



Northern Ireland
Assembly

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND PRIVILEGES

WEDNESDAY, 10TH SEPTEMBER 2014
ROOM 106, 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)
Ms Hilary Cleland-Bogle (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Apologies: None.

Chairperson's Introduction

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

The meeting commenced at 1.30pm in closed session.

The Chairperson welcomed Committee members to the meeting.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2014 were agreed by the Committee.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising

4. Declaration of Interests

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

5. Correspondence from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards

Members noted that the Assembly Commissioner would be invited to brief the Committee on agenda items 5 and 6 after which the Committee would consider these items.

Members noted the Clerk's paper.

1.32pm The Chairperson welcomed Mr Douglas Bain, Assembly Commissioner for Standards, to the meeting.

Members noted correspondence dated 16th July 2014 on a complaint against a Member.

The Chairperson invited the Commissioner to brief the Committee on this issue.

Members noted correspondence dated 11th August 2014 on a complaint against a Member.

The Chairperson invited the Commissioner to brief the Committee on this issue.

1.34pm Mr Eastwood joined the meeting.

1.34pm Mr Storey joined the meeting.

Members noted separate correspondence dated 11th August 2014 on a complaint against another Member.

The Chairperson invited the Commissioner to brief the Committee on this issue.

The Chairperson thanked the Commissioner and asked him to remain at the table for the next agenda item.

6. Report from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards

The Committee noted with concern that, despite the steps taken to uphold confidentiality, there had been various media reports in relation to the Commissioner's report.

Members noted the Clerk's Paper and the Report from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards together with various items of related correspondence.

The Chairperson invited the Commissioner to brief the Committee on his Report. Following this there was a question and answer session.

1.39pm Mr McAleer joined the meeting.

2.43pm Mr McCrea left the meeting.

2.49pm Ms Bradley left the meeting.

2.49pm Mr Eastwood left the meeting.

2.53pm Mr McCrea returned to the meeting.

2.55pm Ms Bradley returned to the meeting.

2.55pm The Chairperson thanked Mr Bain for attending the meeting.

The Chairperson informed members that the Committee would consider the correspondence from the Commissioner at agenda item 5 before considering the report from the Commissioner at agenda item 6.

Agenda item 5.2

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

Agenda items 5.3 and 5.4

Agreed: The Committee agreed with the Assembly Commissioner for Standards' conclusion that the complaints against the Members were 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.

Agenda item 6

Agreed: The Committee considered and agreed the key issues outlined in the Clerk's Paper.

The Committee noted that the Clerk would prepare a draft Committee report, based on the views of the Committee, for the Committee's consideration at a future meeting.

7. Legal Advice

Members noted the Clerk's paper; the legal advice of 22 August 2014 and 3 September 2014; and correspondence of 4 August 2014 and 2 September 2014.

3.07pm Mr Agnew left the meeting.

3.07pm Mr Eastwood returned to the meeting.

3.08pm Mr Boylan left the meeting

3.09pm The Chairperson invited Ms Tara Caul, Head of Legal Services to brief the Committee on the legal advice. This was followed by a question and answer session.

3.10pm Mr Agnew returned to the meeting.

3.24pm Mr Agnew left the meeting.

3.37pm Ms Lo left the meeting.

3.38pm Mr Boylan returned to the meeting.

3.38pm Ms Lo returned to the meeting.

3.40pm Mr Agnew returned to the meeting.

3.41pm Mr Storey left the meeting.

3.48pm Mr McCann left the meeting.

3.50pm Mr McCann returned to the meeting.

3.58pm Mr Storey returned to the meeting.

4.03pm The Chairperson thanked Ms Caul for attending the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed with the recommendations in the Clerk's paper and how the Clerk should respond to the correspondence of 4 August 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members must continue to comply with the requirements of the undertaking on confidentiality until such times as the Committees agrees otherwise.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content that the Chairperson should handle any media enquiries in accordance with the line agreed by the Committee.

4.14pm Mr Eastwood left the meeting.

4.15pm Mr Bain returned to the meeting and clarified an issue raised during his briefing to the Committee on item 6.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Bain and Mr Bain left the meeting.

8. Review of Code of Conduct

Members noted the Clerk's Paper; the Submission from ACCP; the submission from the Assembly Commission; correspondence from the Independent Financial Review Panel; and correspondence from the Environment Minister.

The Clerk updated the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite both the APPC and the Assembly Commission to provide oral evidence to it at a future meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson should meet with the Independent Financial Review Panel as proposed in their correspondence.

9. Any other business

There was no other business.

10. Date, time and place of next meeting

Members agreed that the next meeting of the Committee should take place on Wednesday, 24th September 2014 in Room 106 at 1.30pm.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 4.22pm.



Mr Alastair Ross MLA
Chairperson, Committee on Standards and Privileges
24th September 2014