



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND PRIVILEGES

**WEDNESDAY, 28TH MAY 2014
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Alastair Ross (Chairperson)
Ms Anna Lo (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Steven Agnew
Mr Cathal Boylan
Ms Paula Bradley
Mr Colum Eastwood
Mr Declan McAleer
Mr Fra McCann
Mr Ian McCrea
Mrs Sandra Overend
Mr Mervyn Storey

In Attendance: Mr Paul Gill (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Ashleigh Mitford (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Watson (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

Apologies: None

The meeting commenced at 1.32pm in open session.

Chairperson's Introduction

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the meeting should commence in open session and then move into closed session from agenda item 7.

1.34 pm Mrs Overend joined the meeting

1.35 pm Mr Boylan, Mr McCann and Mr Eastwood joined the meeting

The Chairperson welcomed Committee members to the meeting.

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

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.

No interests were declared.

3. Draft minutes of the meeting held on 30th April 2014

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 30th April 2014 were agreed by the Committee.

1.37pm Mr Storey joined the meeting

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Review of the Code of Conduct: Briefing from the Committee on Standards in Public Life

Members noted the Clerk's paper and a briefing paper from the Committee on Standards in Public Life in relation to the session

Lord Bew, Chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, joined the meeting and was invited to brief the Committee. This was followed by a question and answer session.

1.39pm Mr McAleer joined the meeting

1.47pm Mr Eastwood left the meeting

2.00pm Mr Agnew left the meeting

6. Review of the Code of Conduct: Responses to the Committee's Issues Paper on the Review of the Code

The Committee noted the Clerk's paper summarising written submissions received to date.

The Clerk briefed the Committee and answered questions from Members.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should write to the Electoral Commission to clarify some points in relation to its submission on the Review.

The Committee noted the Clerk's paper in relation to its recent visit to the Scottish Parliament which was made as part of the Review.

The meeting moved into closed session at 2.55pm

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

Members noted the Clerk's paper and a Report from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards in relation to complaints against a Member.

Members noted the Clerk's papers and related items of correspondence from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards on complaints against two other Members.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Douglas Bain, Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards, and invited him to brief the Committee on his Report and his items of correspondence. Following each briefing the Commissioner answered Members' questions.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Bain who left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed with the conclusion of the Assembly Commissioner for Standards that the complaints against two Members are inadmissible.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk write to the Members complained of and the complainants 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 decisions.

The Committee then discussed the Commissioner's findings in his Report in relation to the complaints against a Member.

Following discussion, the Chairperson put the question that the Committee agrees with the decision of the Commissioner that the Member had breached the Code of Conduct.

Ayes

Alastair Ross
Anna Lo
Ian McCrea
Paula Bradley
Sandra Overend
Mervyn Storey

Noes

None

Abstentions

Fra McCann
Declan McAleer
Cathal Boylan

The motion was carried.

The Committee then discussed whether it should recommend the imposition of a sanction and, if so, what it might be.

Mrs Overend proposed that the Committee should call in its report on the Member to apologise to the Assembly and should also table a motion which, if agreed, would have the effect of excluding the Member from proceedings of the Assembly for a period of five days.

Ms Lo proposed that the Committee should establish if the Member would apologise to the Assembly for breaching the Code and that, if so, the Committee should report that it considered the matter to be resolved. If not the Committee could then consider the issue of seeking to impose a sanction.

The Chairperson put the question on Ms Overend's proposal:

Ayes	Noes	Abstentions
Alastair Ross	Cathal Boylan	Anna Lo
Sandra Overend	Fra McCann	
Paula Bradley	Declan McAleer	
Ian McCrea		
Mervyn Storey		

As this proposal was agreed the Chairperson did not put the question on Ms Lo's proposal.

The Clerk informed the Committee that he would prepare a draft report and motion for its consideration.

8. Any other business

Members were reminded to respond to the 2014 Survey of Services.

9. Time, date and place of next meeting

The Chairperson advised Members that the next meeting will take place on 4th June 2014 at 1.30pm in room 29.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 3.40pm.

Mr Alastair Ross MLA
Chairperson, Committee on Standards and Privileges