

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND PRIVILEGES

WEDNESDAY, 17TH FEBRUARY 2016

ROOM 21, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr Paul Givan (Chairman)
Mr Steven Agnew
Mr Cathal Boylan
Mr Gordon Dunne
Mr David Hilditch
Mr Fra McCann
Mrs Sandra Overend
Mr Robin Newton

In Attendance: Mr Keith McBride (Committee Clerk)
Mrs Hilary Cleland-Bogle (Assistant Clerk)
Miss Pamela Carson (Assistant Clerk)
Miss Alison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Ms Anna Lo (Deputy Chairperson)

The meeting commenced at 2.02pm in closed session.

1. Election of a Temporary Chairperson

In the absence of the Chairman and Deputy Chairperson the Clerk took the chair.

The Clerk called for proposals for the position of Temporary Chairperson.

Mr Agnew proposed Mr Newton as a Temporary Chairperson. Mr Dunne seconded this proposal.

The proposal was carried and Mr Newton was elected as Temporary Chairperson.

The Temporary Chairperson welcomed Committee members to the meeting.

2. Apologies

As above.

3. Declaration of Interests

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

4. Draft minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 3rd February 2016 were agreed by the Committee.

5. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

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.

2.05pm Mr Cathal Boylan joined the meeting.

2.06pm Mr Fra McCann joined the meeting.

The Clerk briefed the Committee on the correspondence.

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.

7. Review of Standing Orders

Members noted correspondence from the Committee on Procedures on the Review of Standing Orders.

Agreed: Following discussion the Committee agreed an amendment to draft Standing Order 69.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should write to the Committee on Procedures confirming that, subject to the Committee's agreed amendment being made to Standing Order 69, the Committee is content with the draft Standing Orders.

Members noted that the motions to amend Standing Orders will be debated in the Assembly Chamber during the final week of plenary in this Mandate and that this will give effect to the provisions of the new Code of Conduct and Guide to the Rules Relating to the Conduct of Members, as set out in the Report on the Review of the Code of Conduct and Guide carried out by the Committee. The new Code and Guide will come into effect at the start of the next Mandate.

8. Report from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards

Members noted the Clerk's Paper; the Legal Advice; and key background papers.

Mr Dunne referred to media reports in respect of the recommendations within the Commissioner's Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that further consideration would be given to this issue after the Committee had concluded its consideration of the Report and had published the Committee's Report.

The Committee noted that, as agreed at the last meeting, the Committee would commence consideration of the Addendum Report received from the Commissioner at today's meeting to identify any references which should be redacted in order to ensure that the Committee complies with its obligation under the Human Rights Act 1998.

The Clerk commenced taking the Committee through each section of the Addendum Report and the appendices.

The Committee considered each section of the report and appendices and identified references within the documents which should be redacted in order to ensure that the Committee complies with its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998.

2.28pm Mr Paul Givan, Chairman joined the meeting and took the Chair

2.28pm Ms Angela Kelly, Legal Adviser joined the meeting

The Chairman welcomed Ms Kelly to the meeting to assist the Committee in its deliberations.

2.40pm Mr Fra McCann left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that some documents appended to the Addendum Report should be forwarded to the Information Commissioner for investigation of issues identified by the Committee.

The Clerk took the Committee through outstanding issues, one by one, which the Committee had agreed to address following the receipt of Legal Advice.

2.44pm Mr Newton left the meeting.

2.50pm Mr McCann returned to the meeting.

The Committee identified reference within these issues which should be redacted in order to ensure that the Committee complies with its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998.

Members noted that a draft Committee Report would be placed before the Committee for its consideration at the next meeting.

The Chairman and Members thanked Ms Kelly for attending the Committee and the excellent Legal Advice she had provided to the Committee.

9. Any other business

There was no other business.

10. Time, date and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday, 24th February 2016 at 1.30pm in Room 21.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 3.34pm.

Mr Paul Givan MLA
Chairman, Committee on Standards and Privileges

Date: 24th February 2016