

**Committee on Standards and Privileges**

# **Report on a complaint against Mr Dominic Bradley MLA**

**Together with the Report of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards  
and the Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee**

**Ordered by The Committee on Standards and Privileges to be printed on 5th June 2013  
Report: NIA 115/11-15 Standards and Privileges Committee**



# Committee Powers and Membership

1. The Committee on Standards and Privileges is a Standing Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly established in accordance with paragraph 10 of Strand One of the Belfast Agreement and under Assembly Standing Order Nos. 51 and 57.
2. The Committee has power:
  - to consider specific matters relating to privilege referred to it by the Assembly;
  - to oversee the work of the Assembly Clerk of Standards;
  - to examine the arrangement for the compilation, maintenance and accessibility of the Register of Members' Interests and any other registers of interest established by the Assembly, and to review from time to time the form and content of those registers;
  - to consider any specific complaints made in relation to the registering or declaring of interests referred to it;
  - to consider any matter relating to the conduct of Members;
  - to recommend any modifications to any Assembly code of conduct as may from time to time appear to be necessary.
3. The Committee is appointed at the start of every Assembly, and has power to send for persons, papers and records that are relevant to its enquiries.
4. The membership of the Committee is as follows:
 

Mr Alastair Ross (Chairperson)  
 Mr Kieran McCarthy (Deputy Chairperson)  
 Mr Steven Agnew  
 Mr Sydney Anderson<sup>1</sup>  
 Mr Cathal Boylan  
 Ms Paula Bradley<sup>2</sup>  
 Mr Colum Eastwood<sup>3</sup>  
 Mr Declan McAleer<sup>4 5 6</sup>  
 Mr Fra McCann  
 Mr Ian McCrea<sup>7</sup>  
 Mrs Sandra Overend<sup>8</sup>
5. The Report and evidence of the Committee are published by the Stationery Office by order of the Committee. All publications of the Committee are posted on the Assembly's website: ([www.niassembly.gov.uk](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk).)
6. All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk to the Committee on Standards and Privileges, Committee Office, Northern Ireland Assembly, Room 254, Parliament Buildings, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3XX. Tel: 02890 520333; e-mail: [committee.standards&privileges@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:committee.standards&privileges@niassembly.gov.uk)

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1 With effect from 07 May 2013 Mr Sydney Anderson replaced Mr David McIlveen  
 2 With effect from 15 April 2013 Ms Paula Bradley replaced Mr Jonathan Craig  
 3 With effect from 23 April 2012 Mr Colum Eastwood replaced Mr Patsy McGlone  
 4 With effect from 03 July 2012 Mr Alex Maskey replaced Mr Pat Doherty  
 5 With effect from 07 September 2012 Mr Francie Molloy replaced Mr Alex Maskey  
 6 With effect from 15 April 2013 Mr Declan McAleer replaced Mr Francie Molloy  
 7 With effect from 03 December 2012 Mr Ian McCrea replaced Ms Paula Bradley  
 8 With effect from 26 September 2011 Mrs Sandra Overend replaced Mr Michael Copeland



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# Report

1. The Committee on Standards and Privileges has considered a report from the Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards. The report is on an investigation into a complaint made by Mrs Karen Lennon against Mr Dominic Bradley MLA. The Commissioner's report and the complaint are appended to this report.
2. Mrs Lennon's complaint referred to a number of approaches that she and her husband had made to Mr Bradley (via email and Twitter messages). These approaches were to draw Mr Bradley's attention, as the complainant's local MLA, to alleged actions taken by a number of public bodies and officials in relation to Mr and Mrs Lennon's family situation.
3. Mrs Lennon claimed that Mr Bradley had not responded to either her or her husband's approaches. Mrs Lennon was unhappy with what she saw as Mr Bradley ignoring his constituents' plea for help and claimed that his actions amounted to a breach of the Assembly's Code of Conduct.
4. Having considered the complaint the Commissioner concluded that there were separate aspects to it. One aspect of the complaint was the allegation that Mr Bradley repeatedly ignored and failed to acknowledge correspondence from the complainant. The Commissioner concluded that this part of the complaint was admissible and that, if established, a failure to observe the principal of respect would have occurred.
5. The other aspect of the complaint was the allegation that Mr Bradley failed to take up the complainant's issues regarding a number of public bodies. It was the Commissioner's view that this aspect goes to the merits of how Mr Bradley chose to deal with an individual constituency case. Such judgements are not for the Commissioner but for the electorate. The Commissioner was not satisfied that there was a prima facie case of breach of the Code of Conduct on this aspect of the complaint.
6. The Committee on Standards and Privileges at its meeting on 13th February 2013 considered correspondence from the Commissioner and agreed with the Commissioner's conclusion that this second aspect of the complaint was inadmissible. The Committee did not take any view at this time on the first aspect of the complaint. Mrs Lennon was subsequently informed of this outcome.
7. The Commissioner investigated the aspect of the complaint which he considered to be admissible (as per the admissibility criteria set out in the General Procedures Direction 2012). The Commissioner established that Mrs Lennon's emails were sent to two different email addresses, one of which Mr Bradley did not use and did not provide on his website or literature, and the other of which was found on his website but was not used by Mr Bradley for correspondence. Three of the emails were sent to the latter address on 16th, 19th and 20th of November 2012. Mrs Lennon submitted her complaint a week later.
8. On receiving a letter from the Commissioner on 20th December 2012, Mr Bradley instructed staff to check the email account and to reply to Mrs Lennon. In the event, contact was not made until 9th January 2013, when an apology was made on Mr Bradley's behalf together with the offer of a meeting. Mrs Lennon did not respond to the email, but did agree during a phone call on 23rd January 2013 to meet with Mr Bradley.
9. The Commissioner concluded that that there had been no breach of the Code of Conduct. He reaffirms the longstanding view that it is neither his role, nor that of the Committee, to hold Members to a minimum standard of service. It is for the electorate to reach a judgment on the competence or otherwise of their elected representatives on polling day. Nonetheless, it is the Commissioner's position that a wilful and repeated refusal, without reasonable excuse, to acknowledge receipt of correspondence could amount to a breach of the principle of

respect. In this case, however, no such breach has been demonstrated, since the failure to respond to correspondence was the result of an administrative oversight.

10. The Committee considered the Commissioner's Report at its meeting on 22nd May 2013 and agreed with the Commissioner's conclusion that there had been no breach of the Code of Conduct. **The complaint is therefore not upheld.**
11. The Committee is clear that the Code of Conduct does not place upon Members a duty to respond to or even acknowledge all correspondence sent to them.
12. The Committee recognises that Members receive a wide range of correspondence, including items which are irrelevant, trivial, vexatious or even abusive. Members also receive circulars, marketing or promotional material, and other types of correspondence which do not merit a response.
13. Even leaving these categories of correspondence to one side, in instances where a correspondent does not receive a response or acknowledgement from a Member the Committee would expect a subsequent complaint to be inadmissible under the Code of Conduct on the grounds of being trivial. This is all the more likely in instances such as this where the complainant submitted a complaint within several days of the first approach to Mr Bradley.
14. The Committee noted the complainant's references to approaches to Mr Bradley via social media. The Committee is satisfied that such approaches do not constitute formal correspondence.
15. The Commissioner has recommended that a process be put in place to remind Members, on a regular basis, of the need to ensure that all the details displayed on their Assembly web pages remain accurate. The Committee has agreed to ask the Assembly Commission to give consideration to this recommendation.



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Appendix 1

# Report by the Assembly Commissioner for Standards



**Report by  
the Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards  
to  
the Committee for Standards and Privileges  
on a complaint by  
Mrs Karen Lennon  
against  
Mr Dominic Bradley MLA**

**This report is privileged and is the property of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards.**

**It has been prepared for presentation to the Committee on Standards and Privileges (the Committee). Neither the report nor its contents should be disclosed to any person unless such disclosure is authorised by the Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards or the Committee.**

**The report remains confidential until such time as it is published by the Committee.**

### **Introduction**

On 27 November 2012 Mrs Karen Lennon wrote to the Clerk of Standards intimating a complaint against Mr Dominic Bradley MLA. On 29 November she provided her full name and postal address. On receipt the complaint was passed to me. [Document 1]

Having considered the admissibility of the complaint I, by letter dated 20 December 2012, advised the Committee that I had decided that, save for one aspect, the complaint was not admissible. [Document 2]

At their meeting on 13 February 2013 the Committee agreed my decision on inadmissibility.

This report, accordingly, relates solely to my investigation of the one aspect of the complaint that I considered admissible.

### **The Complaint**

The one admissible aspect of the complaint can be stated shortly. Mrs Lennon complains that by ignoring emails sent to him on 16, 19, 20, 22, and 23 November 2012 Mr Bradley failed to observe the principles of public duty, accountability, openness, leadership, equality and promoting good relations set out in the Code. Curiously, she does not mention the principle of respect.

### **The Investigation**

Other than a meeting with Mr Bradley the investigation required only consideration of the complaint, the supporting documents and limited internet research.

### **Facts Established**

I have found the following facts established -

1. That on 16, 19 and 20 November 2012 Mrs Lennon sent emails to Mr Bradley at 'sdlpnewry@hotmail.com'. [Document 1 pages 3 & 4]
2. That unknown to Mr Bradley, that email address was shown in his page on the Assembly website. [Document 5]
3. That the email address was established some years ago by Mr Bradley's predecessors as an MLA for Newry and Armagh. It is not used by him for correspondence. [Document 5]
4. That the three emails were received at that address. [Document 5]
5. That Mr Bradley's staff failed to check the inbox at that address at any time between receipt of the emails and 20 December 2012. [Document 5]
6. That on receipt of my letter of 20 December 2012 Mr Bradley had the inbox checked and the emails were found. [Documents 3 & 5]
7. That shortly thereafter, and before the Christmas break, Mr Bradley instructed his staff to contact Mrs Lennon to explain what had occurred. [Document 5]

8. That his instructions were not complied with until 9 January 2013 when an email was sent to Mr and Mrs Lennon. [Document 5]
9. That in that email an apology was tendered on behalf of Mr Bradley and an offer for him to meet with Mr and Mrs Lennon was made.
10. That neither Mr nor Mrs Lennon responded to that email. [Document 5]
11. That on 23 January 2013 Mr Bradley's staff telephoned Mrs Lennon who was agreeable to a meeting. Her husband was not. [Document 5]
12. That the emails dated 22 and 23 November 2013 from Mrs Lennon were addressed to 'sdlp@hotmail.com'. [Document 1 page 5]
13. That these emails were not received by Mr Bradley who has no knowledge of that email address. It is not the normal SDLP email address. [Document 5]
14. That Mr Bradley has updated his Assembly webpage to show his normally used email address and has undertaken to consider further measures to reduce the risk of any future breakdowns in communication. [Documents 5 & 7]

#### **Evidence obtained**

The complaint, documents referred to above are listed at Annex B. During my consideration of this matter I did not use any other evidence obtained in the course of my investigation.

#### **Reasoned decision**

I am concerned not with the level of service provided by Mr Bradley to his constituents but with whether he has failed to observe the ethical standards set out in the Code of Conduct. I have no doubt that there has been no breach of the Code of Conduct in this case.

The emails of 22 and 23 November were sent to an email address unconnected to Mr Bradley. He could not have responded to them.

The emails of 16, 19 and 20 November were sent to an email address of Mr Bradley's albeit one that he did not use in correspondence. He was unaware of them until my letter of 20 December. He instructed appropriate action as soon as they came to his attention. Whilst it is regrettable that his instructions were not followed until after the Christmas, the delay could not reasonably be regarded as excessive. Thereafter, Mr Bradley made clear his willingness to engage with Mrs Lennon.

The complaint alleges a breach of the various principles by a wilful act, namely, a decision to ignore the emails.

I am satisfied that there is no substance to that allegation. Insofar as the complaint relates to the emails of 22 and 23 November it is simply without any foundation. In relation to the other three emails Mr Bradley took appropriate action as soon as they came to his knowledge. Any fault that occurred was the omission by his staff to monitor a rarely used email address. Whilst Members must bear responsibility for the acts or omissions of their staff the omission in this case related to performance and not to ethical standards.

On the facts I have found established no case of breaching the principles of public duty, accountability, openness, leadership, equality or promoting good relations has been made out. I find it surprising that Mrs Lennon chose not to found her complaint on the principle of

respect. Had I found that there had been a wilful and repeated failure, without reasonable excuse, even to acknowledge receipt of emails from a constituent I believe that it could have been argued that ethics rather than efficiency were an issue and that there could have been a breach of the respect principle. But as the facts in this case indicate no such failure, I find it unnecessary to consider that matter further.

### **Recommendation**

I am aware from my own experience that Mr Bradley is not the only Member whose Assembly web page has displayed an email address other than the one normally used. The provision on the web of incorrect or rarely checked email addresses and other contact details creates a risk of correspondence going unnoticed and unanswered. I recommend that a process be put in place to remind Members on a regular basis, perhaps six monthly, of the need to ensure that all the details displayed on their Assembly web page remain accurate.

**Douglas Bain CBE TD Advocate  
Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards  
2 May 2013**

## **ANNEX A**

### **Relevant provisions of the Code of Conduct**

#### **Principles of Conduct**

Members shall observe the following principles of conduct, which include principles based upon the general principles of conduct identified by the Committee on Standards in Public Life as applying to holders of public office, and further principles agreed by the Assembly:

#### **Public Duty**

Members have a duty to uphold the law and to act on all occasions in accordance with the public trust placed in them.

Members have a general duty to act in the interests of the community as a whole.

Members have a special duty to their constituents and are responsible to the electorate who are the final arbiter of their conduct as public representatives.

#### **Selflessness**

Members should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not act in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, their friends or associates.

#### **Integrity**

Members should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations which might reasonably be thought by others to influence them in the performance of their duties as a Member of the Assembly.

#### **Objectivity**

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, Members of the Assembly should make choices on merit.

#### **Accountability**

Members are accountable for their decisions and actions to the people of Northern Ireland and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

#### **Openness**

Members should be as open as possible about the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demand it.

### **Honesty**

Members should act honestly. They have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties. Members should take steps to resolve any conflicts between their private interests and public duties at once and in a way that protects the public interest.

### **Leadership**

Members should promote and support these principles by leadership and example in order to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of the people of Northern Ireland, and to ensure the integrity of the Assembly and its Members in conducting business.

### **Equality**

Members should promote equality of opportunity and not discriminate against any person by treating people with respect regardless of race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion, marital status and whether or not a person has dependents.

### **Promoting Good Relations**

Members will act in a way that is conducive to promoting good relations by providing a positive example for the wider community to follow by acting justly and promoting a culture of respect for the law.

### **Respect**

It is acknowledged that the exchange of ideas, and opinions on policies may be robust but this should be kept in context and not extend to individuals being subjected to unreasonable and excessive personal attack. Members should keep in mind that rude and offensive behaviour may lower the public's regard for, and confidence in, Members and the Assembly itself. Members should therefore show respect and consideration for others at all times.

### **Good Working Relationships**

- Between Members - Members should work responsibly with other Members of the Assembly for the benefit of the whole community. Members must treat other Members and the staff of other Members with courtesy and respect. Members must abide by the Assembly Standing Orders and should promote an effective working environment within the Assembly.

- **Between Members and Assembly staff - The relationship between Members and Assembly staff must at all times be professional, courteous and based on mutual respect. This also applies to contract staff at the Assembly.**

**ANNEX B**

**Complaints, Documents and Other Evidence**

<b>Document Number</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Complaint and enclosures
2	Letter Commissioner/Clerk of Standards dated 20 December 2012
3	Letter Commissioner/Bradley dated 20 December 2012
4	Email O'Hanlon/Lennon dated 9 January 2013
5	Note of meeting Commissioner/Bradley on 25 February 2013
6	Copy letter Minister of Justice/Lennon dated 22 March 2011
7	Screen-print of Mr Bradley's Assembly webpage on 25 April 2013

Mr Paul Gill  
Clerk of Standards  
Room 204, Parliament Buildings  
Belfast BT4 3xx.

Karen Lennon

27th November 2012

## COMPLAINT

Dear Mr Gill

I wish to make a Formal complaint against Dominic Bradley MLA regarding a breach of the required Code of Conduct.

Mr Bradley, as you will note below, has blatantly ignored his both constituents plea for help. He sees an injustice and he is aware of the fact that we say that we can support our allegations with official documentation, but for reasons unbeknown to us he can only be seen as not doing what is expected from him, and this case is in the public interest.

**I believe it is evident that Mr Bradley is in breach of the following.**

### **Personal Conduct.**

#### **Public Duty**

Members have a duty to uphold the law and to act on all occasions in accordance with the public trust placed in them.

Members have a general duty to act in the interests of the community as a whole.

Members have a special duty to their constituents and are responsible to the electorate who are the final arbiter of their conduct as public representatives.

#### **Accountability**

Members are accountable for their decisions and actions to the people of Northern Ireland and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

#### **Openness**

Members should be as open as possible about the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands it.

2.

between their private interests and public duties at once and in a way that protects the public interest.

**Leadership**

Members should promote and support these principles by leadership and example in order to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of the people of Northern Ireland, and to ensure the integrity of the Assembly and its Members in conducting business.

**Equality**

Members should promote equality of opportunity and not discriminate against any person by treating people with respect regardless of race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion, marital status and whether or not a person has dependents.

**Promoting Good Relations**

Members will act in a way that is conducive to promoting good relations by providing a positive example for the wider community to follow by acting justly and promoting a culture of respect for the law.

Here are the details of my complaint.

My husband, Gerry has a blog on wordpress.com in which he has detailed a great injustice which was meted out by our government agencies ie Social Services, PSNI, PPS and the NICTS.

On 15th November 2012 he contacted the NIA whilst on the Twitter site and provided a link to his blog and asked if the Assembly could help out, and he was informed that it is up to his MLA`s to investigate the matter.

He then contacted Mr Bradley on twitter and made him aware of the above information and provided him with the link to his blog and asked him for help.

Here are the dates: 17th, 22nd x 4, 24th and 25th November 2012. In total Mr Bradley was contacted seven times, and even though he was online tweeting on 17th, 18th, 21st, and 22nd and 24th November 2012 Mr Bradley never took it upon himself to reply to my husband. Apart from this I also contacted Mr Bradley on five occasions by email in which I also asked for the same help, but he has completely ignored me too.

3.

I sent emails on 16th, 19th, 20th, 22nd November, and my husband also sent an email on 26th November.

I am pasting these emails to support my complaint.

**From:** Karen Lennon  
**Sent:** Monday, November 19, 2012 1:15 PM  
**To:** sdlpnewry@hotmail.com  
**Subject:** Fw: Help!

Dear Mr Bradley,

After reading my husband's blog can you please inform me if you are prepared to offer my family some help?

Regards

Karen Lennon

**From:** karen.lennon  
**Sent:** Friday, November 16, 2012 1:30 PM  
**To:** sdlpnewry@hotmail.com  
**Subject:** Help!

Dear Mr Bradley,

As you will note, the N Ireland Assembly have directed me to my MLA's. You will note in my husband's blog on Wordpress.com that there has been a monstrous cover up by a number of government agencies and solicitors, including the NICTS. Will you please use your position and act on my family's behalf because it is so blatantly obvious that some government department has used its political influence and treated us like some kind of second class citizens.

You are my first port of call and we would very much appreciate if you would help.

Yours sincerely  
Karen Lennon

**Gerry Lennon**

Can the Assembly help my family out on this matter without advising me to take legal advice?

4.

[Hide summary](#)

- [Reply](#)
- [Delete](#)
- [Favorite](#)



**[francisglennon](#)**

**[Police Service of N Ireland \(PSNI\) and Public Prosecution Service \(PPS\) collusion](#)**



[WordPress.com](#)

Tweet text



**[NI Assembly](#)**

[@firststandfurther](#) I'm afraid not. It is up to your MLA's to investigate this on your behalf.

**From:** [karen.lennon](#)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 20, 2012 2:03 PM  
**To:** [sdlpnewry@hotmail.com](#)  
**Subject:** Your constituent needs help!

Dear Mr Bradley

The NIA told me that it is up to my MLA to investigate this, so can you tell me if you are going to do this. I would appreciate a reply today, and if not then my husband will just have to go to extremes to be heard.

Regards

Karen Lennon

5.

**From:** [karen.lennon](mailto:karen.lennon)  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 22, 2012 10:01 PM  
**To:** [sdlp@hotmail.com](mailto:sdlp@hotmail.com)  
**Subject:** Public interest matter

Dear Mr Bradley,

I am one of your constituents and I sent you an email on 16th, 19th & 20th November 2012. I provided you with a link relating to a great injustice meted out to my family by government agencies, as well as individuals. As you are aware, I was advised by the Northern Ireland Assembly, after presenting it with the same link as I did with you, that it is the duty of my MLA's to investigate this on my behalf.

You have read what the link is about, so you will have read that everything can be supported with documentation, so this is a public interest matter and it is your duty to act in my family's interest. I have not, as yet, contacted any member of the assembly, and I know my husband has also sought your help on Twitter, but you have completely ignored him as well, while you tweet.

Again I am asking for your help.

Regards

Karen Lennon

**From:** [karen.lennon](mailto:karen.lennon)  
**Sent:** Friday, November 23, 2012 8:06 PM  
**To:** [sdlp@hotmail.com](mailto:sdlp@hotmail.com)  
**Subject:** Re: Help!

Mr Bradley

**I have given you every opportunity to use your position and act accordingly on behalf of a constituent who has provided you with an offer of documented evidence which clearly show a great injustice carried out before devolvement, and also since by our government. As much as I do not wish for my husband to seek justice by way of protesting in order to catch the media and public attention, I am asking you one more time for help**

**Karen Lennon**

**From:** [francisg.lennon](mailto:francisg.lennon)  
**Sent:** Monday, November 26, 2012 5:06 PM  
**To:** [sdlp@hotmail.com](mailto:sdlp@hotmail.com)  
**Subject:** Fw: Meeting

Dear Mr Bradley,

You have read my blog, and now I ask you to read the below email to D/CI Stephen Wright. As you will note, this will not go away unless I am given a true account of where my child was for fifteen days, and why should the Trust, along with the other agencies and individuals have to play dirty towards my family.

In reality I do not expect the police officer to meet up with me, or even phone, mainly because he is not at liberty to do so without opening a big can of worms.

This is a violation of my family's human rights, so I am pleading with you to please help me out because the only other alternative open for me is to carry out a protest that I do not really want to be pushed into.

We love our children and need to get to the truth.

We have been mentally scarred enough, so please give this some thought.

Yours  
Gerry Lennon

**From:** [francisg.lennon](mailto:francisg.lennon)  
**Sent:** Monday, November 26, 2012 2:36 PM  
**To:** [psni.pnn.police.uk](mailto:psni.pnn.police.uk)  
**Subject:** Meeting

Dear D/CI Wight,

I am contacting you in the hope that you will consider meeting up with me at Armagh station whenever suits you. I know that my previous correspondence with you has been negative, but I need to have my mind put to rest and get rid of the demons, but I cannot do this while I don't know what happened to my child for fifteen days and why the Trust would need to change records, and I hope you can understand where I'm coming from.

I am not out to seek revenge against who I feel has let my family down with regards to the past case, but I cannot live the rest of my life accepting, the way some people maybe can, that the Trust know something about my child that I don't know. I'm at an age where I should be chilling and living life to the full, but I simply cannot do this while kept in the dark.

I will give you my home number in the hope that you will phone me and arrange for me to call and see you.

Regards  
Gerry Lennon

7.

The NIA have advised me that it is the duty of my MLA's to investigate this matter, and it is so blatantly evident that Mr Bradley has fell short of what is expected.

Kind regards

Karen Lennon

Doc 2



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

**COMMISSIONER FOR STANDARDS**

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Belfast  
BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 9052 1211

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**Mr Paul Gill  
Room 254  
Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw  
Stormont  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX**

**20 December 2012**

**Dear Paul**

**COMPLAINT AGAINST DOMINIC BRADLEY MLA**

In accordance with Direction 6.6 of the General Procedures Direction 2012 I write to inform the Committee that I have received a complaint against Dominic Bradley MLA and that I regard part of it as admissible. I shall commence my investigation into that part of the complaint early in 2013. I enclose a copy of the complaint.

The part of the complaint which I regard as admissible is the allegation that Mr Bradley repeatedly ignored and failed to acknowledge correspondence from the complainant. If established I believe that a failure to observe the principal of respect would have occurred.

The other aspects of the complaint are concerned with Mr Bradley's alleged failure to take up the complainants issues regarding a number of public authorities. They go, in my view, to the merits of his alleged decision and are a matter on which the electorate will be able to express a view at the next election. I am not satisfied that there is a prima facie case of breach of the Code.

I have advised both Mr Bradley and the complainant of my views.

Yours sincerely

**Douglas Bain CBE TD Advocate**

Doc 3



Northern Ireland  
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**COMMISSIONER FOR STANDARDS**

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Ballymiscaw  
Stormont  
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Email: [standards@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:standards@niassembly.gov.uk)

**Mr Dominic Bradley MLA**  
**Room 383**  
**Parliament Buildings**  
**Ballymiscaw**  
**Stormont**  
**Belfast**  
**BT4 3XX**

**20 December 2012**

Dear Mr Bradley

**COMPLAINT BY KAREN LENNON**

I am writing to advise you that I have received a complaint that you have breached the Code of Conduct. A copy of the complaint is enclosed.

Having fully considered all the information before me I am satisfied that the allegation that you repeatedly ignored correspondence from Ms Lennon, could, if established, constitute a breach of the Code. I shall therefore commence my investigation into that matter early in 2013 and will be in touch again once I have started work.

I am not, however, satisfied that the other allegations made by Ms Lennon could constitute a breach of the code. I have informed both the complainant and the Committee on Standards and Privileges of my view.

Yours sincerely,

**Douglas Bain CBE TD Advocate**  
**Commissioner**

E-Mail

Page 1 of 1

Doc 4

**E-Mail**

Thomas O'Hanlon

**Sent:** 09 January 2013 10:06

**To:** francisg.lennon ; karen.lennon

**Cc:** dominicobrolchain@btinternet.com

Dear Karen / Gerry,

Can I apologise at the outset as there seems to have been a breakdown in our communications systems and Mr Bradley has asked me to contact you to offer an appointment at your earliest opportunity.

Prior to Christmas Mr Bradley asked me to contact you with the view to setting up an appointment and I apologise this did not happen. Mr Bradley had advised you had made contact via twitter and asked that I arrange an appointment for you.

Yesterday on receipt of a letter from the Assembly that Mr Bradley advised there had been attempts to contact the office and there had been no reply. It was only after some investigation that we discovered the e-mails had been going to an old e-mail address, which we do not use in Armagh. On opening the account I see there have been a number of correspondences which have gone unanswered from yourself and I apologise for this.

Mr Bradley is keen to meet with you in person to offer what ever support he can in your case and I would be grateful if you could contact the office on 028 3752 6800 or my mobile on to arrange the appointment as soon as it suits you.

For future e-mails, I would be grateful if you could use this one or dominicobrolchain@btinternet.com

Apologies again.

Thomas

**Councillor Thomas O'Hanlon**

SDLP Group Leader, Armagh City and District Council

& Parliamentary Assistant to Dominic Bradley MLA

m: e: [thomas.o'hanlon](mailto:thomas.o'hanlon)

PROTECT - INVESTIGATION



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**INVESTIGATION INTO COMPLAINT DOMINIC BRADLEY MLA**

**Meeting with Mr Dominic Bradley MLA**

25 February 2013

Room 283

Start: 11.30am

End: 11.50am

Present: Douglas Bain, Commissioner for Standards  
Pamela Carson (Note of meeting)  
Dominic Bradley MLA

Mr Bain drew attention to his powers to require the attendance of witnesses and the production of documents, to the offence provisions and to the prohibition on disclosure of information. He outlined the procedure both for the interview and for the remaining stages of the investigation.

Mr Bain explained that he was concerned only with that part of Mrs Lennon's complaint that he had determined was admissible. In summary it was that by ignoring five emails she had sent him, Mr Bradley had breached the principle of respect set out in the Code. These emails were dated 16<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2012.

Mr Bradley outlined the background to the issues Mrs Lennon had sought to raise with him. Her husband, Gerry Lennon alleged failure of a number of agencies including social services, the PSNI, the PPS, the Police Ombudsman, the Court Service, and at least two solicitors to explain or investigate the circumstances in which a child had been taken into care. Mr Bradley produced a copy of a letter dated 22 March 2011 to Mr Lennon from the Minister of Justice giving an insight into some of these matters. On the political side he had first raised the matter with former Members, John Fee and Seamus Mallon. Mr Bradley had no involvement in the matter prior to receipt of Mr Bain's letter of 20 December 2012 advising him of Mrs Lennon's complaint.

Mr Bradley noted that the emails dated 16<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> November had all been sent to 'sdlpnewry@hotmail.com'. He explained that that email address had been set up by Mr Fee some years ago. Mr Bradley never used it in correspondence and it did not appear on his personal website. He was unaware that this address

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was the only one given on his page on the Assembly website and would be taking action to have it removed and replaced by his own email address 'dominicobrolchain@btinternet.com'. He had arranged with the Assembly IT staff that any emails sent to his MLAs email address at the Assembly would be forwarded to his personal email address. Unfortunately, the inbox on the 'sdlpnewry@hotmail.com' address was not often checked by his staff. The three emails from Mrs Lennon were not noticed until a check was made following receipt of Mr Bain's letter of 20 December.

Mr Bradley explained that the emails from Mrs Lennon on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> November were addressed to 'sdlp@hotmail.com'. He had no knowledge of that address and did not know whether it existed. The SDLP main address was 'sdlp.ie'. These two emails had never been received by Mr Bradley and the first he knew of them was when he received Mr Bain's letter.

Mr Bradley stated that as soon as he received Mr Bain's letter, his office checked the 'sdlpnewry@hotmail.com' inbox and found the three emails. Prior to Christmas Mr Bradley asked his staff to contact Mrs Lennon to explain what had happened. Unfortunately this did not occur until 9 January 2013 when an email was sent to Mr and Mrs Lennon apologising and explaining what had gone wrong. Mr Bradley produced a copy of that email. In it the Lennon's are asked to telephone to arrange a meeting with Mr Bradley.

By 23 January no call had been received from the Lennon's. Mr Bradley's Parliamentary Assistant phoned Mrs Lennon who was agreeable to a meeting. Her husband then intervened in the call, declined the offer of a meeting and hung up.

Mr Bradley explained that he had been hesitant to deal with Mrs Lennon as she was a third party. Prior to these emails all contact with the SDLP had been by Mr Lennon. Mr Bradley was unclear that Mrs Lennon had authority to speak on his behalf.

Mr Bradley told Mr Bain that he has asked his staff to monitor the 'sdlpnewry@hotmail.com' email address more frequently. Mr Bain suggested that Mr Bradley should consider the use of automatic forwarding of all emails from that address to his own email address to avoid the risk of emails lying unopened in the inbox. Mr Bradley said he would look into whether this was possible.

Mr Bain thanked Mr Bradley for his assistance with the investigation and for the documents provided.

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FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE



Department of  
**Justice**  
www.dojni.gov.uk

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[private.office@dojni.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:private.office@dojni.x.gsi.gov.uk)

Our ref: COR/254/2011

Mr Gerry Lennon

22 March 2011

Dear Mr Lennon

Thank you for your correspondence of 21 February 2011. I also acknowledge your emails of 28 February 2011, 2 March 2011 and two emails of 13 March 2011.

In your email of 21 February you make a complaint against the Director of Research and Performance at the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (OPONI) whereby you state that you are unhappy with the Police Ombudsman's decision as conveyed by Mr Mullan.

I have written to you recently in a letter dated 24 February 2011 to address some concerns that you had raised regarding the PPS, PSNI and OPONI. In respect of these matters my position remains the same and I will therefore address here your complaint against the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (OPONI).

I note that you are unhappy with the decision not to re-open your complaint as conveyed by Mr Mullan. As you may be aware, the Office of the Police Ombudsman was specifically set up to investigate complaints against the police and is independent



FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE



of government and the police. The Police Ombudsman's decision on how any complaint should be handled is final. In this respect there is no role for me to become involved in the handling or outcome of any complaint as this is entirely a matter for the Police Ombudsman.

I am aware that these matters have been reviewed by OPONI on several occasions in the past and much consideration and time has been given to your correspondence. In this respect, I do not consider that there is anything further that I can add and whilst this may not be the response you had hoped for, I would however consider the matter to be closed.

**DAVID FORD MLA**  
**Minister of Justice**



MLA Details: Mr Dominic Bradley



(<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/>)

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## Mr Dominic Bradley



**Title:** Mr  
**Official Last Name:** Bradley  
**Official First Name:** Dominic  
**Usual First Name:** Dominic  
**Date Of Birth:** 18/11/1954  
**Party:** Social Democratic and Labour Party  
**Constituency:** Newry and Armagh

**Parliamentary Contact Details**

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Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Appendix 2

# Other Evidence Considered by the Committee



# Letter to Dominic Bradley - 14.02.2013



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Committee on Standards and Privileges

Room 254  
Parliament Buildings  
Stormont  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 9052 0333  
Email: paul.gill@niassembly.gov.uk

14th February 2013

Mr Dominic Bradley MLA  
Room 383  
Parliament Buildings  
Stormont  
Belfast

BT4 3XX

Dear Mr Bradley

I am writing to inform you that at its meeting on 13 February 2013 the Committee on Standards and Privileges considered correspondence from the Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards on a complaint made against you by Ms Karen Lennon.

The Committee noted the Commissioner's decision to consider part of the complaint as admissible. It shall await the Commissioner's report on his investigation before giving any consideration to this part of the complaint.

The Committee agreed with the Commissioner's decision that the other aspects of the complaint are inadmissible. The Committee was satisfied that the alleged conduct complained of in these aspects of the complaint falls outside the scope of the Assembly's Code of Conduct.

I enclose a copy of the Commissioner's correspondence for your information.

Yours sincerely

**Paul Gill**  
**Clerk to the Committee on Standards and Privileges**

Enc





Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Appendix 3

# Proceedings of the Committee Relating to the Report



## Wednesday, 13 February 2013

### Room 21, Parliament Buildings

**Present:** Mr Alastair Ross (Chairperson)  
Mr Kieran McCarthy (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Cathal Boylan  
Mr Fra McCann  
Mr Ian McCrea

**In Attendance:** Mr Paul Gill (Assembly Clerk)  
Ms Hilary Bogle (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Jonathan Watson (Clerical Supervisor)

**Apologies:** Mr Steven Agnew  
Mr Jonathan Craig  
Mr David McIlveen  
Mr Francie Molloy  
Mrs Sandra Overend

**1.42pm** The meeting commenced in open session.

**5. Correspondence from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards on a complaint against a Member**

The Committee noted the Clerk's Paper and correspondence dated 20th December 2012 from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards.

The Clerk briefed the Committee on this issue.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Douglas Bain, Assembly Commissioner for Standards to the meeting and invited him to brief the Committee on this issue.

Following the briefing the Chairperson thanked Mr Bain.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed with the Assembly Commissioner's decision that aspects of the complaint were inadmissible.

**[EXTRACT]**

## Wednesday, 22 May 2013

### Room 21, Parliament Buildings

**Present:** Mr Alastair Ross (Chairperson)  
Mr Kieran McCarthy (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Steven Agnew  
Mr Sydney Anderson  
Mr Cathal Boylan  
Ms Paula Bradley  
Mr Colum Eastwood  
Mr Declan McAleer  
Mr Fra McCann  
Mrs Sandra Overend

**In Attendance:** Mr Paul Gill (Assembly Clerk)  
Ms Hilary Bogle (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Jonathan Watson (Clerical Supervisor)

**Apologies:** Mr Ian McCrea

#### **6. Report from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards on a complaint against a Member**

Members noted the Clerk's Paper and the Report from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards.

The Chairperson invited Mr Douglas Bain, Assembly Commissioner for Standards to brief the Committee on his Report.

Following discussion the Chairperson thanked Mr Bain.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed with the Assembly Commissioner for Standards' conclusion that the Member had not breached the Code of Conduct.

*Agreed:* Following discussion the Committee agreed that the Clerk should draft a Committee report, reflecting the Committee's views, for consideration at the next meeting.

## Wednesday, 5 June 2013

### Room 21, Parliament Buildings

**Present:** Mr Alastair Ross (Chairperson)  
Mr Kieran McCarthy (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Steven Agnew  
Mr Sydney Anderson  
Mr Cathal Boylan  
Ms Paula Bradley  
Mr Fra McCann  
Mr Ian McCrea  
Mrs Sandra Overend

**In Attendance:** Mr Paul Gill (Assembly Clerk)  
Ms Hilary Bogle (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Jonathan Watson (Clerical Supervisor)

**Apologies:** Mr McAleer

**1.30pm** The meeting commenced in closed session.

**7. Report from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards on a complaint against a Member**

*Agreed:* Members discussed and agreed the draft Committee Report (as amended) and ordered that the report be printed today.

**[EXTRACT]**







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