

# **COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND PRIVILEGES**

**WEDNESDAY, 4<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2015**

## **ROOM 21, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Paul Givan (Chairman)  
Mr Steven Agnew  
Mr Gordon Dunne  
Mr Colum Eastwood  
Mr David Hilditch  
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: Ms Anna Lo (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Cathal Boylan  
Mr Declan McAleer  
Mr Robin Newton

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the meeting should be held in closed session.

*The meeting commenced at 1.30pm 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 7<sup>th</sup> October 2015 were agreed by the Committee.

#### **4. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

#### **5. Report from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards**

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

The Chairman welcomed Mr Douglas Bain, Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards, and invited him to brief the Committee on his report.

The Commissioner declared an interest as the Member who is the subject of his report had been a member of the panel which had recommended his appointment.

The Commissioner briefed the Committee on his report.

*1.45pm Mrs Overend joined the meeting*

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

#### **6. Public Service Ombudsperson Bill**

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

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

The Chairman invited the Commissioner to brief the Committee on his correspondence.

*2.02pm Mr Dunne joined the meeting.*

The Commissioner briefed the Committee and answered members' questions.

The Chairman thanked Mr Bain for attending the meeting.

*Agreed:* Following discussion the Committee agreed not to table an amendment at Further Consideration Stage.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to give further consideration to the issue of how complaints against the Commissioner might be handled.

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## **The Chairman referred members back to Agenda Item 5 – Report from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards on a complaint against a Member**

*Agreed:* Following discussion the Committee agreed with the Commissioner's conclusion that the Member had breached the Code of Conduct.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Member complained of informing him that the Committee has agreed that, prior to it reporting on this complaint, the Member should repay the Assembly the full cost of sending the letters. The Committee also agreed that should the Member make this payment by a specified date such action would allow it to report that the matter had been resolved.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Clerk should prepare a draft report for the Committee's consideration, taking into account the response received from the Member.

*2.21pm Mr Eastwood left the meeting.*

## **7. Review of the General Procedures Direction**

Members noted the Clerk's paper and accompanying papers.

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

The Chairman welcomed Mr Jonathan McMillen, Legal Adviser, and invited him to brief the Committee.

*2.25pm Mr McCann left the meeting*

*Agreed:* Following discussion the Chairman thanked Mr McMillen for attending the meeting.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Clerk should prepare a paper for consideration at a future meeting on this issue.

## **8. Amendment to Standing Orders**

Members noted the Clerk's Paper; and correspondence with the Committee on Procedures.

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

*Agreed:* Following discussion the Committee agreed that the Chairman should write to the Chairman of the Committee on Procedures informing him that the Committee is content with the draft new Standing Orders. The Committee also agreed to

recommend that the Committee on Procedures should seek the views of the Attorney General on the contents of the proposed Standing Orders relevant to that office.

## **9. Correspondence**

Members noted correspondence from the Assembly and Executive Review Committee.

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

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note this correspondence but that no response was necessary.

## **10. Any other business**

The Clerk briefed the Committee on a report it would consider at its next meeting.

*Agreed:* The Committee confirmed the handling arrangements for the report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the complaints received about the Commissioner should be forwarded to him and that he should be asked to respond in writing to the points made by the complainants.

## **11. Time, date and place of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2015 at 1.30pm in Room 21.

*The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 2.41pm.*

**Mr Paul Givan MLA**  
**Chairman, Committee on Standards and Privileges**

18<sup>th</sup> November 2015