



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND PRIVILEGES

**WEDNESDAY, 11TH SEPTEMBER 2013
ROOM 21, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

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

The meeting commenced at 1.34pm in closed session.

Chairperson's Introduction

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the meeting should be held in closed session as the Committee was considering a report from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards and other confidential matters.

The Chairperson welcomed Committee members to the meeting.

The Chairperson advised members that as there was a report and several items of correspondence from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards, he would invite the Commissioner to go through each of these 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.

3. Draft minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 5th June 2013 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

1.35pm Mrs Overend joined the meeting.

5. Report dated 13th June 2013 from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards

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

1.36pm Mr Colum Eastwood joined the meeting.

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

Following discussion the Chairperson thanked Mr Bain.

6. Correspondence dated 4th September 2013 from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards

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

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

Following discussion the Chairperson thanked Mr Bain.

7. Correspondence from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards on complaints against Members

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

Agenda item 7.2

The Chairperson invited Mr Douglas Bain, Assembly Commissioner for Standards to brief the Committee on his correspondence dated 8th August 2013 on a complaint against two Members.

Following discussion the Chairperson thanked Mr Bain.

Agenda items 7.3 and 7.4

The Chairperson invited Mr Douglas Bain, Assembly Commissioner for Standards to brief the Committee on his correspondence dated 8th and 20th August 2013 on a complaint against two Members.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Bain.

Agenda item 7.5

The Chairperson invited Mr Douglas Bain, Assembly Commissioner for Standards to brief the Committee on his correspondence dated 8th August 2013 on a complaint against two Members.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Bain.

8. Appointment of an Acting Commissioner

The Committee noted the Clerk's Paper and correspondence from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards.

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

2.16pm Mr McAleer left the meeting.

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

The Committee returned to the report on the complaint against a Member at agenda item 5.

Agreed: Following discussion the Committee agreed to give further consideration to the report at its next meeting on Wednesday 18th September 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Commissioner's report should be made available for Members to read in a Committee room on Monday 16th and Tuesday 17th September 2013.

The Committee returned to the correspondence on the complaint at agenda item 6.

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.

2.25pm Mr Eastwood left the meeting

The Committee returned to the correspondence from the Commissioner on complaints against Members at agenda item 7.

Agenda item 7.2

Agreed: The Committee agreed with the Assembly Commissioner for Standards' conclusion that the complaint against one of the Members complained of is inadmissible.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk write to the Member who was the subject of the inadmissible complaint 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.

Agenda items 7.3 and 7.4

Agreed: The Committee agreed with the Assembly Commissioner for Standards' conclusion that the complaint against one of the Members complained of is inadmissible.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk write to the Member who was the subject of the inadmissible complaint 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.

Agenda item 7.5

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk write to the Members 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 Appointment of an Acting Commissioner at agenda item 8.

The Clerk updated the Committee on the issues set out in his paper. The Committee noted that there is no requirement in the Assembly Members (Independent Financial Review and Standards) Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 Act ("the 2011 Act") for an Acting Commissioner to be identified through an open competition.

The Committee also noted that directions agreed by the Committee in respect of the Commissioner will be equally applicable to the Acting Commissioner (section 23(8) of the 2011 Act) and it is not necessary for the Committee to make further provision for an Acting Commissioner.

Agreed: Following discussion the Committee agreed to put forward a motion to appoint Mr Stuart Allan as an Acting Commissioner to investigate the three complaints in question and any further related complaints as per the wording of the tabled draft Motion.

The Committee noted that the Motion shall only be submitted to the Business Committee following formal confirmation from Mr Allan that he is not a disqualified person under Schedule 3 of the 2011 Act.

9. End of Session Report

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft End of Session Report.

2.38pm Mr McCrea left the meeting.

10. Any other business

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Code of Conduct should be reissued to all Members.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold a strategic planning workshop to consider what the Committee wants to focus on and achieve during this session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the workshop should be held outside the building and that the Clerk should bring proposals to a future Committee meeting.

11. Date, time, date and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday, 18th September 2013 in Room 21 at 1.30pm.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 2.41pm.

**Mr Alastair Ross MLA
Chairperson, Committee on Standards and Privileges
18th September 2013**