



## COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND PRIVILEGES

**WEDNESDAY, 2<sup>ND</sup> OCTOBER 2013**  
**ROOM 21, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Alastair Ross (Chairperson)  
Ms Anna Lo (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Steven Agnew  
Mr Cathal Boylan  
Mr Colum Eastwood  
Mr Declan McAleer  
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: Ms Paula Bradley  
Mr Fra McCann

### **Chairperson's Introduction**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the meeting should be held in closed session as the Committee would be considering correspondence from the Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards on complaints against Members and other confidential correspondence.

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

The Chairperson welcomed Committee members to the meeting. The Chairperson also welcomed Ms Anna Lo to her first meeting of the Committee. Ms Lo replaced Mr Kieran McCarthy as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Chairperson should write to Mr McCarthy expressing the Committee's appreciation for the contribution he had made to the Committee during his time as Deputy Chairperson.

The Chairperson advised members that he would invite the Commissioner to go through each of his papers in turn but that the Committee would not take any decisions in relation to each item until after the Commissioner had left the meeting.

### **1. Apologies**

As above.

### **2. Declaration of Interests**

The Chairperson reminded Members of their obligation to declare any relevant financial or other interests before and during each Committee meeting.

The Committee noted the tabled declared interests of Ms Anna Lo.

### **3. Draft minutes**

*Agreed:* The draft minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2013 were agreed by the Committee.

### **4. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **5. Correspondence from the Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards complaints against Members**

Members noted the Clerk's Paper and correspondence dated 16<sup>th</sup> September 2013 from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards.

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

Following discussion the Chairperson thanked Mr Bain.

Members noted the Clerk's Paper and correspondence dated 25<sup>th</sup> September 2013 from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards.

The Chairperson invited Mr Bain to brief the Committee on this correspondence.

Following discussion the Chairperson thanked Mr Bain.

## 6. Disclosure of Information on Complaints

Members noted the Clerk's Paper; the submission from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards; and the Assembly Members (Independent Financial Review and Standards) Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (General Procedures) Direction 2012.

*1.37pm Mr Eastwood joined the meeting.*

The Chairperson invited Mr Bain to brief the Committee on his submission.

*1.45pm Mr Agnew joined the meeting.*

Following discussion the Chairperson thanked Mr Bain for attending the meeting.

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The Committee returned to the correspondence dated 16<sup>th</sup> September 2013 on a complaint against a Member at agenda item 5

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed with the Assembly Commissioner for Standards' conclusion that the complaint against the Member is inadmissible.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Clerk write to the Member complained of and the complainant enclosing a copy of the Commissioner's correspondence and informing them of the Committee's decision.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Clerk write to the Commissioner informing him of the Committee's decision.

The Committee returned to the correspondence dated 25<sup>th</sup> September 2013 on a complaint against a Member at agenda item 5

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed with the Assembly Commissioner for Standards' conclusion that the complaint against the Member is inadmissible.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Clerk write to the Member complained of and the complainant enclosing a copy of the Commissioner's correspondence and informing them of the Committee's decision.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Clerk write to the Commissioner informing him of the Committee's decision.

The Committee returned to the submission from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards on the Disclosure of Information at agenda item 6

*Agreed:* Following discussion the Committee agreed to request research on the position on this issue in other legislatures. The Committee agreed that the issue, and any other issues in relation to the general procedures directions, would be considered at the next meeting.

**7. Referral from the Public Accounts Committee**

Members noted the Clerk's paper and correspondence from the Public Accounts Committee.

*Agreed:* Following discussion the Committee agreed that the Clerk should write to the Public Accounts Committee to explain that it is the role of the Assembly Commissioner for Standards to investigate alleged breaches of the Code. The Clerk should also explain how to make an admissible complaint.

**8. Correspondence dated 18<sup>th</sup> September 2013 from the Committee on Standards in Public Life**

The Committee noted the correspondence from the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

The Committee also noted that, as agreed, the Chairperson and the Clerk will meet with Lord Bew to discuss the matter further.

**9. Any other business**

There was no other business.

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

Members will be advised of the date of the next meeting by Committee office staff.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 2.21pm.*

**Mr Alastair Ross MLA  
Chairperson, Committee on Standards and Privileges**

**20<sup>th</sup> November 2013**