

## COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2016  
ROOM 21, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Gordon Lyons MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Edwin Poots MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Steven Agnew MLA  
Mrs Rosemary Barton MLA  
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA  
Mr Chris Lyttle MLA  
Mr Fra McCann MLA  
Mr Barry McElduff MLA

In attendance: Paul Gill (Clerk Assistant)  
Neil Currie (Assistant Clerk)  
Alex Carter (Clerical Officer)  
Lesley Johnston (Clerical Officer)

**1.17pm** The meeting began in closed session.

#### **1. Apologies**

Mr Conor Murphy MLA

#### **2. Draft minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2016**

*Agreed:* Members agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2016.

#### **3. The Undertaking**

**1.19pm** Jonathan McMillen from the Legal Services Office joined the meeting and briefed the Committee on the legal advice and draft Standing Orders he had prepared in relation to the signing of the Undertaking.

**1.25pm** Mr Buchanan joined the meeting.

*Agreed:* The amendment to Standing Order 3 and the motion were agreed.

**1.27pm** The Chairperson thanked Mr McMillen for his attendance and he left the meeting.

#### **4. Official Opposition**

The Committee considered the views of the parties who had responded in writing, along with party views expressed at the meeting, on the options under consideration in relation to Standing Orders relating to the Official Opposition.

*Agreed:* As there was consensus on the preferred option from all the parties who expressed views, it was agreed to proceed with Option 3.

The Clerk was asked to prepare a briefing paper for the next meeting outlining how this work may be taken forward.

**1.30pm** The meeting moved into public session.

#### **5. Hybrid Bills**

The Committee considered draft motions to make provision in Standing Orders for Hybrid Bills, and the response from the First Minister and deputy First Minister confirming that they are supportive of the Committee's proposals.

*Agreed:* The amendment to Standing Order 30 and the motion were agreed.

*Agreed:* The proposed Standing Orders 100-109 and the motion were agreed.

*Agreed:* The Committee was content for the motions agreed at the meeting in relation to the Undertaking and Hybrid Bills to be grouped for debate in plenary with the motion agreed by the Committee on 8 June 2016 to amend Standing Order 23(3) in relation to the publication of papers deposited in the Library.

#### **6. Introduction of an e-Petitions process**

The Clerk briefed the Committee on his briefing paper outlining the current position in relation to the introduction of an e-Petitions process. The Committee then discussed a number of issues in relation to the proposed e-Petitions model, as outlined in the previous Committee's report on the Review of Public Petitions Procedures.

Differences of opinion were expressed by Members on how any e-Petition process should operate and the threshold number of signatures that should apply before any admissible e-Petition is taken forward for action by the Assembly.

*Agreed:* It was agreed that the Committee should carry out its own review on the issue and that it would not bring forward amendments to Standing Orders in relation to the issue prior to the outcome of that review.

*Agreed:* It was agreed that, in the meantime, arrangements for an e-Petition procedure should be implemented in line with the recommendations in the previous Committee's report on the Review of Public Petitions Procedures and subsequent advice, subject to the decision that Standing Orders do not need to be amended, and that the Committee still needs to take a decision on the threshold.

*Agreed:* It was agreed to give further consideration to the threshold number of signatures that should apply, and Members agreed to bring party views on this issue to the next meeting.

#### **7. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee was content with the Forward Work Programme.

#### **8. Correspondence**

The Committee noted correspondence from the Office of the Attorney General for Northern Ireland inviting Members to a colloquium on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2016 on '*Getting legislation right: improving the process*'. The Chairperson advised Members wishing to attend the event to contact the Attorney General's office.

#### **9. Any other Business**

None.

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

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> September 2016 at 1.15pm in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

**1.59pm** The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Gordon Lyons  
Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

27 September 2016