

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND PRIVILEGES

WEDNESDAY, 18TH NOVEMBER 2015

ROOM 21, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr Paul Givan (Chairman)
Ms Anna Lo (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Cathal Boylan
Mr Gordon Dunne
Mr David Hilditch
Mr Declan McAleer
Mr Fra McCann
Mrs Sandra Overend

In Attendance: Mr Paul Gill (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Hilary Cleland Bogle (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Miss Alison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Steven Agnew
Mr Robin Newton

The meeting commenced at 1.34pm in closed session.

The Chairman welcomed Committee members to the meeting.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests

The Chairman reminded Members of their obligation to declare any relevant financial or other interest before or during each Committee meeting.

3. Draft minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 4th November 2015 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Consideration of a draft Committee Report

Members noted the Clerk's Paper; the appended draft Committee Report and correspondence to the Member complained of.

The Clerk briefed the Committee on the background to this issue.

Agreed: Members discussed and agreed the draft report and ordered that the report be printed today.

Agreed: Members agreed that the following should form part of the report –

- The Committee Powers and Membership;
- A copy of the Assembly Commissioner's Report;
- An extract from the minutes of the last meeting and the tabled extract of the Minutes of today's meeting.

Agreed: Members agreed that the Clerk should write to the complainant and the Member complained of informing them of the Committee's decision and forwarding an advance copy of the report to them.

Agreed: Members agreed that the Clerk should write to the Assembly Commissioner for Standards informing him of the Committee's decision.

6. Correspondence from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards

Members noted the Clerk's Paper; and correspondence from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards on a complaint against a Member.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Douglas Bain, Assembly Commissioner for Standards to the meeting and invited him to brief the Committee.

Following this briefing the Chairperson thanked Mr Bain and asked him to remain at the table for the next agenda item.

The Chairperson informed members that the Committee would return to give its consideration to this complaint after the next agenda item.

7. Report from the Assembly Commissioner of Standards on complaints against a Member

Members noted the Clerk's Paper and key background papers together with the Report from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards.

The Chairperson invited Mr Bain to brief the Committee on his Report

The Commissioner briefed the Committee on general issues in relation to his report and then followed this by briefing the Committee on the individual complaints.

Complaint No. 1

The Commissioner briefed the Committee on this complaint and then answered questions from members.

1.58pm Mr Dunne left the meeting

2.04pm Mr McAleer left the meeting.

Complaint No. 2

The Commissioner briefed the Committee on this complaint and then answered questions from members.

2.09pm Mr Dunne returned to the meeting

Complaint No. 3

The Commissioner briefed the Committee on this complaint and then answered questions from members.

Complaint No. 4

The Commissioner briefed the Committee on this complaint and then answered questions from members.

2.15pm Mr McCann left the meeting

Complaint No. 5

The Commissioner briefed the Committee on this complaint and then answered questions from members.

2.24pm Mr McCann returned to the meeting

Complaint No. 6

The Commissioner briefed the Committee on this complaint and then answered questions from members.

Complaint No. 7

The Commissioner briefed the Committee on this complaint and then answered questions from members.

3.12pm Mr Dunne left the meeting

Complaint No. 8

The Commissioner briefed the Committee on this complaint and then answered questions from members.

3.15pm Ms Lo left the meeting

3.17pm Mrs Overend left the meeting

Complaint No. 9

The Commissioner briefed the Committee on this complaint and then answered questions from members.

3.29pm Mrs Overend returned to the meeting

Complaint No. 10

The Commissioner briefed the Committee on this complaint and then answered questions from members.

3.58pm Mrs Overend left the meeting

Complaint No. 11

The Commissioner briefed the Committee on this complaint and then answered questions from members.

Complaint No. 12

The Commissioner briefed the Committee on this complaint and then answered questions from members.

The Commissioner briefed the Committee on his response to the points raised by two witnesses who had made complaints to the Committee and then answered

The Commissioner briefed the Committee in relation to regard to the investigation.

Following final questions from members, the Chairperson thanked Mr Bain for attending the meeting.

4.07pm Mr Boylan and Mr Hilditch left the meeting.

4.07pm The meeting became inquorate

4.10pm Mr McAleer and Mr Hilditch returned to be meeting

4.10pm Quorum was re-established

The Chairman referred members back to Agenda Item 6 – Correspondence from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards on a complaint against a Member

Agreed: Following discussion, the Committee agreed with the Assembly Commissioner for Standards' conclusion that the complaint was inadmissible.

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

4.14pm The meeting went into public session

8. All-Party Groups

All-Party Group on Tackling Education Underachievement and Promoting Education Excellence for all

The Committee noted an application form for the formation of an All-Party Group on Tackling Education Underachievement and Promoting Education Excellence for all.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to the formation of an All-Party Group on Tackling Education Underachievement and Promoting Education Excellence for all.

All-Party Group on Human Life

The Chairperson declared an interest as the Vice Chairperson of this proposed All-Party Group.

The Committee noted an application form for the formation of an All-Party Group on Human Life.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to the formation of an All-Party Group on Human Life.

9. Correspondence

Members noted correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First and deputy First Minister on an amendment to the NIPSO Bill.

10. Any other business

There was no other business.

4.16pm The Committee returned to closed session

The Committee continued its consideration of agenda item 7

The Clerk briefed the Committee on the request for Legal Advice.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms Angela Kelly, Legal Adviser to the meeting and invited her to brief the Committee on the Legal Advice.

4.29pm Mr Hilditch left the meeting.

4.32pm Mr Hilditch returned to the meeting.

Following discussion the Chairperson thanked Ms Kelly for attending the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should write to the Assembly Commissioner requesting further information on an issue raised in his briefing.

11. Time, date and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday, 25th November 2015 at 1.30pm in Room 21.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 4.38pm.

Mr Paul Givan MLA

Chairman, Committee on Standards and Privileges

25th November 2015