



COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND PRIVILEGES

WEDNESDAY, 18TH SEPTEMBER 2013
ROOM 21, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

- Present: Mr Alastair Ross (Chairperson)
Mr Kieran McCarthy
Mr Steven Agnew
Mr Cathal Boylan
Ms Paula Bradley
Mr Colum Eastwood
Mr Declan McAleer
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: Mrs Sandra Overend
Mr Mervyn Storey

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 confidential correspondence.

The meeting commenced at 1.34pm in closed session.

The Chairperson welcomed Committee members to 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 Mr Mervyn Storey who has replaced Mr Sydney Anderson.

1.37pm Mr McCrea joined the meeting

3. Draft minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 11th September 2013 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Report dated 13th June 2013 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.

Agreed: Following discussion the Committee agreed with the Commissioner's conclusion that the Member complained of had not breached the Code of Conduct.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should prepare a draft report reflecting the Committee's views for consideration by the Committee at its next meeting.

6. Correspondence dated 11th September 2013 from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards on a complaint against a Member

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed with the Commissioner's 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.

7. Appointment of an Acting Commissioner

The Committee noted correspondence from Mr Stuart Allan, Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland, formally confirming that he is not a disqualified person under schedule 3 of the Assembly Members (Independent Financial Review and Standard) Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

The Committee also noted that, as Mr Allan had confirmed that he was not a disqualified person, the Committee's motion to appoint him as an Acting Commissioner had been submitted to the Business Committee who had scheduled it for debate on 24th September 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should circulate Mr Allan's pen picture to all Members for information in advance of the motion being debated in Plenary on 24th September 2013.

8. Any other business

The Clerk briefed the Committee on the background to a matter that the Commissioner had raised.

Agreed: Following discussion the Committee agreed that it remains its position that:

"Where necessary or appropriate the Commissioner may redact confidential or personal information in order to protect privacy without compromising the public interest in knowing how a conclusion has been reached."

The Clerk updated the Committee with regard to Lord Bew's call for a regional body to be set up in Northern Ireland to advise MLAs on Ethical Standards.

Agreed: Following discussion the Committee agreed that the Chairperson and the Clerk should meet with Lord Bew to discuss this issue.

9. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Monday 23rd September 2013 at 12 noon in Room 21. The purpose of this meeting will be to agree the Committee's draft report on a complaint against a Member.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.54pm.

Mr Alastair Ross MLA
Chairperson, Committee on Standards and Privileges
23rd September 2013