Mr Givan joined the meeting.

*Agreed:* Following consideration of the issues highlighted in the legal advice, it was agreed to ask the Legal Services Office to extract the Standing Orders relating to the Code of Conduct and Guide to the Rules Relating to the Conduct of Members from those that relate to the AGNI in Part 1 of the AGNI inquiry report, and to prepare revised draft amendments to Standing Orders relating only to the Code of Conduct.

**1.23pm** The Chairperson thanked Mr McMillen for his briefing and he left the meeting.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Chairperson of the Committee on Standards and Privileges in relation to the review of Standing Orders 69 and 70.

*Agreed:* It was agreed to write back to the Committee on Standards and Privileges when the revised draft amendments to Standing Orders had been considered.

**1.24pm** The meeting moved into public session.

#### **4. Review of Public Petitions Procedures**

The Chairperson informed Members that a response from the junior Ministers on behalf of the Executive Committee had still not been received.

*Agreed:* It was agreed to write back to the junior Ministers to remind them of their outstanding response.

*Agreed:* It was agreed that, unless other items of business necessitate it, there was no need for the Committee to meet on 8 December to consider a response from the junior Ministers.

#### **5. Review of the time allocated to Topical Questions**

*Agreed:* Having considered the views of the Speaker and the parties in relation to the time allocated to Topical Questions, it was agreed that no changes be made to the current procedures in respect of supplementary questions permitted during Topical Question Time. It was also agreed that the current breakdown of time allocated within Question Time be retained.

Mr McCarthy raised the issue of reducing the time allowed for answers to listed oral questions, in order to increase the number of oral questions asked.

*Agreed:* It was agreed to write to party Whips and Independent Members to seek views on reducing the time allowed for answers to supplementary oral questions only from two minutes to one minute.

## **6. Forward Work Programme**

The Chairperson advised Members that it was anticipated that only one minor amendment to Standing Orders will be required following the passage of the Public Services Ombudsperson Bill.

*Agreed:* It was agreed to obtain an update in writing regarding a number of items contained within “*A Fresh Start – The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan*”, in view of the impact on the work of the Committee in respect of drafting facilitating Standing Orders.

The Chairperson advised Members that, in anticipation of an increased workload and the need for an additional meeting in January 2016, a room had been booked for 12 January 2016.

The Committee was content with the Forward Work Programme.

## **7. Correspondence**

There was no correspondence.

## **8. Any other Business**

None.

## **9. Date, time and place of next meeting**

It was agreed that, unless there is a need to meet on 8 December 2015, the next meeting of the Committee would take place on either 12 January or 26 January 2016 at 1.00pm in Parliament Buildings.

**1.40pm** The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Gerry Kelly  
Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

12 January 2016