Northern Ireland Assembly

Standing Orders

1. Standing Orders detail the procedures which regulate the way the Northern Ireland Assembly carries out its business. Standing Orders cover a range of issues, from detailing the times the Assembly sits to the rules concerning establishment of committees to assist the Assembly.

2. Under section 41 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, Standing Orders shall not be made, amended or repealed without cross-community support from members.

3. Further information on Standing Orders can be obtained from the Clerk to the Committee on Procedures, Tel: 02890 521629 or email: committee.procedures@niassembly.gov.uk

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Preliminary Arrangements

1. The Speaker

(1) A Presiding Officer of the Assembly elected under section 39 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 may be called "Mr Speaker", "Madam Speaker" or "Speaker", and is referred to in the remaining provisions of these Standing Orders as "the Speaker".

(2) The Speaker's ruling shall be final on all questions of procedure and order.

(3) A Deputy Presiding Officer of the Assembly elected under section 39 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 is referred to in the remaining provisions of these Standing Orders as "a Deputy Speaker".

2. Notice of First Meeting of New Assembly

(1) After an Assembly election, the Clerk to the Assembly (in these Standing Orders referred to as "the Clerk") shall send a notice to each member -

(a) stating that a meeting of the Assembly will be held as required by section 31(4) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and

(b) stating the place and time and date of the meeting.

(2) The Clerk shall send the notice as soon as may be after the election and in any event at least three days before the time stated in the notice.

3. Procedure at First Meeting of New Assembly

(1) At the first meeting of an Assembly after dissolution, members having met at the place and time appointed for that meeting -

(a) the Clerk shall read the notice sent under Standing Order 2(2) convening the meeting; and
(b) the outgoing Speaker shall take the chair.

(2) If, for any reason, the outgoing Speaker cannot take the chair, it shall be taken by an Acting Speaker, who shall be the oldest member present at the meeting.

(3) Members shall then take their seats in accordance with paragraph (7).

(4) All members shall have the opportunity to take their seats before any other formal business is conducted in the Assembly.

(5) A member shall not participate in Assembly proceedings or have title to the privileges of office until the member has taken his or her seat.

(6) The decision of the Speaker or Acting Speaker as to whether a member has taken his or her seat shall be final.

(7) A member shall take his or her seat by -

(a) giving the undertaking set out in section 40A(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and

(b) after the member has given that undertaking, by signing the Roll of Membership.

(8) A member shall give the undertaking by signing a document provided for that purpose.

(9) At the first meeting of an Assembly after dissolution, the document referred to in paragraph (8) and the Roll of Membership shall be located in the Chamber.

(10) Where a member does not take his or her seat at the first meeting of an Assembly after dissolution, he or she may do so thereafter by arrangement with the Speaker and in accordance with paragraph (7).

(11) The Clerk shall draw up a list of the party affiliations of the members. Each member shall have the opportunity to confirm or correct his or her affiliation as stated in that list.

(12) A member may change his or her party affiliation at any time. Any such change takes effect seven days after notification in writing is submitted to the Speaker.

3A. Political Designation

(1) After signing the Roll of Membership, a member may enter in the Roll his or her political designation.

(2) A member's political designation may be "Nationalist", "Unionist" or "Other".

(3) A member may change his or her political designation only if—

(a) (being a member of a political party) he or she becomes a member of a different political party or he or she ceases to be a member of any political party;
(b) (not being a member of any political party) he or she becomes a member of a political party.

(4) Any change in political designation takes effect immediately after notification in writing is submitted to the Speaker.

(5) Where the Speaker has received a Notice of Political Designation from any member before the first meeting of an Assembly after dissolution, the Speaker shall report the contents of that Notice to the Assembly.

(6) A Notice of Political Designation shall —

(a) be submitted by a member only where exceptional circumstances prevent that member attending in person the first meeting of an Assembly after dissolution;
(b) be in writing;
(c) detail the exceptional circumstances which make it necessary for the member to submit the Notice; and
(d) detail that member's political designation (see paragraph (2)).

(7) A Notice of Political Designation shall have effect only if received by the Speaker before the first meeting of an Assembly after dissolution.

(8) Except where paragraph (3) applies, when a Member who has submitted a Notice of Political Designation takes his or her seat, he or she shall enter the designation set out in that Notice in the Roll of Membership.

(9) A member who does not specify a political designation (whether by entering it in the Roll or by submitting a Notice of Political Designation) may be designated "Other" for the purposes of these Standing Orders and the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

(10) In this Standing Order the term "the Speaker" includes where relevant an outgoing Speaker or Acting Speaker (see Standing Order 3).

4. Election of Speaker: New Assembly

(1) When all members have had the opportunity to take their seats and specify a political designation, the Assembly shall proceed to elect a Speaker in the following manner.

(2) If the outgoing Speaker is in the chair and is seeking re-election as Speaker, he or she shall leave the chair, and the chair shall be taken by an Acting Speaker, who shall be the oldest member present at the meeting who is not seeking election as Speaker.

(3) Any member, addressing himself or herself to the outgoing Speaker or Acting Speaker, may propose a candidate (a member whether or not present) to the Assembly for the Office of Speaker and move "That be Speaker of this Assembly". If that motion is seconded, the candidate proposed and seconded may accept nomination by making an oral or written statement to that effect.

(4) Where a candidate is proposed and seconded and has accepted nomination as a candidate for the Office of Speaker, the outgoing Speaker or Acting Speaker shall then ask "Is there any further proposal?" and-

(a) if there is no further proposal the outgoing Speaker or Acting Speaker shall say "The time for proposals has expired" and a debate relevant to the election may then take place in which no member shall speak more than once;

(b) if more than one candidate is proposed and seconded and has accepted nomination as a candidate for the office of Speaker, the outgoing Speaker or Acting Speaker shall say "The time for proposals has expired", and a debate relevant to the election may then take place in which no member shall speak more than once.

(5) Upon the conclusion of the debate, or if there is no debate, the outgoing Speaker or Acting Speaker shall put the question, "That (being the only candidate proposed, or the candidate first proposed) be Speaker of this Assembly".

(6) If the question is not carried with the cross-community support required by section 39(7) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the out•••going Speaker or Acting Speaker shall put a similar question in relation to the second candidate proposed; whereupon if affirmed in the positive in accordance with section 39(7) of that Act, that candidate shall be declared by the Speaker or Acting Speaker to be elected and shall immediately take the chair; and this shall be done in relation to each candidate proposed in the order that they are proposed as often as necessary until a candidate is chosen to be Speaker.

(7) Where the Assembly is unable to elect a Speaker under the foregoing provisions of this order, but where a Deputy Speaker has been elected by virtue of Standing Order 5, the Deputy Speaker shall act as Speaker. In the case of more than one Deputy Speaker being elected they shall act in turn until a Speaker is elected.

(8) Where the Assembly is unable to elect either a Speaker under the foregoing provisions of this order, or a Deputy Speaker by virtue of Standing Order 5, the chair shall be taken, until a Speaker or Deputy Speaker is elected, by an Acting Speaker who shall be the oldest member of the Assembly.

4A. Election of Speaker: Assembly term

(1) Where the Speaker gives notice in writing to the Clerk of his intention to resign from the Office of Speaker during an Assembly term, the Speaker shall continue to hold office until a new Speaker has been elected.

(2) A new Speaker shall be elected in the manner provided for by Standing Order 4.

(3) If the Speaker cannot take the chair for the proceedings to elect a new Speaker, the chair shall be taken by an Acting Speaker, who shall be the oldest member present at the meeting who is not seeking election as Speaker.

5. Deputy Speakers

(1) There shall be elected three Deputy Speakers. The process of election shall be as set out in Standing Order 4.

(2) Where the Speaker wishes to authorise a Deputy Speaker to exercise functions on his or her behalf, he or she shall notify the Deputy Speaker of the duties which that person is to perform and the authority which that person is to exercise.

(3) In Standing Orders, references to the Speaker shall, unless the context requires otherwise, include a Deputy Speaker acting as Speaker -

(a) under section 39(4) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, or

(b) under the authorisation of the Speaker in accordance with paragraph (2).

(4) A Deputy Speaker may be called "Mr Deputy Speaker", "Madam Deputy Speaker" or "Deputy Speaker".

5A. Principal Deputy Speaker

(1) Any Member of the Assembly may nominate a Deputy Speaker, who has been elected in accordance with Standing Order 5(1), to act as Principal Deputy Speaker.

(2) Once a nomination under paragraph (1) has been made, no further nomination under that paragraph shall be made, unless the person nominated does not agree to act as Principal Deputy Speaker or the nomination is not approved, in which case a further nomination may be made.

(3) A nomination to act as Principal Deputy Speaker shall not take effect unless the person nominated agrees to act as Principal Deputy Speaker and the nomination is approved by resolution of the Assembly.

(4) Where a nomination has taken effect in accordance with paragraph (3), the person so preferred may be called "Mr Principal Deputy Speaker", "Madam Principal Deputy Speaker", or "Principal Deputy Speaker".

(5) If the Assembly resolves that the person acting as Principal Deputy Speaker should no longer so act, it may, in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order, nominate another Deputy Speaker to act as Principal Deputy Speaker.

(6) Where the Principal Deputy Speaker ceases to hold office as a Deputy Speaker, any Member of the Assembly may, in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order, nominate another Deputy Speaker to act as Principal Deputy Speaker.

(7) Where a Deputy Speaker is nominated to act as Principal Deputy Speaker under paragraph (1) or a motion is moved for a resolution under paragraph (5), a debate relevant to that nomination or resolution may take place in which no member shall speak more than once.

(8) A resolution under paragraph (3) or (5) shall not be passed without cross-community support.

6. Procedure when Office of Speaker becomes vacant

(1) Where a vacancy in the Office of Speaker of the Assembly occurs during an Assembly term, a Deputy Speaker shall report the vacancy to the Assembly at the opening of its next meeting and the Assembly shall, as soon as may be, proceed to elect a Speaker in the manner provided by Standing Order 4.

(2) For the purposes of that election, the chair shall be taken by an Acting Speaker, who shall be the oldest member present at the meeting who is not seeking election as Speaker.

(3) Where there is no agreement on the election of a Speaker, meetings of the Assembly shall be chaired by the Deputy Speakers in weekly rotation in the order in which they were elected in so far as this is possible.

Operations of the Assembly

7. Proceedings to be held in Public

Except as otherwise prescribed in Standing Orders the proceedings of the Assembly shall be held in public.

8. Prayers

Before the commencement of business the Speaker shall announce the commencement of a period of two minutes silent prayer or contemplation. This period shall be known as Prayers; it shall take place in private and shall be the first item on the Order Paper for the day.

9. Quorum

(1) The quorum of the Assembly shall be ten members including the Speaker.

(2) If, at any time, a quorum is not present and the Speaker's attention is directed to that fact, he or she shall order the division bells to be rung. If at the expiration of five minutes a quorum is present, it shall not be in order to direct the attention of the Speaker to the absence of a quorum for a period of one hour from that time.

(3) If at the expiration of five minutes a quorum is not present, the Speaker shall, without question put, either-

(a) suspend the Assembly to a later time; or

(b) adjourn the Assembly until the next sitting day.

(4) Where the Assembly is suspended under paragraph (3), the outstanding business on the Order Paper for that day shall be, subject to any direction of the Speaker to the contrary, the first business when the Assembly resumes.

(5) Where the Assembly is adjourned under paragraph (3), the outstanding business on the Order Paper for that day shall be, subject to any direction of the Speaker to the contrary, the first business when the Assembly next sits.

9A. Temporary Speaker

(1) If neither the Speaker nor any Deputy Speaker is able to chair a sitting of the Assembly, the sitting shall be chaired by a temporary Speaker.

(2) Paragraph (1) does not apply in cases where Standing Order 3(2) or 4(2) applies. If the Acting Speaker under Standing Order 4(8) is unable to chair a sitting, the sitting shall be chaired by a temporary Speaker.

(3) The temporary Speaker shall be the member, present at the sitting, who has served the Assembly the longest number of days, and in the case of a tie, the oldest of the longest-serving members present. Ministers and junior Ministers are not eligible to be considered as temporary Speakers.

10. Sittings and Adjournments of the Assembly

(1) The categories of business to be conducted in the Assembly shall consist of the following -

(a) Assembly Business;

(b) Executive Committee Business;

(c) Committee Business;

(d) Questions;

(e) Opposition Business;

(f) Private Members' Business;

(g) Private Business;

(h) Adjournment Debates;

(i) Party Business;

(j) Matters of the Day; and

(k) Members' Statements

(2) Subject to the authority of the Business Committee to determine the time for commencement of business in plenary session, the sittings of the Assembly shall be arranged as follows -

Monday noon – 6.00 pm
Tuesday 10.30 am – 6.00 pm.

The allocation of time for business within these sittings shall be determined by the Business Committee, except that -

(a) there shall be a period for questions as set out in Standing Orders 20 to 20B;

(b) at the end of each sitting up to one hour may be set aside for an adjournment debate.

(3) Where business on the Order Paper has not been disposed of by 6.00 pm on Monday, the Speaker may allow business to continue until 7.00 pm or until the outstanding business is completed, whichever is earlier.

(3A) Where it appears that Monday's business may not be completed by 7.00 pm, a motion to extend the sitting into the evening may be moved by –

(a) a member of the Executive Committee (in respect of outstanding Executive Committee Business);

(b) a member of the Business Committee (in respect of any other outstanding business).

(3B) A motion under paragraph (3A) may only be moved if –

(a) notice of the motion has been given to the Speaker by –

(i) 11.00 am on the Monday in question; or

(ii) such later time as the Speaker may allow; and

(b) the motion specifies the latest time at which the Assembly is to adjourn and the Speaker considers that time to be reasonable.

(3C) Consideration of business on the Order Paper not concluded by the time the Assembly adjourns on a Monday shall be postponed until such time as the Business Committee determines.

(4) If at the time the Assembly is to adjourn a division is in progress, or a question is being put and a division or a vote in the Chamber results, adjournment of the Assembly shall be deferred until after the declaration of the result of the division or vote in the Chamber.

(5) If Tuesday's business cannot be completed in the allocated time, the sitting may be extended into the evening, into Wednesday, or both.

(6) Additional sittings may be arranged by the Business Committee according to the exigencies of the Assembly.

(7) Where an oral Ministerial statement made under Standing Order 18A impinges upon the time bands specified in this order, the Speaker shall act in accordance with Standing Order18A(6).

(8) An adjournment of the Assembly shall mean an adjournment until the next sitting day unless the Assembly, on a motion moved by a member of the Executive Committee after notice, has ordered an adjournment to some other definite date.

(9) A session of the Assembly shall be that period from the commencement of business following the summer recess until the end of the subsequent summer recess. The Business Committee shall determine the dates for recess.

11. Earlier Meetings of the Assembly

(1) Whenever notice is given to the Speaker by the First Minister and deputy First Minister or by not less than 30 members that the Assembly should meet at an earlier date than that to which it stands adjourned for the purpose of discussing a specific matter of urgent public importance, or several such matters, the Speaker shall, as soon as may be, summon the Assembly to meet.

(2) The notice given to the Speaker under paragraph (1) of this order shall be in writing over the signature of the First Minister and deputy First Minister or the signatures of the members desiring the recall and shall contain a statement of the specific matter or matters to be discussed.

(3) The business to be transacted on the day on which the Assembly shall meet shall be the specific matter or matters referred to in the notice given to the Speaker and when that business has been disposed of the Assembly shall either stand adjourned to the date to which it originally stood adjourned or determine differently on a motion from a member when it shall next meet.

12. Public Business

(1) Public business shall consist of stages of Public Bills, statutory committee reports and notices of motions and shall include Executive Committee, opposition and private members business.

(2) Notice of future public business shall be given in writing to the Clerk who shall prepare a No Day Named List from time to time listing the motions received by him or her.

(3) The items of public business to be taken on a particular day shall be disposed of in the order in which they have been arranged on the Order Paper.

(4) At the times laid down for Executive Committee business, the Executive Committee shall have the right of placing its business in any order that it pleases prior to the issue of the Order Paper.

(4A) Where there is an opposition, in each session of the Assembly ten days shall be allotted for opposition business.

(5) Unless the Assembly otherwise directs, by motion made after notice, private members' business shall be arranged on the Order Paper in such order as the Business Committee shall think fit.

(6) In determining the order of private members' business the Business Committee shall have regard to-

(a) the wishes expressed by the members in charge of the various items;

(b) the relative public importance in its opinion of the various items; and

(c) the desirability of giving precedence to those Bills which are furthest advanced in their passage

through the Assembly.

(7) Motions relating to the business of the Assembly –

(a) subject to Standing Order 10(3B)(a)(ii), shall be taken at the commencement of public business after notice; and

(b) shall be decided without amendment or debate.

13. Private Business

(1) The stages and procedures for Private Bills shall be as set out in the provisions of Standing Orders dealing with Private Bills.

(2) All private business which is set down for any sitting day and which is not disposed of in the time allotted for it shall, without question being put, be postponed until such time as the Business Committee determines.

(3) Where the time allocated for private business is insufficient for the transaction of all private business tabled, the private business to be transacted shall be chosen by ballot and the resulting unopposed private business shall have precedence over the resulting opposed private business.

14. Seconders

No motion or amendment (other than the nomination of a candidate for the election of a Speaker or Deputy Speaker) shall require to be seconded before the question is put thereon.

15. Amendments

(1) Except as provided for in paragraphs (2) and (3), any amendment to a motion shall be given in writing to the Speaker not later than 9.30 am two working days before the day on which the motion is to be taken.

(2) Any amendment to a motion to be debated on a day on which the Business Committee has arranged an additional sitting of the Assembly under Standing Order 10(6) shall, where the time between such decision of the Business Committee and the day of the additional sitting is less than two working days, be given to the Speaker not later than 9.30 am on the day of the additional sitting.

(3) Any amendment to a motion to be debated on a day on which the Assembly is summoned to meet earlier than that to which it stood adjourned shall, where the time between the Speaker's summons and the meeting to which the Speaker's summons relates is less than two working days, be given to the Speaker not later than 9.30 am on the day on which the Assembly is summoned to meet.

(4) When any amendment has been moved, the question to be put shall be, "That the amendment be made". Where any amendment is agreed the question to be put shall be "That the motion, as amended, be agreed". Where any amendment is rejected the question on the substantive motion shall be put.

(5) In respect of any motion or Bill under consideration in the Assembly, the Speaker shall have power to select the new clauses, schedules or amendments to be proposed and may, if he or she thinks fit, call upon any member who has given notice of any amendment to give such explanation of the object of the amendment as may enable him or her to form a judgement upon it.

(6) Any amendment may be withdrawn prior to debate with the agreement of the member or members proposing the amendment.

(7) By leave of the Assembly any amendment may be withdrawn before a division is called.

16. Delaying Motions

(1) When a motion is made for the adjournment of a debate, or of the Assembly during any debate, any debate on the motion shall be confined to the matter of such motion; and any member, having moved any such motion, shall not be entitled to move any similar motion during the same debate.

(2) Where a motion is made for the adjournment of a debate the motion shall specify the length of adjournment and in any case it shall not be for a period greater than seven days. The Speaker shall not permit more than one adjournment on the same debate except by leave of the Assembly.

(3) If the Speaker shall be of the opinion that a motion for the adjournment of a debate, or of the Assembly, is an abuse of the rules of the Assembly, he or she may immediately put the question on the motion without debate or he or she may decline to put the question on the motion to the Assembly.

17. Speeches in the Assembly

(1) A member shall not address the Assembly unless called on to speak by the Speaker. When the Speaker rises to speak, the member addressing the Assembly shall cease speaking and resume his or her place.

(2) A member may not speak more than once to the same motion, but a right of reply shall be allowed to a member who has moved a motion or an amendment.

(3) Notwithstanding paragraph (2) any member may seek to intervene while another member is speaking subject to that member's consent, but may not persist in so doing if the member refuses to give way.

(4) The Business Committee shall consult with the Speaker in order to establish the total time to be allocated to each debate and the general arrangements for the debate including those set out in paragraph (5) below.

(5) The Speaker shall determine the order of speaking and the number of speakers in any debate having due regard to the balance of opinion on the matter, the party strengths in the Assembly and the number of members who have indicated a desire to speak.

(6) The Speaker shall announce to the Assembly the established speaking times as above for any debate as a preliminary to the debate.

(7) The Speaker, after having called the attention of the Assembly to the conduct of a member who persists in irrelevance or tedious repetition, may direct the member to discontinue his or her speech.

18. Ministerial Statements

(1) Ministers shall make statements to the Assembly on matters relating to their official responsibilities, which may be either –

(a) oral Ministerial statements (see Standing Order 18A); or

(b) written Ministerial statements (see Standing Order 18B).

(2) A statement shall be oral unless the Minister considers it appropriate to make a written statement, having regard to, among other things, whether the statement relates to a matter of public importance and when the Assembly will next sit.

18A. Oral Ministerial Statements

(1) The Minister shall deliver the oral Ministerial statement in the Assembly.

(2) The Minister shall make a written copy of the statement available to members as early as possible and in any event at least 30 minutes before delivering the statement in the Assembly. Where this has not been possible he or she shall state to the Assembly the reason.

(3) The written copy, whether or not embargoed, shall not be given to members of the news media before it is made available to members.

(4) Notice of a statement shall be given to the Speaker not later than 9.30 am on the working day before the day, or in cases of urgency 2 ½ hours before, it is due to be made and the Speaker shall communicate such information to members as soon as is practicable.

(5) After a statement has been delivered in the Assembly a period of questions on the statement, which shall last no more than one hour, may then ensue. The Speaker shall determine the period taking into consideration the content of the statement, the number of members wishing to ask questions and the pressure of other business.

(5A) Where there is an opposition, the first question on the statement shall be asked by a member of the opposition.

(6) Statements shall ordinarily be made outside the time bands specified in Standing Order 10(2) for questions and adjournment debates. However, where a statement is of urgent public importance it may impinge upon those bands. In such cases, the Speaker shall make arrangements for appropriate additional time to be scheduled under Standing Order 10 for questions and/or an adjournment debate unless, by leave, the Assembly determines to dispense with this requirement.

18B. Written Ministerial Statements

(1) The written statement shall be delivered to the Speaker not later than 24 hours (or in cases of urgency 2 ½ hours) before it is –

(a) made public; or

(b) given, whether or not embargoed, to members of the news media;

whichever comes first.

(2) The statement shall be included in the Official Report (Hansard).

18C. Executive Legislation Programme

(1) In each calendar year, time should be allocated for a debate on the programme of Executive legislation which Ministers intend to introduce to the Assembly during that session ('the Legislation Programme').

(2) The First Minister and deputy First Minister acting jointly should table a motion to debate the Legislation Programme.

(3) The motion referred to in paragraph (2) should be tabled within a period of 20 working days beginning with the first day on which the Business Committee meets following the summer recess.

(4) If a motion to debate the Legislation Programme is tabled, the Business Committee must select that motion for debate and a vote in the Assembly.

(5) The debate and vote on the Legislation Programme should take place within a period of 10 working days beginning with the day on which the motion is tabled.

(6) Where no motion to debate the Legislation Programme is tabled within the period set out in paragraph (3), the First Minister and deputy First Minister acting jointly should, as soon as is practicable, make an oral or written ministerial statement to the Assembly on the Legislation Programme.

(7) The statement referred to in paragraph (6) should –

(a) give reasons why a motion to debate the Legislation Programme has not been tabled, and

(b) set out a revised date for the tabling of a motion to debate the Legislation Programme in that calendar year.

19. Questions

(1) A member may ask questions of –

(a) a Minister, on matters relating to the Minister's official responsibilities;

(b) a member representing the Assembly Commission, on matters relating to the Commission's official responsibilities.

(2) A question should not contain –

(a) statements of facts or names of persons, unless they are necessary to make the question intelligible and can be authenticated;

(b) arguments, inferences or imputations;

(c) adjectives, unless they are necessary to make the question intelligible;

(d) ironical expressions;

(e) hypothetical matter; or

(f) requests for expressions of opinion, legal or otherwise.

(3) A question may be –

(a) for oral answer (see Standing Order 20);

(b) a topical question for oral answer (see Standing Order 20A);

(c) for urgent oral answer (see Standing Order 20B); or

(d) for written answer (see Standing Order 20C).

(4) A question (other than a topical question) must –

(a) be in writing;

(b) indicate the type of answer sought, within the meaning of paragraph (3);

(c) be submitted to the Business Office by the member, or by the person authorised in writing by the member;

(d) be submitted by hand, by post, or electronically.

(5) A question must be answered as clearly and as fully as possible.

20. Questions for Oral Answer

(1) Questions for oral answer for Ministers shall be taken between 2.00 pm and 3.30 pm on those Mondays and Tuesdays on which the Assembly is sitting. Where questions for members representing the Assembly Commission are to be taken, they shall be taken after questions for Ministers.

(2) If for any reason the Assembly does not sit on a day when questions for oral answer would normally be taken, the Speaker may allocate additional time for questions on the nearest sitting day.

(3) The Speaker shall from time to time consult the Business Committee on the need to provide additional time for questions.

(4) A rota, agreed by the Business Committee, shall determine who should answer questions on a particular day.

(5) A member who wishes to ask a question of a Minister at a particular sitting shall submit his or her name in advance to the Speaker who shall select 15 members by ballot.

(6) Each member selected shall submit his or her question to the Business Office, and the Business Office shall publish the questions on the penultimate Friday before the day they are due to be taken.

(7) The Speaker shall determine, by means of a random selection, the order in which questions are taken. However, the first question may not be from a member of the same party as the Minister to whom it is addressed, unless all the questions are from members of that party.

(8) Answers may not be debated, but the member asking the question may ask a supplementary question. Further supplementary questions may be asked at the discretion of the Speaker. A supplementary question may contain no more than one enquiry.

(8A) Answers (including those to supplementary questions) may be no longer than two minutes. This period may be extended at the discretion of the Speaker.

(9) Where –

(a) the member who submitted the question is not present to ask it; or

(b) the question is not reached in the time allocated for questions;

the Minister or member representing the Assembly Commission to whom the question is addressed shall give a written answer. This question and answer shall be published in the Official Report (Hansard).

(10) No question shall be taken outside the time allocated for questions except a question which has not been answered in consequence of the absence, in exceptional circumstances, of the Minister or member representing the Assembly Commission to whom it is addressed.

(11) Where a question or supplementary question is asked of the First Minister and deputy First Minister which relates to a matter in respect of which the junior Ministers in the Executive Office have been assigned a specific responsibility by the First Minister and deputy First Minister, the First Minister or deputy First Minister, as appropriate, may call upon a junior Minister in the Executive Office to answer the question. The First Minister or deputy First Minister shall be present in the Chamber during the time for questions for oral answer.

20A. Topical Questions

(1) Topical questions for a Minister shall be taken during the last 15 minutes of the time allocated for questions for oral answer by that Minister.

(2) No topical questions shall be asked of the Assembly Commission.

(3) A member who wishes to ask a topical question of a Minister at a particular sitting shall submit his or her name in advance to the Speaker.

(4) The Speaker shall allow up to 10 members to ask a topical question.

(5) Except where paragraphs 6-8 apply, the Speaker shall determine, by means of a random selection, the order in which members may ask a topical question.

(6) Where—

(a) there is an official opposition; and

(b) at least one member of the official opposition has submitted his or her name to the Speaker under paragraph (3),

the first topical question must be asked by a member of the official opposition.

(7) Where more than one member of the official opposition has submitted his or her name to the Speaker under paragraph (3), the Speaker shall determine by which member of the official opposition the first topical question is to be asked.

(8) Where the first topical question is to be asked by a member of the official opposition, the Speaker shall determine, by means of a random selection, the order in which subsequent questions are taken.

(9) The first topical question may not be from a member of the same party as the Minister to whom it is addressed, unless all the topical questions are from members of that party.

(10) The Speaker shall inform –

(a) members; and

(b) the Ministers to whom the questions will be addressed at the sitting;

in advance, of the names and order in which questions are to be taken.

(11) Answers may not be debated, but the member asking the question may ask a supplementary question. A supplementary question may contain no more than one enquiry.

(12) Where a member is not present to ask a topical question, the Speaker shall move to the next member in accordance with the order determined under paragraph (5).

(13) Paragraphs (1)(a) and (2) of Standing Order 19 and paragraphs (2), (8A), (10) and (11) of Standing Order 20 shall apply to topical questions as they apply to questions for oral answer.

20B. Questions for Urgent Oral Answer

(1) A question for urgent oral answer may be taken if, in the opinion of the Speaker, it is of an urgent nature and relates to a matter of public importance. The question may only be asked on a sitting day.

(2) A member may ask a question if –

(a) it is submitted before 10.30 am; and

(b) the Minister or member representing the Assembly Commission to whom it is addressed is given a minimum of four hours' notice.

(3) Subject to paragraph (2)(b), the time for taking questions shall be at the discretion of the Speaker.

(4) Paragraphs (8) and (11) of Standing Order 20 shall apply to questions for urgent oral answer as they apply to questions for oral answer.

20C. Questions for Written Answer

(1) A member may submit up to five questions for written answer each working day, one of which may be for priority answer.

(2) Priority questions shall indicate whether an answer is sought within two, three, four or five working days.

(3) The Business Office shall publish all written questions.

(4) The Minister or member representing the Assembly Commission to whom a question is addressed shall answer it –

(a) by the end of ten working days after it is published; or

(b) in the case of a question for priority answer, by the end of two, three, four or five working days (as the

case may be) after it is published.

(5) A question for priority answer should not request a large amount of historical or statistical information.

(6) The Minister or member representing the Assembly Commission to whom a written question is addressed shall cause the question and answer to be published in the Official Report (Hansard).

21. Adjournment Debates

(1) At such time as is set aside in Standing Orders, the question shall be put by the Speaker, "That the Assembly do now adjourn", upon which question a member who has the leave of the Speaker may raise any matter.

(2) Any member who wishes to raise a matter under the provisions of this order shall give notice to the Speaker of at least eight days.

(3) Where the subject matter of an adjournment debate is the responsibility of a member of the Executive Committee ten minutes shall be allotted for a Ministerial response at the end of the debate.

22. Public Petition

(1) Every member offering to present a petition to the Assembly, shall confine himself or herself to a statement of the parties from whom it comes, the number of signatures attached to it and the material allegations contained in it, and to reading the prayer of such petition.

(2) Every petition presented under this order, not containing matter which would create a substantial risk that the course of justice in legal proceedings (which are active within the meaning of section 2 of the Contempt of Court Act 1981), would be seriously impeded or prejudiced, shall be notified to the Clerk of the Business Committee, and that committee shall consider whether and when it shall be taken in the Assembly.

(3) A petition shall relate to matters that are within the legislative competence of the Assembly.

23. Presentation of Papers and Accounts

(1) Papers and accounts which are to be presented to the Assembly shall be delivered to the Business Office of the Assembly and the listing of the same in the Journal of Proceedings of the Assembly shall constitute presentation for all purposes. Any papers or accounts so placed shall be regarded as matters for the public domain.

(2) The above procedure shall also be followed when there is a statutory requirement to lay any document before the Assembly.

(3) Any papers or accounts not subject to a requirement to be laid or presented to the Assembly which are deposited in the Assembly Library shall be published in accordance with law.

24. Matters of the Day

(1) A member may seek leave of the Speaker to make a statement to the Assembly on a matter which fulfils the criteria specified in paragraph (2) by making a formal request not later than the time provided for in paragraph (3), which formal request shall outline the subject matter of the proposed statement.

(2) In deciding whether to grant leave to a member who has made a formal request under paragraph (1) the Speaker shall take account of the following criteria –

(a) whether the proposed statement relates to a matter which has occurred and has come to public attention since the Assembly last stood adjourned;

(b) whether the proposed statement relates to a matter which is of exceptional public interest;

(c) whether the proposed statement relates to a matter which directly affects the people of Northern Ireland;

(d) that the specific subject matter of the proposed statement is not, and has not previously been, the subject of or directly related to a statement, application, notice or referral made or given under this or any other Standing Order.

(3) Any request under this order shall be made not later than–

(a) 9.30 am on any sitting day; or

(b) if the Speaker is satisfied that the event or incident to which the formal request relates came to the attention of the member at such time that the member could not reasonably have made a formal request by the time stipulated in sub-paragraph (a), such later time as the Speaker may direct.

(4) As soon as possible after receipt of a formal request under this order the Speaker shall decide whether to give a member who has made the formal request under this order leave to make a statement, and shall immediately notify the member of that decision. If the Speaker gives leave for a statement to be made he or she shall allow the member (together with such other members as the Speaker may select) to make the statement as soon as reasonably practicable.

(5) No member may intervene during a member's statement under this order and there will be no questions and no vote will be taken at the conclusion of the statement or statements.

24A. Members' Statements

(1) This order shall apply in any period set aside for members' statements.

(2) A member who wishes to make a statement must rise in his or her place, and may be selected by the Speaker.

(3) When selecting a member to make a statement, the Speaker shall have regard to the balance of opinions in the Assembly.

(4) No member may intervene during a statement.

(5) No vote will be taken, and there shall be no questions, following a statement.

(6) A statement must relate to a topical matter of public interest and must not:

(a) exceed three minutes in duration;

(b) relate to a matter scheduled for debate in the Assembly;

(c) address a question that has already been decided by the Assembly within the previous 6 months; or

(d) be used to impugn or to attack another member.".

Voting

25. Closure of Debate

(1) After "the question" of a motion has been proposed, any member who has not already spoken to it, or to any amendment to it which has been proposed, may move that "the question be now decided"; and unless it shall appear to the Speaker that any of the parties present has not had a reasonable opportunity to contribute to the debate or that such motion is otherwise an abuse of these orders, the question that "the question be now decided" shall be put immediately and decided without amendment or debate.

(2) Where a division is held on a question for the closure of debate on an issue the resolution of which requires cross-community support the question shall not be carried unless at least 30 members have voted in support of it.

(3) If a question for the closure of debate has been carried, the Speaker shall immediately put the question on any amendment already proposed to the motion and the question on any other amendment which he or she may then select to be proposed, and shall then immediately put the question on the motion or (as the case may be) on the motion as amended.

26. Voting – General

(1) Every decision of the Assembly shall be taken by a simple majority of those voting other than a decision -

(a) in relation to which any statutory provision or Standing Orders provide otherwise; or

(b) on a vote, resolution or Act which -

(i) appropriates a sum out of the Consolidated Fund of Northern Ireland or increases a sum to be appropriated; or

(ii) imposes or increases a tax.

The decisions mentioned in sub-paragraph (b) shall require cross-community support within the meaning of section 4(5) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

(2) The Speaker, or a Deputy Speaker when in the chair, shall not be entitled to a vote on any matter.

(3) Subject to Standing Order 27, the Speaker shall judge whether the question be carried or not by collecting voices.

(4) A vote shall not be taken on any matter if a quorum is not present.

27. Voting - Divisions

(1) Subject to paragraph (1A), the Speaker shall direct that the lobbies be cleared and the division bells sounded if –

(a) the Speaker is unsure whether or not a question is carried following the collection of voices under Standing Order 26; or

(b) the Speaker's judgement as to whether a question is so carried is challenged.

(1A) Where a question is put immediately after the result of a previous division is announced, and paragraph 1(a) or (b)

applies –

(a) the Speaker may direct that the lobbies be cleared and the division bells sounded; or

(b) the Speaker may direct that the lobbies be cleared and proceed immediately in accordance with paragraphs (4) to (11)

and in deciding whether to direct that the lobbies be cleared and the division bells sounded under this paragraph, the Speaker shall have regard to any representations made by any party whip.

(2) Three minutes after a direction under paragraph (1) or (1A)(a), the Speaker shall put the question again, and if paragraph (1)(a) or (b) still applies, he or she shall proceed as set out below. Otherwise he or she shall judge whether the question be carried in accordance with Standing Order 26(3).

(3) If, in the Speaker's opinion, his or her judgement is unnecessarily challenged, he or she may take the vote of the Assembly by calling upon the members who support and who challenge his or her judgement successively to rise in their places and he or she shall thereupon, as he or she thinks fit, declare the determination of the Assembly without proceeding as set out below.

(4) The Speaker shall call for the nomination of two tellers for each side of the question but, if within a reasonable time after this call –

(a) two tellers for one side but not the other have been nominated, the determination of the Assembly shall be that of the side which has nominated the two tellers;

(b) two tellers for each side have not been nominated, the question shall not be carried.

(5) After tellers have been nominated, the Speaker shall direct the Assembly to divide, "ayes" to the right and "noes" to the left, and that the division bells be again sounded.

(6) Four minutes after this direction, the Speaker shall direct that the doors from the corridors to the Chamber and lobbies are secured.

(7) When all members in the lobbies have voted, the tellers shall bring the division lists to the table clerks who will announce the result.

(8) A member may vote in a division although he or she did not hear the question put.

(9) A member shall not be obliged to vote.

(10) If the votes in a division are equal the question shall not be carried.

(11) If any member is present within the precincts of the Assembly and is disabled by infirmity from passing through a lobby, his or her name may be communicated by his or her party whip to the lobby clerks and tellers and may be included in the numbers counted.

27A. Voting by Proxy

(1) A member (M) may arrange for M's vote to be exercised by a proxy (P) where—

(a) M meets the conditions set out in paragraph 2,

(b) the Speaker has published a proxy voting scheme (the Scheme) in accordance with paragraph 3,

(c) P is not the Speaker or a deputy Speaker, and

(d) M and P have complied with the terms of the Scheme.

(2) The conditions are—

(a) M could, if an employee, exercise a right to maternity leave, paternity leave, adoption leave, shared parental leave or parental bereavement leave,

(b) M is affected by complications arising from pregnancy, including miscarriage, stillbirth and baby loss, or

(c) M has fostering responsibilities of a kind prescribed in the Scheme.

(3) The Scheme must include—

(a) the process by which M may designate P,

(b) the period for which a proxy vote may be exercised,

(c) how M may vary or withdraw that proxy, and

(d) subject to paragraph 4, details of how a proxy vote may be exercised.

(4) A proxy vote—

(a) may be exercised only in a plenary session of the Assembly,

(b) is to be disregarded for the purposes of Standing Order 9 (Quorum),

(c) must be recorded as such in the Official Report and the Journal of the Proceedings of the Assembly,

(d) may not be exercised in a vote on any of the following—

i. a Bill to which section 7A of the 1998 Act applies,

ii. the democratic consent process at Schedule 6A of the 1998 Act,

iii. any motion which requires the support of a number of members of the Assembly which equals or exceeds two thirds of the total number of seats in the Assembly, and

iv. any motion which requires the support of a number of members of the Assembly which equals or exceeds two thirds of the total number of members voting on the motion.

(5) In this standing order—

'employee' has the meaning given by Article 3 of the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996

'the 1998 Act' means the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

28. Petition of Concern

(1) This Standing Order supplements section 42 of the 1998 Act (petitions of concern).

(2) If, in respect of a matter to be voted on by the Assembly, a petition is presented by 30 or more members and on the day after the consideration period, confirmed by 30 or more members, the vote on the matter subject to the petition —

(a) shall require cross-community support; and

(b) shall not take place until after the day the petition is confirmed by 30 or more members.

(3) The petition may be accompanied by a statement to the Business Office setting out the grounds and rationale upon which it is being presented.

(4) Except where paragraph (5) applies, the petition must be presented to the Business Office not later than 4:00pm on the last working day before the day on which the debate on the matter subject to the petition is due to take place.

(5) In exceptional circumstances, the Speaker may permit the petition to be presented to the Business Office not later than one hour before the debate on the matter subject to the petition is due to take place.

(6) A matter may not be the subject of a petition if it —
  (a) concerns a sanction in relation to the conduct of a Minister or member;
  (b) concerns a vote on the Second Stage of a Bill (debate on the general principles of a Bill);
  (c) concerns a vote on a motion or question which has no express legal or procedural effect.

(7) The Speaker shall determine whether a motion or question has an effect mentioned in paragraph (6)(c).

(8) The members presenting or confirming a petition must include —
  (a) one member who belongs to a political party and one member who belongs to a different political party;
  (b) one member who belongs to a political party and one member who does not belong to a political party and did not belong to a political party when returned as a member; or
  (c) two members who do not belong to a political party and did not belong to a political party when returned as members.

(9) A petition may not be presented or confirmed by the Speaker, the Principal Deputy Speaker or a Deputy Speaker.

(10) If the day on which a petition is to be confirmed by 30 or more members is not a working day, it must be confirmed on the next day that is a working day.

(11) In paragraph (10), "working day" means any day other than a Saturday, a Sunday, Christmas Day, Good Friday or a day which is a bank holiday in Northern Ireland.

(12) In this Standing Order —
  "the 1998 Act" means the Northern Ireland Act 1998;
  "the consideration period" means the period of 14 days beginning with the day on which the petition is presented.

29. Referral of a Ministerial Decision to the Executive Committee

(1) A petition to refer a Ministerial decision to the Executive Committee under section 28B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 shall be in the form of a notice signed by at least 30 members presented to the Speaker.

(2) If, on receipt of the petition, the Speaker determines –
  (a) that the decision has not been the subject of a previous reference under that section; and
  (b) that the time limit specified in section 28B(5) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 has not elapsed, the Speaker shall consult the political parties whose members hold seats in the Assembly.

(3) That consultation -
  (a) shall be completed before the expiry of the time limit specified in section 28B(5) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and
  (b) shall be in such form as the Speaker may determine.

(4) The Speaker shall, on completing that consultation, certify whether or not the decision relates to a matter of public importance.

(5) If the Speaker certifies that the decision relates to a matter of public importance, the Speaker shall immediately refer the decision to the Executive Committee.

(6) The Speaker shall announce -
  (a) the receipt and disposal of a petition under section 28B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998;
  (b) the receipt of a notification under section 28B(4) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, to the Assembly at the earliest opportunity.

Public Legislation

30. Public Bills: Introduction and First Stage

(1) A Minister or member of the Assembly who proposes to introduce a Public Bill shall submit the full text of the Bill to the Speaker not less than seven days (excluding Saturdays and Sundays) before the date proposed for the introduction of the Bill in the Assembly.

(2) A member of the Assembly in charge of a Private Member's Bill shall, when submitting the text of the Bill to the Speaker, in accordance with paragraph (1), also submit a statement in writing to the effect that in his or her view the Bill would be within the legislative competence of the Assembly. The statement shall be published with the Bill on its introduction.

(2A) No Private Member's Bill shall be introduced in the Assembly after the final sitting day in June of any relevant year.

(2B) In this Standing Order, a relevant year is the calendar year immediately preceding the calendar year in which, in accordance with section 31(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, a poll for the election of an Assembly will take place.

(3) No Bill shall be introduced in the Assembly if the Speaker decides that any provision of it would not be within the legislative competence of the Assembly.

(3A) Where the Speaker is of the opinion that a Bill is a Hybrid Bill, the Speaker shall direct that the Bill be referred for Preliminary Scrutiny in accordance with Standing Order 101.

(4) When the Speaker has signified to the Minister or member of the Assembly in charge of the Bill that in his or her opinion it may properly be introduced, notice of introduction may be given for any subsequent sitting day.

(5) On the introduction of a Bill, its title shall be read to the Assembly by a table clerk and this shall constitute the Bill's First Stage; the Bill shall be ordered to be printed and shall be set down in the list of pending future business until a date for its Second Stage is determined.

(6) The Speaker shall, as soon as is reasonably practicable after the introduction of a Bill, send a copy of it to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.

(7) Subject to paragraph (8), a Bill which is in the same or similar terms to a Bill which has fallen or been rejected by the Assembly –

(a) must not be introduced in the Assembly within a period of 6 months from the date of that fall or rejection; but

(b) may be introduced at any time following the dissolution of the Assembly in which the fallen or rejected Bill was introduced.

(8) In exceptional circumstances, the Assembly may, on a motion by the appropriate person, allow the introduction of a Bill to which paragraph (7) applies. The 'appropriate person' is –

(a) where the Bill is proposed to be introduced by a Minister, that Minister;

(b) where the Bill is proposed to be introduced by a member of the Assembly, that member.

31. Stages in Consideration of Public Bills

Subject to Standing Orders 33(1), 37A, 40 and 42(2) to (4), the stages in the Assembly's consideration of a Public Bill shall be as follows –

(a) Second Stage: a general debate on the Bill, with an opportunity for members to vote on its general principles.
(b) Committee Stage: detailed investigation by a committee, followed by report to the Assembly.
(c) Consideration Stage: consideration of and an opportunity for members to vote on the details of the Bill including amendments proposed to the Bill.
(d) Further Consideration Stage: an opportunity for members to consider and vote on amendments proposed to the Bill.
(e) Final Stage: passing or rejection of the Bill, without further amendment.

32. Public Bills: Second Stage

(1) The debate on the motion, "That the Second Stage of the .....Bill be agreed" shall be confined to the general principles of the Bill.

(2) Amendments may be proposed to this motion, to leave out the words after "That" and insert words which state a reason for the Assembly not to agree to the Second Stage of the Bill.

(3) If an amendment proposed in accordance with paragraph (2) of this order is negatived the Speaker shall immediately put the question that the Second Stage of the Bill be agreed.

33. Public Bills: Committee Stage

(1) On the Second Stage of a Bill being agreed, the Bill shall stand referred to the appropriate statutory committee, unless the Assembly shall order otherwise.

(2) A statutory committee to which a Bill stands referred under this order, may, within the period of 30 working days from the date of referral, consider and take evidence on the provisions of the Bill, and report its opinion thereon to the Assembly.

(3) A report made to the Assembly under paragraph (2) may include proposals for amendments to the Bill that may be proposed at Consideration Stage.

(4) Before the conclusion of the period specified in paragraph (2), a motion may be moved in the Assembly by -

(a) a Minister; or

(b) the chairperson of the relevant statutory committee (or deputy chairperson acting in the chairperson's stead)

to extend the period until a date specified in the motion.

(5) On a report being made to the Assembly under paragraph (2), or on the conclusion of any period specified in this order or extended by the Assembly under this order, the Bill shall be set down on the list of pending future business until a date for its Consideration Stage is determined.

34. Public Bills: Human Rights Issues

(1) For the purpose of obtaining advice as to whether a Bill, draft Bill or proposal for legislation is compatible with human rights (including rights under the European Convention on Human Rights) the Assembly may proceed on a motion made in pursuance of paragraph (2).

(2) Notice may be given by any member of a motion "That the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission be asked to advise whether the ..... Bill (or draft Bill or proposal for legislation) is compatible with human rights".

(3) In the case of a draft Bill or proposal for legislation, notice of such a motion may be given at any time after the draft Bill or proposal for legislation is published for public consultation.

(4) In the case of a Bill, notice of such a motion may be given at any time after the Bill's introduction.

(5) On a motion being made under paragraph (2) a brief explanatory statement may be made by the member who proposes the motion and by a member who opposes it, and the Speaker shall then put the question without further debate.

(6) Any advice tendered to the Assembly by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission in response to a request made in pursuance of paragraph (2) shall be circulated to all members of the Assembly and published in a manner determined by the Speaker.

35. Public Bills: Equality Issues

(1) For the purpose of obtaining advice as to whether a Bill, draft Bill or proposal for legislation is compatible with equality requirements (including rights under the European Convention on Human Rights) the Assembly may proceed on a motion made in pursuance of paragraph (2).

(2) Notice may be given by -

(a) any member of the Executive Committee, or

(b) the chairperson of the appropriate statutory committee (or another member of that statutory committee acting on the chairperson's behalf),

of a motion "That the …… Bill (or draft Bill or proposal for legislation) be referred to an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements".

(3) On a motion being made under paragraph (2), a brief explanatory statement may be made by the member who proposes the motion and by a member who opposes it, and the Speaker shall then put the question without further debate.

(4) In the case of a draft Bill or proposal for legislation, notice of such a motion may be given at any time after the draft Bill or proposal for legislation is published for public consultation.

(5) In the case of a draft Bill or proposal for legislation, if a motion under paragraph (2) is agreed, an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements shall consider and report only whether the provisions of the draft Bill or proposal are in conformity with the requirements for equality and observance of human rights. The committee shall report its opinion thereon to the Assembly within the period of 30 working days after the motion is agreed or at a time agreed by the Assembly.

(6) In the case of a Bill, notice of such a motion may be given at any time after the Bill's introduction.

(7) Except as provided in paragraph (9) an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements shall consider and report only whether the provisions of the Bill are in conformity with the requirements for equality and observance of human rights. The committee shall report its opinion thereon to the Assembly within the period of 30 working days after the motion is agreed to or at a time agreed by the Assembly.

(8) If notice of such a motion is given at the conclusion of the Second Stage of a Bill, the motion shall also specify whether -

(a) the Bill is to be referred to an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements instead of the appropriate statutory committee, and

(b) whether the Bill is to be referred to the appropriate statutory committee after the Assembly receives the report of an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements.

(9) If the Bill is referred to an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements instead of the statutory

committee, the provisions of Standing Order 33 shall apply to the consideration of the Bill by an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements.

(10) If notice of such a motion is given after a Bill has been referred to a statutory committee, and before that committee has reported or the period for reporting has expired, the motion shall also -

(a) order that the Bill be transferred from the statutory committee to an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements, and

(b) specify whether an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements shall -

(i) consider only and report only whether the provisions of the Bill are in conformity with the requirements for equality and observance of human rights, or

(ii) in addition to considering and reporting on those matters, carry out the role of the statutory committee in relation to the Bill.

(11) In the case of a motion specifying that an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements should act as mentioned in paragraph (10)(b)(i), the Bill shall stand referred to the statutory committee again when an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements reports to the Assembly.

(12) In the case of a motion specifying that an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements should act as mentioned in paragraph (10)(b)(ii), the Committee Stage of the Bill shall be complete when an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements reports to the Assembly.

(13) If such a motion is agreed after the appropriate statutory committee has reported, or the time for reporting has expired, the Consideration Stage of the Bill shall not begin until an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements reports to the Assembly.

(14) If such a motion is agreed after the Consideration Stage of the Bill has begun but before that stage has been completed, the Consideration Stage shall be adjourned until an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements reports to the Assembly.

(15) On resuming an adjourned Consideration Stage, the Assembly may, instead of considering the remaining clauses and schedules in the order in which they stand in the Bill, on a motion moved by the member in charge of the Bill decide to consider them in a different order, and to consider again and amend, provisions of the Bill which have already been ordered to stand part of the Bill, and to consider new clauses and schedules even if the time for considering them has passed.

(16) If such a motion is agreed after the end of the Consideration Stage of a Bill, no date shall be determined for the Further Consideration Stage of the Bill until an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements reports to the Assembly.

(17) If such a motion is agreed after the Further Consideration Stage of the Bill has begun but before that stage has been completed, the Further Consideration Stage shall be adjourned until an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements reports to the Assembly.

(18) On resuming an adjourned Further Consideration Stage, the Assembly may, instead of considering the remaining amendments in the order in which the relevant clauses or schedules stand in the Bill, on a motion moved by the member in charge of the Bill decide to consider them in a different order, and to consider again and amend, provisions of the Bill which have already been agreed, and to consider new clauses and schedules even if the time for considering them has passed.

(19) If such a motion is agreed after the end of the Further Consideration Stage of a Bill, no date shall be determined for the Final Stage of the Bill until an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements reports to the Assembly.

(19A) Paragraphs (17) to (19) apply to Exceptional Further Consideration Stage as they do to Further Consideration Stage.

(20) A decision by the Assembly to agree to a report by an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements under paragraph (7) shall require cross-community support within the meaning of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

36. Public Bills: Consideration Stage

(1) Any amendments proposed to be made to a Bill at Consideration Stage shall be deposited with the Clerk in time for inclusion on a Notice Paper circulated on a day before the day appointed for the Consideration Stage. Amendments shall be arranged in the order in which the Bill is to be considered. Amendments may be moved, at the discretion of the Speaker, in very exceptional circumstances without such notice.

(2) On consideration of a Bill, the clauses and schedules shall be considered in the order in which they stand in the Bill unless the Assembly, on a motion moved after notice by the member in charge of the Bill, decides otherwise. The question shall be put in respect of each clause and schedule, that the clause or schedule (or, as the case may be, the clause or schedule, as amended) stand part of the Bill.

(3) The preamble and the long title shall stand postponed until after the consideration of the clauses and of any schedules.

(4) Members may speak more than once in debate during the Consideration Stage. At the completion of the Consideration Stage, the Bill shall stand referred to the Speaker.

37. Public Bills: Further Consideration Stage

(1) Any amendments proposed to be made to a Bill at Further Consideration Stage shall be deposited with the Clerk in time for inclusion on a Notice Paper circulated on a day before the day appointed for the Further Consideration Stage, and shall be arranged in the order in which the Bill is to be considered; provided, however, that at the discretion of the Speaker, amendments may be moved in very exceptional circumstances without such notice.

(2) During proceedings at Further Consideration Stage, debate and vote shall be confined to those amendments which have been selected. The amendments shall be considered in the order in which the relevant clauses or schedules stand in the Bill.

(3) Any amendments selected which relate to the long title shall be considered after those relating to the clauses and schedules of the Bill.

(4) Members may speak more than once in debate during the Further Consideration Stage.

(5) At the conclusion of the debate on the Further Consideration Stage the Bill shall stand referred to the Speaker.

37A. Public Bills: Exceptional Further Consideration Stage

(1) If, after the Further Consideration Stage of a Bill, and prior to its Final Stage, the Minister or member of the Assembly in charge of the Bill submits a statement to the Speaker, in writing, asserting—

(a) that, as a consequence of an amendment made to the Bill, either a provision of the Bill is outside the legislative competence of the Assembly, or the Bill has a serious technical defect, and

(b) that the Assembly had not fully considered prior to making, or not making, any relevant amendment that the Bill might, as a result, be outside the legislative competence of the Assembly or have a serious technical

defect, the Bill shall be set down on the list of pending future business until a date for Exceptional Further Consideration Stage is determined.

(2) A statement submitted to the Speaker under paragraph (1) shall be circulated to all members of the Assembly, as soon as is practicable, and published in a manner determined by the Speaker.

(3) An amendment proposed to a Bill at Exceptional Further Consideration Stage shall only be selected if the Speaker is satisfied—

(a) that the amendment is intended either -

(i) to bring the Bill within the legislative competence of the Assembly, or

(ii) to correct any serious technical defect;

(b) that the proposed amendment deals with a matter specified in the statement under paragraph (1)(a) and which has arisen as a consequence of an amendment made to the Bill; and

(c) that the Assembly had not fully considered prior to making, or not making, any relevant amendment that the Bill might, as a result, be outside the legislative competence of the Assembly or have a serious technical defect.

(4) Subject to paragraphs (1) to (3) above, the provisions of Standing Order 37 and Standing Order 39 shall apply to Exceptional Further Consideration Stage of a Bill as if in those Standing Orders for 'Further Consideration Stage' there were substituted 'Exceptional Further Consideration Stage'.

38. Public Bills: Amendments

Amendments proposed to a Bill shall be relevant to the provisions of the Bill and shall not be in conflict with the principle of the Bill as agreed to at Second Stage.

39. Public Bills: Final Stage

(1) After the completion of the Further Consideration Stage of a Bill, the Bill shall be set down on the list of pending future business until a date for its Final Stage is determined.

(2) No date may be determined for the Final Stage of a Bill until -

(a) the Speaker has considered the Bill in accordance with section 10 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and signified to the Minister or member of the Assembly in charge of the Bill that in his or her opinion it may properly proceed to its Final Stage; or

(b) if the Bill is referred to the Secretary of State by the Speaker under section 10(2)(b) of that Act, the Secretary of State has signified his or her consent, or informed the Assembly of his or her opinion, under section 10(2)(c) of that Act.

(3) Debate at the Final Stage shall be on the motion "That the Bill do now pass" and shall be confined to the content of the Bill. No amendments may be made to the Bill at the Final Stage.

40. Public Bills: Reconsideration

(1) Notwithstanding that a Bill has been passed under Standing Order 39 or approved under paragraph (3) of this order, it shall be set down in the list of pending future business as awaiting reconsideration if (but only if) -

(a) the Supreme Court decides that any provision of the Bill is not within the legislative competence of the

Assembly;

(b) a reference to the Supreme Court made by the Advocate General for Northern Ireland or the Attorney General for Northern Ireland in relation to a provision of the Bill under section 11 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 has been withdrawn following a request for withdrawal under section 12 of that Act;

(c) a decision is made by the Secretary of State under section 14(4) or (5) of that Act not to submit the Bill for Royal Assent; or

(d) a motion under section 15(1) of that Act that the Bill shall not be submitted for Royal Assent has been passed by either House of Parliament.

(2) During proceedings on reconsideration of a Bill, the Assembly shall consider only amendments proposed to be made to the Bill; and the provisions of Standing Order 36(1) shall apply to such amendments.

(3) Where a Bill has been amended during proceedings on reconsideration, the question, that the Bill, as amended, be approved shall be put immediately and decided without amendment or debate.

41. Public Bills: Explanatory and Financial Memoranda

Public Bills on introduction shall be accompanied by an explanatory and financial memorandum detailing as appropriate -

(a) the nature of the issue the Bill is intended to address;

(b) the consultative process undertaken;

(c) the main options considered;

(d) the option selected and why;

(e) the cost implications of the proposal/s.

42. Public Bills: Special Scheduling Requirements

(1) There shall be a minimum interval of five working days between each stage of a Bill, save in the following cases -

(a) between Second Stage and Committee Stage; and

(b) where a Bill is subject to the accelerated passage procedure in accordance with paragraph (2) or (4).

(2) Where on or before the Second Stage of a Budget Bill the chairperson of the Committee for Finance (or another member of that committee acting on his or her behalf) confirms to the Assembly that the committee is satisfied that there has been appropriate consultation with it on the public expenditure proposals contained in the Bill, the Bill shall proceed under the accelerated passage procedure which shall exclude any Committee Stage.

(3) Where, exceptionally, a Bill (other than a Budget Bill) is thought to require accelerated passage, which shall exclude any Committee Stage, the member in charge of the Bill shall, before introduction of the Bill in the Assembly, explain to the appropriate committee -

(a) the reason or reasons for accelerated passage;

(b) the consequences of accelerated passage not being granted; and, if appropriate,

(c) any steps he or she has taken to minimise the future use of the accelerated passage procedure.

(4) Before Second Stage the member in charge of the Bill shall move a motion “That the …. Bill proceed under the accelerated passage procedure”. In moving the motion the member shall explain to the Assembly-

(a) the reason or reasons for accelerated passage;

(b) the consequences of accelerated passage not being granted; and, if appropriate,

(c) any steps he or she has taken to minimise the future use of the accelerated passage procedure.

A motion under this order shall require cross-community support within the meaning of section 4(5) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

(5) No Bill shall pass all its required stages in the Assembly in less than ten days.

(6) Where a Bill has not completed its passage by the end of an Assembly session it shall be carried forth and its passage continued into the next session.

(7) A Bill shall not be carried forth if the Assembly stands dissolved.

42A. Legislative Consent Motions

(1) A legislative consent motion ('consent motion') is a motion which seeks the agreement of the Assembly to the Parliament of the United Kingdom ('Parliament') considering provisions of a Bill which deal with a devolution matter.

(2) A legislative consent memorandum ('consent memorandum') shall be laid in respect of any devolution matter for which a consent motion is proposed.

(3) A consent memorandum is a memorandum which includes—

(a) a draft of the consent motion;

(b) sufficient information to enable debate on the consent motion;

(c) a note of those provisions of the Bill which deal with a devolution matter; and

(d) an explanation of—

(i) why those provisions should be made, and

(ii) why they should be made in the Bill rather than by Act of the Assembly.

(4) A consent memorandum may include the Bill and any explanatory notes attached to the Bill.

(5) The Minister whom the devolution matter referred to in paragraph (1) concerns ('the Minister') shall, not later than 10 working days after the relevant day, lay a relevant memorandum before the Assembly.

(6) A relevant memorandum is—

(a) a consent memorandum;

(b) a memorandum explaining why a consent motion is not sought; or

(c) an indicative memorandum (see paragraph (15)).

(7) The time period set out in paragraph (5) shall not apply where exceptional circumstances prevent the Minister from laying a relevant memorandum within that period.

(8) If the Minister fails to lay a relevant memorandum for the reason set out in paragraph (7) the Minister shall as soon as is possible thereafter—

(a) lay a relevant memorandum; and

(b) at the same time, provide an explanation of the exceptional circumstances which prevented the Minister from laying that memorandum within the time period set out in paragraph (5).

(9) Where the Minister has laid an indicative memorandum, the Minister shall as soon as is practicable thereafter—

(a) lay a consent memorandum; or

(b) lay a memorandum explaining why a consent motion is not sought.

(10) A member of the Assembly other than the Minister may lay a consent memorandum but shall not do so unless—

(a) the Minister has laid a memorandum explaining why a consent motion is not sought;

(b) the Minister has laid an indicative memorandum, and a reasonable period has passed since that memorandum was laid; or

(c) the period referred to in paragraph (5) has ended and no relevant memorandum has been laid by the Minister.

(11) Upon a consent memorandum being laid before the Assembly, those provisions of the Bill dealing with a devolution matter shall stand referred to the appropriate statutory committee unless the Assembly shall order otherwise.

(12) The appropriate statutory committee may, within 15 working days from the date of referral, or such greater period as may be agreed by the Assembly, consider those provisions of the Bill which deal with a devolution matter and report its opinion thereon to the Assembly.

(13) A consent motion shall not normally be moved until at least—

(a) 5 working days after publication of the appropriate statutory committee's report; or

(b) 5 working days after the end of any period referred to in paragraph (12).

(14) A subsequent consent motion may be moved if appropriate, having regard to the nature of any amendment dealing with a devolution matter made, or proposed to be made, to the Bill. Paragraphs (5) to (13) shall not apply to that motion.

(15) An indicative memorandum is a memorandum which—

(a) indicates why the Minister has not laid a consent memorandum, or a memorandum explaining why a consent motion is not sought;

(b) indicates when the Minister is likely to lay either such memorandum;

(c) may include the Bill and any explanatory notes attached to the Bill; and

(d) must include an explanation of the provisions of the Bill which deal with a devolution matter.

(16) In this order—

'devolution matter' means—

(a) a transferred matter, other than a transferred matter which is ancillary to other provisions (whether in the Bill or previously enacted) dealing with excepted or reserved matters;

(b) a change to—

(i) the legislative competence of the Assembly,

(ii) the executive functions of any Minister,

(iii) the functions of any department;

'relevant day' means—

(a) in respect of a Bill other than a Private Member's Bill—

(i) the day the Bill is introduced in Parliament, or

(ii) the day the Bill completes the stage in Parliament during which an amendment is made to the Bill which makes it a Bill to which this order applies;

(b) in respect of a Bill which is a Private Member's Bill, whichever is the later of—

(i) the day the Bill completes the first stage at which it may be amended in the House of Parliament in which it was introduced, or

(ii) the day the Bill completes the stage in Parliament during which an amendment is made to the Bill which

makes it a Bill to which this order applies;

(c) in respect of any Bill introduced in Parliament that, by virtue of amendments agreed to, or tabled by a Minister of the Crown or published with the name of a Minister of the Crown in support, in either House, makes (or would make) provisions of a Bill dealing with a devolution matter for the first time or beyond the limits of any consent previously given by the Assembly—

(i) the day the amendments are agreed to by a Minister of the Crown, or

(ii) the day the amendments are tabled by a Minister of the Crown or published with the name of a Minister of the Crown in support.

(17) This order does not apply in respect of Bills introduced to Parliament which are consolidation Bills or statute law revision Bills.

43. Scrutiny of Statutory Rules

(1) Every statutory rule or draft statutory rule which -

(a) is laid before the Assembly; and

(b) is subject to Assembly proceedings,

shall stand referred to the appropriate committee for scrutiny.

(2) The appropriate committee may also scrutinise any statutory rule which-

(a) deals with a transferred matter (within the meaning of the Northern Ireland Act 1998); and

(b) is not subject to Assembly proceedings,

whether or not the statutory rule is laid before the Assembly.

(3) To assist committees in the scrutiny of instruments under this order there shall be an officer of the Assembly known as the Examiner of Statutory Rules who shall carry out any functions delegated to him or her under paragraph (4)(b).

(4) The appropriate committee may -

(a) scrutinise the instrument itself; or

(b) delegate to the Examiner of Statutory Rules any of its functions in relation to the technical scrutiny of the instrument.

(5) Where a committee has delegated functions to the Examiner of Statutory Rules under paragraph (4)(b), references to the committee in the following provisions of this order, in relation to functions so delegated, include references to the Examiner.

(6) In scrutinising an instrument the appropriate committee shall among other things consider the instrument with a view to determining and reporting on whether it requires to be drawn to the special attention of the Assembly on any of the following grounds, namely, that -

(a) it imposes a charge on the public revenues or prescribes the amount of any such charge;

(b) it contains provisions requiring any payment to be made to any Northern Ireland department or public body in respect of any approval, authorisation, licence or consent or of any service provided or to be provided by that department or body or prescribes the amount of any such payment;

(c) the parent legislation excludes it from challenge in the courts;

(d) it purports to have retrospective effect where the parent legislation confers no express authority so to provide;

(e) there appears to have been unjustifiable delay in the publication of it or in the laying of it before the Assembly;

(f) there appears to be a doubt whether it is intra vires or it appears to make some unusual or unexpected use of the powers conferred by the parent legislation;

(g) it calls for elucidation;

(h) it appears to have defects in its drafting;

or on any other ground which does not impinge on its merits or the policy behind it.

(7) The appropriate committee shall where practicable report on an instrument before any resolution or motion relating to that instrument is moved in the Assembly.

(8) In this order -

"committee" means a statutory committee;

"instrument" means a statutory rule or a draft statutory rule;

"the parent legislation", in relation to an instrument, means the legislation under which the instrument is made or is to be made;

"statutory rule" has the same meaning as in the Statutory Rules (Northern Ireland) Order 1979.

(9) For the purposes of this order a statutory rule or draft statutory rule is subject to Assembly proceedings if, in pursuance of the parent legislation, proceedings may be taken in the Assembly in relation to it.

43A. Scrutiny of Delegated Powers in Bills

(1) In carrying out its functions under Standing Order 33(2), the appropriate committee may, among other things, consider and report on the following –

(a) whether the provisions of the Bill inappropriately delegate legislative power, and
(b) whether the exercise of legislative power provided for in the Bill is subject to an inappropriate degree of scrutiny by the Assembly.

(2) The appropriate committee may delegate to the Examiner of Statutory Rules the functions set out in this Standing Order.

(3) In this Standing Order, the "appropriate committee" is the committee to which the Bill is referred under Standing Order 33.

Ministerial Appointments,Etc - Time Limits

44. Ministerial Offices (other than Justice)

(1) Where a person has been nominated to be First Minister or deputy First Minister under section 16A or 16B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the person nominated must affirm the terms of the pledge of office and take up the office within 15 minutes of the nomination, unless the nominating officer, the person nominated, or another member of the Assembly asks the Assembly to extend that time limit, and gives a reason or reasons for so asking, and the Assembly approves the extension.

(2) Where section 18(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 applies, Ministerial offices must be filled by applying the procedures set out in section 18(2) to (6) within a period of seven days beginning with the day on which -

(a) the determination mentioned in section 18(1)(b) takes effect;

(b) the resolution mentioned in section 18(1)(c) is passed;

(c) the direction mentioned in section 18(1)(d) is given; or

(d) the period of exclusion mentioned in section 18(1)(da) comes to an end.

(3) Where a Ministerial office becomes vacant as mentioned in section 18(10) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, otherwise than by virtue of an Assembly election, the nominating officer of the party on behalf of which the previous incumbent was nominated must nominate a person to hold the office and the person nominated must take up the office within a seven day period beginning with the date on which the office became vacant.

(4) Where under section 18 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 the Speaker requests a nominating officer to select a Ministerial office and nominate a person to hold it -

(a) the nominating officer must exercise that power, and

(b) the person nominated must affirm the terms of the pledge of office and take up the office,

within 15 minutes of the request, unless the nominating officer, the person nominated, or another member of the Assembly asks the Assembly to extend that time limit, and gives a reason or reasons for so asking, and the Assembly approves the extension.

(5) This order does not apply in respect of the Minister of Justice or the office of Minister of Justice.

44A. Office of Minister of Justice

(1) Where paragraph 3D(1) and (2)(a) of Schedule 4A of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 applies, the office of Minister of Justice must be filled by applying the procedures set out in paragraph 3D(4) to (8) in Part 1A of Schedule 4A within a period of seven days beginning with the day on which–

(a) the determination mentioned in paragraph 3D(2)(a) takes effect;

(b) the resolution mentioned in paragraph 3D(2)(b) is passed;

(c) the direction mentioned in paragraph 3D(2)(c) is given;

(d) the period of exclusion mentioned in paragraph 3D(2)(d) comes to an end as so mentioned; or

(e) the Minister of Justice ceases to hold office as mentioned in paragraph 3D(14), otherwise than by virtue of an Assembly election.

(2) Where under paragraph 3D in Part 1A of Schedule 4A to the Northern Ireland Act 1998 a person is nominated to be Minister of Justice –

(a) that nomination must take effect; and

(b) the person nominated must affirm the terms of the pledge of office and take up the office;

within 30 minutes of the nomination, unless the person nominated, or another member of the Assembly asks the Assembly to extend that time limit, and gives a reason or reasons for so asking, and the Assembly approves the extension.

(3) If a vote to fill the office of Minister of Justice is delayed under Standing Order 28(1) in order to comply with a petition of concern, the time periods set out in paragraphs (1) and (2) shall not run for the period of that delay, provided that that delay is no longer than one sitting day.

45. Junior Ministers

Where the First Minister and deputy First Minister make a determination under section 19 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 specifying procedures for appointing members as junior Ministers, those procedures shall be applied within a period of seven days beginning with the day on which the determination takes effect.

45A. The Opposition

(1) A party may choose to be recognised as the opposition, or part of the opposition, if no member of that party holds a Ministerial office and it satisfies any of the following conditions—

(a) the party was entitled to nominate a person to hold Ministerial office under section 18(2) to (6) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and declined to do so;

(b) during the relevant period, the party was entitled to nominate a person to hold a Ministerial office under section 18(10) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and declined to do so; or

(c) the party's members comprise 8% or more of the total number of members of the Assembly at the end of the day on which the Assembly first meets.

(2) Where only one party is recognised as the opposition in accordance with paragraph 1, the nominating officer of that party must nominate a person who is a member of the Assembly and that party to be the Leader of the Opposition.

(3) Where two or more parties form the opposition, then—

(a) the nominating officer of the largest party must nominate a person who is a member of the Assembly and that party to be the Leader of the Opposition

(b) the nominating officer of the second largest party must nominate a person who is a member of the Assembly and that party to be the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

(4) The opposition is dissolved if either of the following conditions are met–

(a) The Assembly is dissolved; or

(b) all Ministers cease to hold office in accordance with section 18(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

(5) In this order “relevant period” means the period of two years beginning with the date on which the Ministerial offices are filled under section 16A(3)(b) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Committees

46. Committees of the Assembly — General

(1) The Assembly shall establish committees to -

(a) discharge the functions mentioned in Standing Order 48(1)(a) (statutory committees); and

(b) carry out any other functions deemed necessary.

(2) Committees shall be established by motion made after notice setting out terms of reference, quorum and composition and/or referring to any Standing Order, as appropriate, which prescribes these.

(3) Committees may sit on any day.

(4) The names of the members present at each sitting of a committee shall be entered in the minutes of evidence or in the minutes of proceedings of the committee (as the case may be) and reported to the Assembly in any report of such committee.

(5) A general record of the proceedings of a committee shall be brought up and laid before the members of the Assembly with the report of the committee.

(6) If, at any time, during the sitting of a committee, the quorum of members fixed by the Assembly is not present, the clerk of the committee shall call the attention of the chairperson to the fact, and the chairperson shall thereupon suspend the proceedings of the committee until a quorum is present, or adjourn the committee to some future day.

(7) Every committee shall have leave to report its opinions and observations upon any matters referred to it by the Assembly, together with the minutes of any evidence taken before it and also to make a special report of any matters which the committee may think fit to bring to the notice of the Assembly.

(8) No document received by the clerk of a committee shall be withdrawn or altered without the knowledge and approval of the committee.

47. Statutory Committees

The number of statutory committees established and their membership shall be determined by the Assembly after –

(a) all Ministerial offices have been filled following the election of the Assembly; and

(b) the Business Committee has considered the matter and made a recommendation having had regard to –

(i) the need to ensure that membership of committees is in proportion to party strengths within the Assembly (see Standing Orders 48 and 49);

(ii) the overall number of the Assembly members; and

(iii) the best arrangement for allowing the Assembly to discharge its functions.

48. Establishment of Statutory Committees

(1) As soon as is practicable after the Assembly makes a determination under Standing Order 47, the Speaker shall supervise -

(a) the establishment of committees of members of the Assembly ("statutory committees") to advise and assist-

(i) the First Minister and the deputy First Minister in the formulation of policy with respect to matters within their responsibilities as Ministers jointly in charge of the Executive Office; and

(ii) each Northern Ireland Minister in the formulation of policy with respect to matters within his or her responsibilities as a Minister:

Each such committee shall carry out such role in relation to one or more Ministerial Portfolios; and

(b) the allocation of committee chairpersons and deputy chairpersons to parties in accordance with the following procedure.

(2) Statutory committees shall have the powers described in paragraph 9 of Strand One of the Belfast Agreement (CM 3883) and may, in particular, exercise the power in section 44(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

(3) A statutory committee shall have one chairperson and one deputy chairperson appointed in accordance with this order. The other members of a statutory committee shall be determined by the Assembly subject to the requirement upon the Speaker to ensure that all members who do not hold Ministerial or junior Ministerial office are offered at least one statutory committee place.

(4) By reference to the consolidated list of political parties and their members, the Speaker shall calculate each party's figure for the purpose of this order by applying the formula–

$$\frac{S}{1 + C}$$

where
S is the number of seats which were held by members of that party on the day on which the Assembly first met following its election.

C is the number of chairpersons and deputy chairpersons of statutory committees established under this order who are members of the party.

Where two or more parties have an identical figure they shall be ranked by applying the formula –

$$\frac{V}{1 + C}$$

where
V is the total number of first preference votes cast for the party at the most recent general election of members of the Assembly, and C has the same meaning as above.

(5) The Speaker shall then invite the nominating officer of the party with the highest figure to nominate a member of that party who is a member of the Assembly to be chairperson or deputy chairperson of a statutory committee and to specify on which committee that member is nominated to serve. In making nominations, nominating officers shall prefer committees in which they do not have a party interest over those in which they do have a party interest.

(6) For the purposes of paragraph (5) a nominating officer has a party interest in a committee if it is established to advise and assist -

(a) the First Minister and the deputy First Minister and either of those Ministers is a member of his or her party; or

(b) a Northern Ireland Minister and that Minister is a member of his or her party.

(7) Subject to paragraphs (8), (9) and (10), where the Speaker asks the nominating officer to make a nomination under paragraph (5) -

(a) if he or she fails to do so within 15 minutes of the request being made (whether the nominating officer was present when the request was made or not), or

(b) if the person nominated does not take up the specified office within 15 minutes of the request being made (whether that person was present when nominated or not),

the power shall be exercisable by the nominating officer of the party for which the formula in paragraph (4) gives the next highest figure.

(8) Where the nominating officer, the person nominated, or another member of the Assembly asks the Assembly to extend the 15 minute time period mentioned in paragraph (7), and gives a reason or reasons for so asking, the Assembly may grant an extension.

(9) Paragraphs (7) and (8) shall not operate whilst the Assembly is adjourned.

(10) Paragraphs (5) to (7) shall be applied as many times as necessary to ensure that the positions of chairperson and deputy chairperson have been filled.

(11) Once a member has accepted a nomination as chairperson or deputy chairperson the Speaker shall announce and confirm the appointment.

(12) A Minister or junior Minister may not be the chairperson or deputy chairperson of a statutory committee.

(13) A member shall not be eligible for nomination as a chairperson of a statutory committee if at the date of such nomination the member is a chairperson of another statutory committee or a standing committee.

(14) A chairperson or deputy chairperson shall cease to hold office on -

(a) resigning that office by notice in writing to the Speaker;

(b) ceasing to be a member of the Assembly; or

(c) being dismissed by the nominating officer of the party which nominated him or her and the Speaker is notified of his or her dismissal.

(15) If an office of chairperson or deputy chairperson of a statutory committee becomes vacant by reason of any circumstances described in paragraph (14), the nominating officer of the party on whose behalf the previous incumbent was nominated shall nominate a member of the party who is a member of the Assembly to replace the previous incumbent.

(16) If the nominating officer fails to make such a nomination within a period of ten days of the vacancy occurring or the nominated person does not take up office within this period of time, the power of nomination shall become exercisable by the nominating officer of the party for which the formula in paragraph (4) gives the next highest figure. Any such nominations must comply with paragraphs (5), (6), (12) and (13). Nominations shall be announced and confirmed by the Speaker at the next following meeting of the Assembly.

49. Membership of Statutory Committees

(1) Statutory committees shall be constituted to reflect as far as possible the party composition of the Assembly except in so far as individual parties or individual members may waive their rights.

(2) Seats on statutory committees will be allocated on a proportional basis in accordance with the following principles -

(a) that each statutory committee will consist of 9 members including the chairperson and deputy chairperson;

(b) that not all seats on a statutory committee are allocated to the same political party;

(c) that, where there is an opposition, and so far as practicable, at least one seat on each statutory committee is allocated to a member of the opposition;

(d) that the majority of the seats on each statutory committee is allocated to a particular political party if the number of persons belonging to that party constitutes a majority of the Assembly membership;

(e) subject to paragraphs (b) to (d), that the number of seats on the statutory committees of the Assembly which is allocated to each political party as far as possible bears the same proportion to the total of all the seats on the committees as is borne by the number of members of that party to the membership of the Assembly; and

(f) subject to paragraphs (b), (c) and (d), that the number of seats on each statutory committee which is allocated to each political party as far as possible bears the same proportion to the number of seats on that committee as is borne by the number of members of that party to the membership of the Assembly.

(3) The allocation of seats to parties or individual members shall be undertaken by the Business Committee and shall be approved by resolution of the Assembly.

(4) The Business Committee shall review the allocation made under paragraph (2) as soon as practicable following any numerical changes to party memberships in the Assembly.

(5) The quorum of every statutory committee shall be five, except when no decision is taken or question put to the committee, when the quorum shall be four. A quorum shall be deemed to be present where members are linked by a video-conferencing facility.

(6) A statutory committee shall continue for the duration of the Assembly unless the Assembly determines otherwise.

(7) All questions at a statutory committee shall be decided by a simple majority. Voting shall be by show of hands unless otherwise requested by a member of the committee.

49A. Membership of the Committee for Justice

A person cannot be a member of the statutory committee established to advise and assist the Minister of Justice if that person is a member of –

(a) the Northern Ireland Policing Board;

(b) a policing and community safety partnership; or

(c) a district policing and community safety partnership;

and those words have the same meaning as in the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

49B. Changes to Statutory Committees

(1) This order applies where all Northern Ireland Ministers cease to hold office as a consequence of the application of section 18(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, for example, where a new department is established or an existing one dissolved.

(2) All statutory committees shall be dissolved.

(3) After all Ministerial offices are subsequently filled, the procedures referred to in paragraph (4) for constituting statutory committees shall be run as they are run following the election of the Assembly.

(4) Those procedures are the procedures set out in Standing Orders for –

a) determining the number of statutory committees;

(b) establishing them;

(c) appointing chairpersons and deputy chairpersons to them; and

(d) allocating seats on them.

50. Non-Statutory Committees

(1) Unless otherwise specified in Standing Orders there shall be three types of non-statutory committee in the Assembly, namely standing committees, Private Bill committees and ad hoc committees ("non-statutory committees").

(2) Standing committees shall be permanent committees of the Assembly.

(3) Ad hoc committees may be established from time to time to deal with any specific time-bounded terms of reference that the Assembly may set.

(4) Private Bill committees shall be established in accordance with the provisions of Standing Orders dealing with Private Bills.

51. Establishment of Standing Committees

(1) Unless otherwise provided for in these orders, each standing committee shall have one chairperson and one deputy chairperson appointed in accordance with this order as part of a procedure that is separate and distinct from the procedure of nominating the chairperson or deputy chairperson of a statutory committee.

(1A) The procedure set out in this order shall be applied as soon as is practicable following the election of the Assembly.

(2) By reference to the consolidated list of political parties and their members, the Speaker shall calculate each party's figure for the purpose of this order by applying the formula–

$$\frac{S}{1 + C}$$

where
S is the number of seats which were held by members of that party on the day on which the Assembly first met following its election.

C is the number of chairpersons and deputy chairpersons of standing committees established under this order who are members of the party.

Where two or more parties have an identical figure they shall be ranked by applying the formula –

$$\frac{V}{1 + C}$$

Where V is the total number of first preference votes cast for the party at the most recent general election of members of the Assembly and C has the same meaning as above.

(3) The Speaker shall then invite the nominating officer of the party with the highest figure to nominate a member of that party who is a member of the Assembly to be chairperson or deputy chairperson of a standing committee and to specify on which committee that member is nominated to serve.

(4) Subject to paragraphs (5), (6) and (7) where the Speaker asks the nominating officer to make a nomination under paragraph (3) –

(a) if he or she fails to do so within 15 minutes of the request being made (whether the nominating officer was present when the request was made or not), or

(b) if the person nominated does not take up the specified office within 15 minutes, of the request being made, (whether that person was present when nominated or not),

the power shall be exercisable by the nominating officer of the party for which the formula in paragraph (2) gives the next highest figure.

(5) Where the nominating officer, the person nominated, or another member of the Assembly asks the Assembly to extend the 15 minute time period as in paragraph (4), and gives a reason or reasons for so asking, the Assembly may grant an extension.

(6) Paragraph (4) and (5) shall not operate whilst the Assembly is adjourned.

(7) Paragraphs (3) to (5) shall be applied as many times as necessary to ensure that the positions of chairperson and deputy chairperson have been filled.

(8) Once a member has accepted a nomination as chairperson or deputy chairperson the Speaker shall announce and confirm the appointment.

(9) A Minister or junior Minister may not be the chairperson or deputy chairperson of a standing committee.

(10) A member shall not be eligible for nomination as a chairperson of a standing committee if at the date of such nomination they are a chairperson of another standing committee or a statutory committee.

(11) The chairperson or deputy chairperson of a standing committee shall cease to hold office on –

(a) resigning that office by notice in writing to the Speaker;

(b) ceasing to be a member of the Assembly; or

(c) being dismissed by the nominating officer of the party which nominated him or her and the Speaker is notified of his or her dismissal.

(12) If an office of chairperson or deputy chairperson of a standing committee becomes vacant by reason of any circumstances described in paragraph (11), the nominating officer of the party on whose behalf the previous incumbent was nominated shall nominate a member of the party who is a member of the Assembly to replace the previous incumbent.

(13) If the nominating officer fails to make such a nomination within a period of ten days of the vacancy occurring or the nominated person does not take up office within this period of time the power of nomination shall become exercisable by the nominating officer of the party for which the formula in paragraph (2) gives the next highest figure. Any such nominations must comply with paragraphs (3), (9) and (10). Nominations shall be announced and confirmed by the Speaker at the next meeting of the Assembly.

52. Membership of Standing Committees

(1) Standing committees shall be constituted to reflect as far as possible the party composition of the Assembly except in so far as individual parties or individual members may waive their rights.

(2) Seats on standing committees will be allocated on a proportional basis in accordance with the following principles –

(a) that unless otherwise provided for in these Standing Orders, each standing committee shall consist of 9 members including the chairperson and deputy chairperson;

(b) that not all the seats on a standing committee are allocated to the same political party;

(c) that the majority of the seats on each standing committee be allocated to a particular political party if the number of persons belonging to that party constitutes a majority of the Assembly membership;

(d) subject to paragraphs (b) and (c) above, that the number of seats on the standing committees of the Assembly which are allocated to each political party as far as possible bears the same proportion to the total of all the seats on the standing committees as is borne by the number of members of that party to the membership of the Assembly; and

(e) subject to paragraphs (b) and (d) above, that the number of seats on each standing committee which is allocated to each political party as far as possible bears the same proportion to the number of seats on that standing committee as is borne by the number of members of that party to the membership of the Assembly.

(3) The allocation of seats to parties or individual members on the standing committees other than the Business Committee shall be undertaken by the Business Committee and shall be approved by resolution of the Assembly.

(4) The Business Committee shall review the allocation made under paragraph (2) as soon as practicable following any numerical changes to party membership in the Assembly.

(5) Unless otherwise provided for in these Standing Orders, the quorum of every standing committee shall be five, except when no decision is taken or question put to the committee, when the quorum shall be four. A quorum shall be deemed to be present where members are linked by a video-conferencing facility.

(6) Unless otherwise provided for in these Standing Orders, all questions at a standing committee shall be decided by a simple majority. Voting shall be by show of hands unless otherwise requested by a member of the committee.

52A. Changes to Standing Committees

(1) This order applies in respect of changes to standing committees, including changes by way of –

(a) the establishment of a new standing committee; or

(b) the dissolution of an existing standing committee;

subsequent to the application of the procedure set out in Standing Order 51 following the election of the Assembly.

(2) All chairpersons and deputy chairpersons of standing committees shall cease to hold their offices on those committees upon that change taking effect. All other members shall continue to hold their seats on those committees.

(3) The procedures set out in Standing Orders for –

(a) establishing standing committees (in respect of any new committee);

(b) appointing chairpersons and deputy chairpersons to standing committees; and

(c) allocating seats on standing committees (in respect of any new committees);

shall be run as they are run following the election of the Assembly.

(4) The Business Committee shall review the allocation of seats on standing committees made under Standing Order 52(2) as soon as is practicable following the application of this order.

53. Establishment of Ad Hoc Committees

(1) Ad hoc committees shall be established from time to time to deal with any specific time-bounded terms of reference that the Assembly may set. The Assembly shall decide the membership of any such committee and may direct its method of operation.

(2) Each ad hoc committee may exercise the power in section 44(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

54. Committee on Procedures

(1) There shall be a standing committee of the Assembly to be known as the Committee on Procedures to consider and review on an ongoing basis the Standing Orders and procedures of the Assembly.

(2) The committee may exercise the power in section 44(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

(3) The procedures of the committee shall be such as the committee shall determine.

55. Business Committee

(1) There shall be a standing committee of the Assembly to be known as the Business Committee which shall make arrangements for the business of the Assembly and perform such other duties as the Speaker may request or the Assembly determines.

(2) The committee may exercise the power in section 44(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

(3) The Speaker shall be chairperson of the Business Committee.

(4) The Speaker shall nominate two members of the committee, either of whom, in the Speaker's absence shall act as chairperson of the committee.

(5) The procedures of the Business Committee shall be such as the committee shall determine.

(6) The Business Committee shall comprise the chairperson and a maximum of twelve other members of the Assembly. Each of these other members shall be entitled to appoint a substitute member to attend the committee in his or her place. Where there is an opposition, at least one member of the Business Committee must be a member of the opposition.

(7) Each party delegation present at the committee, whether comprised of members or their substitutes, shall be entitled to cast a number of votes equivalent to the number of members who adhere to the whip of that party. For the purposes of this order, the Speaker shall not be considered to adhere to any whip; but a member acting as chairperson in accordance with paragraph (4) shall be considered to adhere to a whip.

(8) The Business Committee shall determine the dates of recess.

56. Public Accounts Committee

(1) There shall be a standing committee of the Assembly to be known as the Public Accounts Committee to consider

–

(a) accounts laid before the Assembly;

(b) reports on accounts laid before the Assembly;

(c) reports to the Assembly under Article 11 of the Audit (Northern Ireland) Order 1987.

(2) The committee may exercise the power in section 44(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and may report from time to time.

(3) Neither the chairperson nor deputy chairperson of the committee shall be a member of the same political party as the Minister of Finance or of any junior Minister appointed to the Department of Finance.

(4) Where there is an opposition -

(a) The chairperson of the committee is to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition.

(b) The deputy chairperson of the committee is to be nominated by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition (if any).

57. Committee on Standards

(1) There shall be a standing committee of the Assembly to be known as the Committee on Standards –

(a) to consider any complaint of unauthorised disclosure of information by a member referred to it by the Assembly or a committee;

(b) to oversee the work of the Clerk of Standards; to examine the arrangements for the compilation, maintenance and accessibility of the Register of Members' Interests and any other registers of interests established by the Assembly; and to review from time to time the form and content of those registers;

(c) to consider any matter relating to the conduct of members;

(d) to recommend any modifications to the Code of Conduct;

(e) to perform the functions described in Standing Orders 69A to 69C;

(f) to make reports (including reports to the Assembly) on the exercise of any of its functions or any other matter listed above.

(2) The committee shall be appointed at the commencement of every Assembly and may exercise the power in section 44(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

58. Audit Committee

(1) There shall be a standing committee of the Assembly to be known as the Audit Committee to exercise the functions mentioned in section 66(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and sub-paragraphs 18(2) to (4) of Schedule 1 to the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. In accordance with section 66(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, no more than one member of the committee shall at the same time be a member of the Public Accounts Committee.

(2) Any motion for a resolution of the Assembly relating to the salary payable under Article 4(1) of the Audit (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 to the holder of the office of Comptroller and Auditor General shall be tabled on behalf of the committee.

(3) The committee may exercise the power in section 44(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

(4) The committee shall have a membership of five and a quorum of two.

59. Assembly and Executive Review Committee

(1) There shall be a standing committee of the Assembly to be known as the Assembly and Executive Review Committee.

(2) The committee may -

(a) exercise the power in section 44(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998;

(b) report from time to time to the Assembly and the Executive Committee.

(3) The committee shall consider –

(a) such matters relating to the operation of the provisions of Parts 3 and 4 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 as enable it to make the report referred to in section 29A(3) of that Act; and

(b) such other matters relating to the functioning of the Assembly or the Executive Committee as may be referred to it by the Assembly.

59A. Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee

(1) This order supplements section 56B and Schedule 6B to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

(2) There shall be a standing committee of the Assembly to be known as the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee ('the committee') to assist with the observation and implementation of Articles 13(3a) and (4) of the Windsor Framework.

(3) The committee shall exercise the functions set out in Schedule 6B to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

(4) The committee may exercise the power in section 44(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, read with paragraph 5(2) of Schedule 6B to that Act.

(5) Membership of the committee shall be determined in accordance with Standing Order 52.

(6) Each member of the committee ('M') may appoint as a substitute a person who is—

(a) a member of the same political party as M;

(b) a member of the Assembly;

(c) not a member of the committee; and

(d) not a substitute for any other member of the committee.

(7) A substitute may attend any meeting of the committee from which M is absent.

(8) A substitute may participate in the proceedings of the committee as though the substitute were a member of the committee.

(9) If the chairperson is absent, the committee shall be chaired by the deputy chairperson.

(10) If both the chairperson and the deputy chairperson are absent, the committee shall be chaired by the oldest member present at the meeting who is not a substitute.

(11) In this Standing Order, 'Windsor Framework' has the same meaning as in paragraph 1(6) of Schedule 6B to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

60. Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements

(1) The Assembly may establish an ad hoc committee to examine and report on whether a Bill or proposal for legislation is in conformity with equality requirements (including rights under the European Convention on Human Rights or any Northern Ireland Bill of Rights).

(2) The committee may exercise the power in section 44(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

(3) The Assembly shall consider all reports of the committee and determine the matter in accordance with the procedures on cross-community support within the meaning of section 4(5) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

(4) Where there is a Petition of Concern the Assembly shall vote to determine whether the measure or proposal for legislation may proceed without reference to the above procedure. If this fails to achieve support on a parallel consent basis the procedure as at (1) – (3) above shall be followed.

61. Service on Committees

Within seven days of the establishment of any committee of the Assembly, the Speaker shall seek nominations of members to serve on that committee from party leaders (or their nominees).

62. Committee Members Voting in the Chamber

Where it is known to a committee of the Assembly that a vote of any kind is to be taken imminently at a sitting of the Assembly in Plenary, the chairperson of the committee shall suspend the proceedings of the committee to enable members to vote.

63. Sub-Committees

(1) Each committee ("the parent committee"), in the discharge of its functions, may establish sub-committees.

(2) Unless with the approval of the Business Committee and the Assembly, a parent committee shall establish no more than one sub-committee to operate at any one time.

(3) A sub-committee shall be appointed to consider specific, time-bounded matters within the terms of reference set by the parent committee and shall -

(a) report only to that committee; and

(b) stand dissolved on disposal of those matters.

(4) A sub-committee shall not take any decision on behalf of the parent committee.

(5) A parent committee may appoint a member to be the Convenor of a sub-committee.

(6) Each sub-committee shall, as far as is practicable, reflect the party strengths in the Assembly.

(7) The quorum of a sub-committee shall be determined by the parent committee.

(8) The proceedings of a sub-committee shall be such as the parent committee shall determine.

64. Matters of Joint Concern: Options Available to Committees

Where a matter may be of concern to two or more committees ("the relevant committees") it may be dealt with by –

(a) one of the relevant committees disposing of it, in accordance with Standing Order 64A;

(b) the relevant committees sitting concurrently, in accordance with Standing Order 64B;

(c) an ad hoc joint committee established for that purpose, in accordance with Standing Order 64C.

64A. Matters of Joint Concern: Disposal by one Committee

(1) The chairpersons of the relevant committees shall consult and agree to which committee the matter should fall for disposal. Where they are unable to agree, they shall make their views known to the Business Committee which shall rule on to which committee the matter should fall for disposal.

(2) The committee to which the matter falls for disposal shall seek the views and establish the interests of the other relevant committees before arriving at any conclusions and may invite the other relevant committees to carry out the consideration of any stated issue and provide it with a draft report.

64B. Matters of Joint Concern: Committees Sitting Concurrently

(1) The relevant committees shall consult and agree that the matter be disposed of by the relevant committees sitting concurrently.

(2) The procedures normally applicable to committees shall continue to apply to concurrent sittings, save that the relevant committees shall, as far as practicable, operate as a single committee. While operating as a single committee, they shall, for example, deliberate and consider any evidence together, produce a single set of minutes, and prepare any reports together.

(3) The chairpersons of the relevant committees shall consult and agree that–

(a) one of them shall act as chairperson and another as deputy chairperson, or

(b) the posts of chairperson and deputy chairperson shall be rotated between them.

The chairpersons shall prefer that a person not act as chairperson at the concurrent sittings if he or she is of the same party as a Minister (including the First Minister and deputy First Minister) who the concurrent sittings may advise or assist.

(4) Where the chairpersons of the relevant committees fail to agree on one of the alternatives set out in paragraph (3), they shall make their views known to the Business Committee which shall rule on the matter.

(5) For the avoidance of doubt –

(a) a person acting as chairperson at a concurrent sitting, who is a chairperson of one of the relevant committees, shall not be regarded as breaching any prohibition in Standing Order 48(13) or 51(10);

(b) a quorum shall be present at a concurrent sitting if there is a quorum present for each of the relevant committees;

(c) all questions at concurrent sittings shall be decided by a simple majority of all members present; voting shall be by a show of hands unless otherwise requested by a member of a relevant committee.

64C. Matters of Joint Concern: Establishment of Joint Committee

(1) The relevant committees shall consult and agree that the matter be disposed of by the establishment of an ad hoc joint committee.

(2) Save as is set out below, the ad hoc joint committee shall be established in accordance with Standing Order 53.

(3) Membership of the ad hoc joint committee shall be drawn from the memberships of the relevant committees.

(4) The ad hoc joint committee shall appoint its own chairperson and deputy chairperson, and if it fails to do so, it shall make its views known to the Business Committee which shall rule on the matter.

Good Order

65. Order in the Assembly

(1) The Speaker may, if any member -

(a) wilfully assaults, molests, obstructs or acts in a disorderly manner towards the Speaker or any other member;

(b) persistently and wilfully obstructs the business of the Assembly;

(c) is guilty of disorderly conduct;

(d) wilfully assaults, obstructs or resists any police constable or officer of the Assembly acting under the authority of the Speaker;

(e) uses unparliamentary language which he or she refuses to withdraw;

(f) persistently or wilfully refuses to conform with Standing Orders; or

(g) persistently or wilfully disregards the authority of the Speaker,

order the member to withdraw immediately from Parliament Buildings during the remainder of that day's sitting and the Director of Facilities/Keeper of the House shall act upon any instructions as he or she may receive from the Speaker in pursuance of this order.

(2) Whenever a member shall have been named by the Speaker, immediately after the commission of the offence of disregarding the authority of the Speaker, or of persistently and wilfully obstructing the business of the Assembly by abusing the rules of the Assembly or otherwise, then if the offence has been committed by such member in the Assembly, the Speaker shall immediately put the question, on a motion being made, "That such member be suspended from the service of the Assembly" for a period of up to five working days.

(3) Where for any reason the Speaker does not declare the suspension of a member under this order at the sitting of the Assembly during which the offence occurred, he or she shall inform the Assembly at its next sitting of the member's offence and shall immediately put the question on a motion being made, "that such member be suspended from the service of the Assembly" for a period of up to five working days.

(4) A member who is suspended under this order shall not be admitted to the Assembly chamber or its precincts. For the purposes of this Standing Order the precincts shall include any part of Parliament Buildings.

(5) The Speaker shall take whatever steps he or she deems necessary in the circumstances to prevent conduct which would constitute a criminal offence or a contempt of court.

(6) In the case of grave disorder arising in the Assembly, the Speaker may–

(a) suspend the sitting until a later time on that sitting day; or

(b) adjourn the Assembly without question put.

66. Public Access to Assembly Proceedings

(1) Members of the public seeking to attend proceedings of the Assembly shall be permitted in such places reserved for them by the Speaker save that –

(a) they are not permitted in the Public Gallery during Prayers;

(b) they are not permitted to have any item in the Public Gallery which in the opinion of the Speaker could interfere with the preservation of order; and

(c) the Speaker may, in the interests of preserving order, require them to leave.

(2) Where the proceedings are committee proceedings, members of the public shall be permitted in such places reserved for them by the chairperson of the committee save that –

(a) they are not permitted to have any item in a public area which in the opinion of the chairperson could interfere with the preservation of order;

(b) the chairperson may, in the interests of preserving order, require them to leave; and

(c) the committee may resolve to sit in closed session.

(3) An authorised person may, during proceedings of the Assembly, lawfully remove any member of the public who is –

(a) in breach of paragraph (1) or (2);

(b) in a place reserved for members of the Assembly; or

(c) acting in a disorderly manner.

(4) In this order "**authorised person**" means –

(a) the Speaker or a person authorised by the Speaker;

(b) in the case of committee proceedings, the chairperson or a person authorised by the chairperson.

(5) This order applies whether the proceedings are carried on in Parliament Buildings or in some other place.

(6) These provisions are without prejudice to any other functions of the Speaker, the Assembly Commission or an authorised person in respect of Parliament Buildings which may be exercised by virtue of any other statutory provision or rule of law.

67. Media Access to Assembly Proceedings

Standing Order 66 applies to the media as if –

(a) references to members of the public were references to members of the media;

(b) references to the Public Gallery were references to the Press Gallery; and

(c) references to public areas were references to areas reserved for the media.

Standards

69. Members' Interests

(1) There is to be a register of interests of members of the Assembly ('the Register of Interests').

(2) The Register of Interests must set out the registrable interests of members.

(3) The Clerk of Standards–

(a) must compile, and may from time to time revise, the Register of Interests; and

(b) must publish, and make available for public inspection, the Register of Interests.

(4) A member must–

(a) within 28 days of taking his or her seat, inform the Clerk of Standards of his or her registrable interests; and

(b) within 28 days of any change to those registrable interests, inform the Clerk of Standards of that change.

(5) A member who has

(a) a financial interest in any matter; or

(b) a relevant interest in any matter,

must declare that interest before taking part in any proceedings of the Assembly relating to that matter.

(6) A member must not, in consideration of any payment or benefit in kind specified in Chapter 3 of the Guide to the Rules, advocate or initiate any cause or matter on behalf of any person in any proceedings of the Assembly, or urge any other member to do so.

(7) In this order –

"financial interest" means an interest specified in Chapter 1 of the Guide to the Rules, other than an interest specified in category 8 or category 9 of Chapter 1;

"registrable interest" means an interest specified in Chapter 1 of the Guide to the Rules;

"relevant interest" means an interest to which Chapter 2 of the Guide to the Rules applies.

69A. Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards

(1) This order supplements Part 2 of the Assembly Members (Independent Financial Review and Standards) Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

(2) In these Standing Orders "the Commissioner" means the Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards established by section 16 of the Act.

(3) The Committee on Standards shall exercise the following functions in respect of the Commissioner –

(a) considering any report made by the Commissioner under section 17(1)(c) or section 26 of the Act;

(b) requesting and considering advice from the Commissioner under section 17(1)(d);

(c) directing the Commissioner under section 24 (including specifying matters under section 24(2)(b)(i) and making requirements under section 24(2)(b)(ii));

(d) requesting a further investigation under section 26; and

(e) publishing a report under section 27(3).

(4) The consideration of a report or advice by the Committee on Standards does not preclude its consideration by the Assembly.

(5) The Commissioner must investigate a referral –

(a) made by the Committee on Standards, that relates to the conduct of members;

(b) made by the Clerk to the Assembly, that relates to –

(i) the conduct of members, and

(ii) the Clerk's duties as accounting officer within the meaning of the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001.

69B. Sanctions

(1) Where it appears to the Committee on Standards that a member has failed to comply with any provision of the Code of Conduct or Standing Orders 69 to 69C, the committee may make a report to the Assembly. The report may include a recommendation that a sanction be imposed upon the member.

(2) In consideration of such a report, the Assembly may impose a sanction upon a member who has failed to comply with any of those provisions.

(3) Sanctions may include, but are not limited to –

(a) a requirement that the member apologise to the Assembly;

(b) censure of the member by the Assembly;

(c) exclusion of the member from proceedings of the Assembly for a specified period;

(d) withdrawal of any of the member's rights and privileges as a member for that period;

and for the avoidance of doubt, the rights and privileges withdrawn under sub-paragraph (d) may include the rights to salary and allowances.

69C. Members' Interests: Rectification of Minor Errors

(1) This order applies to a failure by a member –

(a) to register an interest in the Register of Members' Interests,

(b) to declare an interest.

(2) The Committee on Standards may determine not to apply Standing Order 69B in respect of that

failure if–

(a) the Commissioner recommends it;

(b) the failure was minor or inadvertent; and

(c) the member acknowledges the failure and apologises to the Assembly for it.

(3) Where the failure is under paragraph (1)(a), the Register must also be rectified.

Other Orders

71. Oath

Where an oath is to be administered it shall be in the following form -

"I swear by Almighty God that the evidence I shall give shall be truthful and honest, and that I will give the Committee/Assembly all such information and assistance as I can to enable it to discharge its responsibilities";

but where the person giving the evidence objects to being sworn, he or she shall be permitted to make a solemn affirmation in the following form -

"I,_____do solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm that the evidence I shall give shall be truthful and honest, and that I will give the Committee/Assembly all such information and assistance as I can to enable it to discharge its responsibilities".

72. Administration of Oath

In addition to the Speaker the following persons may administer an oath and require any person giving evidence in the proceedings of the Assembly or its committees, as appropriate, to take such oath -

a. Deputy Speaker;
b. committee chairpersons or deputy chairpersons;
c. the Clerk;
d. the Director of Parliamentary Services;
e. a clerk assistant;
f. a committee clerk.

73. Sub Judice

(1) A member shall not, in any proceedings of the Assembly, refer to any matter in respect of which legal proceedings are active (within the meaning of section 2 of the Contempt of Court Act 1981) except to the extent permitted by the Speaker.

(2) Where the proceedings are committee proceedings, paragraph (1) applies as if the reference to the Speaker were a reference to the chairperson of that committee.

(3) Nothing in this order shall prevent the Assembly from considering legislation.

75. Office of Clerk and Records of the Assembly

(1) All proceedings of the Assembly shall be noted by the Clerk and the minutes of proceedings after being perused and signed by the Speaker, shall be printed and shall constitute the Journal of the Proceedings of the Assembly.

(2) The Clerk shall have custody of all Journals of Proceedings, records and other documents belonging to the Assembly.

(3) During any vacancy in the Office of Clerk, or in his or her absence, the functions and duties of the Clerk shall be exercised and performed by the Director of Parliamentary Services or if there is a vacancy in that office or he or she is also absent, by a clerk assistant.

76. Remuneration and Pensions

(1) Any determination made by the Assembly under section 47(2A)(a) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 shall be published in full.

(2) The Speaker shall make arrangements for the publication of details for each financial year of sums paid by the Assembly to its current members and its former members. The Speaker shall also publish a list of the offices in the Assembly the holders of which receive salaries or allowances greater than the salaries and allowances received by members in general, together with the salary or allowance each such office-holder is entitled to receive.

77. Suspension of Standing Orders

Subject to the requirements of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, a member may move a motion for the suspension of one or more orders in whole or in part. A motion under this order shall require cross-community support within the meaning of section 4(5) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

78. Language

Members may speak in the language of their choice.

79. Appointments to the Assembly Commission

(1) The Assembly shall by resolution appoint the prescribed number of members of the Assembly to be members of the Commission.

(2) Appointments under paragraph (1) shall be made within 28 days after the first sitting of the Assembly after dissolution.

(3) Any resolution under this order shall require cross-community support.

(4) In the event of a vacancy occurring, the Speaker shall, as soon as may be possible, inform the Assembly of the vacancy. Any vacancy shall be filled by resolution of the Assembly within 28 days of the vacancy occurring.

(5) A person shall not be eligible for appointment as a member of the Commission if he or she holds a relevant office.

(6) Where a member of the Assembly is appointed to a relevant office he or she shall immediately cease to be a member of the Commission.

(7) A Commissioner may at any time resign by giving notice in writing to the Speaker.

(8) In this order a relevant office means a Minister, a junior Minister or a chairperson or deputy chairperson of-

(a) a statutory committee;

(b) the Public Accounts Committee;

(c) the Audit Committee.

80. Official Report (Hansard)

(1) A substantially verbatim report of the proceedings at all sittings of the Assembly and committee meetings that form part of the legislative process or at which evidence that will contribute to a report by a committee is being taken shall be prepared and published. The report shall be known as the Official Report (Hansard) and shall be a record of the proceedings in the language spoken.

(2) A revised edition of the Official Report (Hansard) for all Assembly sittings and committee meetings which form part of the legislative process shall be prepared in bound volume form at such times as the Speaker shall determine. Such bound volumes shall also contain written questions and answers and written Ministerial statements for the period covered.

(3) Editorial control of the Official Report (Hansard) shall rest ultimately with the Speaker but shall be exercised on his or her behalf by the Editor of Debates.

81. Interpretation

In these Standing Orders –

***"*Code of Conduct"** means any code of conduct for members and the Guide to the Rules agreed to by the Assembly;

"day" means calendar day;

"Guide to the Rules" means any guide to the rules relating to the conduct of members agreed to by the Assembly.

"member of the opposition" means a member who is a member of political party which forms or forms part of the opposition in accordance with standing order 45A.

"**nominating officer**", in relation to a party, means –

(a) the person registered under Part 2 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2002 as the party's nominating officer; or

(b) a member of the Assembly nominated by that person;

"**public holiday**" includes Christmas Day, Good Friday, any bank holiday and any other day appointed as such;

"**sitting day**" means a day on which the Assembly sits in plenary;

"**working day**" means any day which is neither a Saturday, Sunday, public holiday nor day when the Assembly is in recess.

Private Legislation

82. Preliminary Matters and Interpretation

(1) The provisions of these Standing Orders apply to Private Bills.

(2) In these Standing Orders –

"**explanatory and financial memorandum**", in relation to a Private Bill, means a memorandum detailing –

(a) the issue the Bill is intended to address;

(b) the consultative process undertaken;

(c) the main options considered;

(d) the option selected and why; and

(e) the cost implications of the proposal;

"**Objector**" means a person objecting to a Private Bill;

"**Private Bill**" means a Bill introduced for the purpose of obtaining for the Promoter particular powers or benefits in excess of or in conflict with the general law, and includes a Bill relating to the estate, property, status or style, or otherwise relating to the personal affairs, of the Promoter; and

"**Promoter**" means the individual, body corporate or unincorporated association of persons promoting a Private Bill.

83. Stages in Consideration of Private Bills

(1) The stages in the consideration of a Private Bill are –

(a) Preliminary Scrutiny Stage: consideration as to whether the Bill satisfies the pre-requisites;

(b) Introduction and First Stage: introduction of the Bill to the Assembly;

(c) Investigation Stage: initial investigation by a Private Bill committee into the principles of the Bill and report to the Assembly;

(d) Second Stage: general debate on the Bill with an opportunity for members to vote on its general principles;

(e) Committee Stage: detailed investigation and opportunity to amend by the committee followed by report to the Assembly;

(f) Consideration Stage: consideration of and an opportunity for the Assembly to vote on the details of the Bill, including amendments proposed to the Bill;

(g) Further Consideration Stage: opportunity for members to consider and vote on amendments proposed to the Bill;

(h) Final Stage: passing or rejection of the Bill without further amendment.

(2) In the circumstances set out in Standing Order 90, the Committee Stage may be re-opened.

84. Preliminary Scrutiny Stage

(1) A Private Bill shall not be introduced in the Assembly unless the Promoter has satisfied the Speaker that –

(a) there is proof of need for the Bill;

(b) there is no suitable alternative other than the matter proceeding by way of a Private Bill;

(c) there has been sufficient consultation with those who may be affected by the Bill;

(d) the Bill would be within the legislative competence of the Assembly;

(e) the Promoter has been authorised to promote the Bill in accordance with its constitution or such higher standard as the Speaker may require; and

(f) the Bill would not have the effect of authorising any sum to be paid out of the Consolidated Fund.

(2) In addition to the requirements of paragraph (1) the Bill must be –

(a) signed by the Promoter;

(b) in such form as the Speaker may require; and

(c) accompanied by –

(i) an explanatory and financial memorandum;

(ii) a statement in writing signed by the Promoter, to the effect that, in the Promoter's view, the Bill would be within the legislative competence of the Assembly;

(iii) such other documents as the Speaker may require; and

(iv) such fee as the Assembly Commission may determine.

(3) The fee referred to in paragraph (2)(c)(iv) shall be reduced by 75% where the Promoter –

(a) is a charity; or

(b) is a body –

(i) which is not established or conducted for profit; and

(ii) whose main objects are charitable or are concerned with science, literature or the finearts.

(4) The Speaker may reduce the fee referred to in paragraph (2)(c)(iv) to nil if satisfied that the Bill –

(a) is largely the same as a Bill recently withdrawn; and

(b) has the same Promoter as the withdrawn Bill.

85. Introduction and First Stage

(1) A Private Bill shall be introduced in the Assembly by the Speaker. The Speaker shall announce that the Bill has been received, has passed Preliminary Scrutiny Stage and will now be published. This shall constitute the Bill's First Stage.

(2) The following shall accompany the Bill on introduction –

(a) the statement of legislative competence referred to in Standing Order 84(2)(c)(ii);

(b) the explanatory and financial memorandum; and

(c) such other documents as the Speaker may require.

(3) After introduction, the Bill shall stand referred to a Private Bill committee for its Investigation Stage.

(4) The Speaker shall, as soon as is reasonably practicable after the introduction of the Bill, send a copy of it to the

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.

86. Investigation Stage

(1) Investigation Stage shall commence when the Private Bill is referred to the Private Bill committee and shall last at least 60 working days.

(2) The committee shall carry out an initial investigation into the general principles of the Bill and report its opinion to the Assembly.

(3) On the report being made to the Assembly, the Bill shall be set down in the list of pending future business until a date for its Second Stage is determined.

87. Second Stage

(1) The debate on the motion "That the Second Stage of the ..... Bill be agreed" shall be confined to the general principles of the Bill.

(2) Amendments may be proposed to this motion, to leave out the words after "That" and insert words which state a reason for the Assembly not to agree to the Second Stage of the Bill.

(3) If an amendment proposed in accordance with paragraph (2) is negatived the Speaker shall immediately put the question that the Second Stage of the Bill be agreed.

88. Committee Stage

(1) On the Second Stage of a Private Bill being agreed, the Bill shall stand referred to the Private Bill committee, unless the Assembly shall order otherwise.

(2) Proceedings at Committee Stage shall be conducted in accordance with the directions of the committee.

(3) The committee shall consider the Bill within the period of 30 working days from the date of referral.

(4) Before the conclusion of that period, a motion may be moved in the Assembly by the chairperson of the committee to extend the period until a date specified in the motion.

(5) The committee shall take such evidence and hear from such witnesses as it thinks fit.

(6) The parties may present their case to the committee, introduce evidence and call witnesses. A party may cross examine any other party, any witness called by that party and, at the discretion of the committee, any other witness.

(7) The parties must make full written disclosure in advance of the issues they intend to raise and the evidence they intend to introduce.

(8) The parties may act on their own behalf or by means of a representative.

(9) The committee may make such amendments as it thinks fit to the Bill and report its opinion on the Bill to the Assembly.

(10) On a report being made to the Assembly under paragraph (9), or on the conclusion of any period specified in this order or extended by the Assembly under this order, the Bill shall be set down on the list of pending future business until a date for its Consideration Stage is determined.

(11) In this order "**parties**" means –

(a) the Promoter; and

(b) any Objector whose objection has been admitted under Standing Order 96.

89. Consideration Stage

(1) Consideration Stage shall not commence until at least five working days after the Private Bill committee makes its report to the Assembly under Standing Order 88.

(2) Any amendments proposed to be made to a Bill at Consideration Stage shall be deposited with the clerk in time for inclusion on a Notice Paper circulated on a day before the day appointed for Consideration Stage. Amendments shall be arranged in the order in which the Bill is to be considered. Amendments may be moved, at the discretion of the Speaker, in very exceptional circumstances without such notice.

(3) On consideration of a Bill, the clauses and schedules shall be considered in the order in which they stand in the Bill unless the Assembly, on a motion moved after notice by the chairperson of the committee, decides otherwise. The question shall be put in respect of each clause and schedule, that the clause or schedule (or, as the case may be, the clause or schedule as amended) stand part of the Bill.

(4) Consideration of the preamble and the long title shall be postponed until after the consideration of the clauses and of any schedules.

(5) Members may speak more than once in debate during Consideration Stage.

(6) At the completion of Consideration Stage the Bill shall stand referred to the Speaker.

90. Adjournment of Consideration Stage and Re-Opened Committee Stage

(1) The Assembly may, in view of the number or complexity of amendments proposed to be moved at Consideration Stage and on foot of a motion moved by the chairperson of the Private Bill committee, adjourn Consideration Stage and refer the Bill, together with such amendments as are thought fit, to the committee for a re-opened Committee Stage.

(2) Notice of the motion must be given to the Speaker not later than 9.30 am on the day appointed for Consideration Stage.

(3) Re-opened Committee Stage shall be conducted in accordance with Standing Order 88 save that –

(a) debate and vote shall be confined to those amendments referred to the committee; and

(b) the duration of the re-opened Committee Stage shall be determined in accordance with the motion adjourning Consideration Stage.

(4) Consideration Stage may only be adjourned once under this order.

91. Further Consideration Stage

(1) Further Consideration Stage shall not commence until at least five working days after Consideration Stage ends.

(2) Any amendments proposed to be made to a Bill at Further Consideration Stage shall be deposited with the clerk in time for inclusion on a Notice Paper circulated on a day before the day appointed for Further Consideration Stage. Amendments shall be arranged in the order in which the Bill is to be considered. Amendments may be moved, at the discretion of the Speaker, in very exceptional circumstances without such notice.

(3) During proceedings at Further Consideration Stage, debate and vote shall be confined to those amendments which have been selected. The amendments shall be considered in the order in which the relevant clauses or schedules stand in the Bill.

(4) Any amendments selected which relate to the long title shall be considered after those relating to the clauses and schedules of the Bill.

(5) Members may speak more than once in debate during Further Consideration Stage.

(6) At the conclusion of the debate on Further Consideration Stage the Bill shall stand referred to the Speaker.

92. Final Stage

(1) After completion of Further Consideration Stage of a Bill, it shall be set down on the list of pending future business until a date for its Final Stage is determined.

(2) Final Stage shall not commence until at least five working days after Further Consideration Stage ends.

(3) No date may be determined for Final Stage of a Bill until –

(a) the Speaker has considered the Bill in accordance with section 10 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and signified to the chairperson of the Private Bill committee that in his or her opinion it may properly proceed to its Final Stage; or

(b) if the Bill is referred to the Secretary of State by the Speaker under section 10(2)(b) of that Act, the Secretary of State has signified his or her consent, or informed the Assembly of his or her opinion, under section 10(2)(c) of that Act.

(4) Debate at Final Stage shall be on the motion "That the Bill do now pass" and shall be confined to the content of the Bill. No amendments may be made to the Bill at Final Stage.

93. Reconsideration

(1) Notwithstanding that a Bill has been passed under Standing Order 92 or approved under paragraph (3) of this order, it shall be set down in the list of pending future business as awaiting reconsideration if (but only if) –

(a) the Supreme Court decides that any provision of the Bill is not within the legislative competence of the Assembly;

(b) a reference to the Supreme Court made by the Advocate General for Northern Ireland or the Attorney General for Northern Ireland in relation to a provision of the Bill under section 11 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 has been withdrawn following a request for withdrawal under section 12 of that Act;

(c) a decision is made by the Secretary of State under section 14(4) or (5) of that Act not to submit the Bill for Royal Assent; or

(d) a motion under section 15(1) of that Act that the Bill shall not be submitted for Royal Assent has been passed by either House of Parliament.

(2) During proceedings on reconsideration of a Bill, the Assembly shall consider only amendments proposed to be made to the Bill; and the provisions of Standing Order 89(2) shall apply to such amendments.

(3) Where a Bill has been amended during proceedings on reconsideration, the question, that the Bill, as amended, be approved shall be put immediately and decided without amendment ordebate.

94. Continuation of Bills into New Session

(1) Where a Bill has not completed its passage by the end of a session of the Assembly, its passage shall be continued into the next session.

(2) A Bill shall not be continued if the Assembly is dissolved.

95. Amendments

Amendments proposed to a Private Bill shall be relevant to the provisions of the Bill and shall not be in conflict with the principles of the Bill as agreed to at Second Stage.

96. Objections

(1) Subject to paragraph (2), any objections to a Private Bill must be lodged within 42 working days of the commencement of Investigation Stage.

(2) The committee may accept objections lodged outside that period if it is satisfied that –

(a) there are exceptional circumstances; and

(b) the objection is lodged as quickly as possible, provided that the objection must be lodged at the latest before the first sitting of the committee at Committee Stage.

(3) The committee shall consider all objections lodged in accordance with this order and admit them if –

(a) the Objector has shown that his or her property or interests are directly and specially affected by the Bill;

(b) the objection is in such form and accompanied by such information as may be required; and

(c) the objection is accompanied by such fee as the Assembly Commission may determine.

(4) An Objector may take no further part in proceedings unless the objection is admitted.

(5) An Objector cannot raise an issue subsequently unless it was contained in the original objection.

97. Human Rights Issues

(1) For the purpose of obtaining advice as to whether a Private Bill is compatible with human rights (including rights under the European Convention on Human Rights) the Assembly may proceed on a motion made in pursuance of paragraph (2).

(2) Notice may be given by any member of a motion "That the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission be asked to advise whether the ..... Bill is compatible with human rights".

(3) Notice of such a motion may be given at any time after the Bill's introduction.

(4) On a motion being moved under paragraph (2) a brief explanatory statement may be made by the member who proposes the motion and by a member who opposes it, and the Speaker shall then put the question without further debate.

(5) Any advice tendered to the Assembly by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission in response to a request made in pursuance of paragraph (2) shall be circulated to all members and published in a manner determined by the Speaker.

98. Fees and Costs

(1) The Promoter must pay the costs associated with a Private Bill incurred by the Assembly Commission (in addition to the fee which must be paid before a Bill is introduced).

(2) All fees and costs (including Objectors' fees) payable under the provisions of these Standing Orders shall be paid to the Assembly Commission.

99. Private Bill Committees

(1) The Assembly shall establish a Private Bill committee to exercise the functions set out in the provisions of these Standing Orders, in respect of each Private Bill introduced in the Assembly.

(2) Each committee shall –

(a) consist of five members; and

(b) have a chairperson and deputy chairperson who shall be elected by thecommittee.

(3) The quorum of the committee shall be three. Members linked by a video-conferencing facility shall not count towards the quorum.

(4) All questions at the committee shall be decided by a simple majority. Voting shall be by a show of hands unless otherwise requested. In the event of a tied vote, the chairperson shall have a casting vote.

(5) Members of the committee shall normally attend all meetings of the committee and may be absent from a meeting in exceptional circumstances only.

(6) A member with a personal or constituency interest in the Bill shall not be eligible to sit on the committee.

(7) Each committee may exercise the power in section 44(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Hybrid Bills

100. Stages of Hybrid Bills

(1) Subject to Standing Order 106, the Assembly stages of a Hybrid Bill are –

(a) Preliminary Scrutiny Stage: consideration as to whether the Bill satisfies the conditions at Standing Order 101;

(b) Introduction and First Stage: introduction of the Bill to the Assembly;

(c) Investigation Stage: initial investigation by a Hybrid Bill committee into the principles of the Bill, and the period during which objections must be lodged;

(d) Second Stage: general debate on the Bill with an opportunity for members to vote on its general principles;

(e) Committee Stage: detailed investigation by the Hybrid Bill committee and opportunity to propose amendments to the Bill, followed by report to the Assembly;

(f) Consideration Stage: consideration of and an opportunity for the Assembly to vote on the details of the Bill, including amendments proposed to the Bill;

(g) Further Consideration Stage: opportunity for members to consider and vote on amendments proposed to the Bill; and

(h) Final Stage: passing or rejection of the Bill without further amendment.

101. Preliminary Scrutiny Stage

(1) A Hybrid Bill shall not be introduced in the Assembly unless the standard conditions and any applicable information conditions are met.

(2) The standard conditions are that –

(a) there is proof of need for the Bill;

(b) no suitable alternative to the matter proceeding by way of a Hybrid Bill is demonstrated;

(c) there has been sufficient consultation with those who may be affected by the Bill;

(d) the Bill would be within the legislative competence of the Assembly; and

(e) the Bill would not impose any charge on the Consolidated Fund.

(3) The Speaker may direct that one or more of the information conditions apply to the Bill.

(4) The information conditions are that –

(a) The Bill is accompanied by an explanatory and financial memorandum;

(b) The Bill is accompanied by a statement in writing signed by the Promoter, to the effect that, in the Promoter's view, the Bill would be within the legislative competence of the Assembly;

(c) The Bill is accompanied by an environmental statement; and

(d) The Bill is accompanied by such other documents as the Speaker may require.

(5) The explanatory and financial memorandum must be in such form as the Speaker may direct and must set out –

(a) the issue the Bill is intended to address;

(b) the consultation undertaken;

(c) the options considered;

(d) the option selected and the reason therefore; and

(e) the cost implications of the proposal.

(6) Paragraphs 6 to 8 of Standing Order 30 shall apply to Hybrid Bills as they apply to Public Bills.

102. Introduction and First Stage

(1) When the Speaker has signified to the Promoter that a Hybrid Bill may be introduced, notice of introduction on a sitting day may be given by the Promoter.

(2) The Bill shall be accompanied on introduction by –

(a) the statement of legislative competence;

(b) the explanatory and financial memorandum, setting out the matters at Standing Order 101(5); and

(c) such other documents as the Speaker may require.

(3) On introduction, the Bill's title shall be read to the Assembly, and this shall constitute the Bill's First Stage.

(4) After the Bill's First Stage, the Bill shall be ordered to be printed and the Bill shall stand referred to a Hybrid Bill committee for its Investigation Stage.

103. Investigation Stage

(1) Investigation Stage shall commence when the Bill is referred to a Hybrid Bill committee.

(2) Investigation Stage shall last at least 60 working days.

(3) The committee shall carry out an initial investigation into the general principles of the Bill and report its opinion on the Bill to the Assembly.

(4) Investigation Stage is concluded when the committee reports to the Assembly.

(5) On the report being made to the Assembly by the committee, the Bill shall be set down in the list of pending future business until a date for its Second Stage is determined.

104. Objections

(1) Any objections to a Hybrid Bill must be lodged within 42 working days, beginning with the day on which the Bill is referred to the Hybrid Bill committee for Investigation Stage.

(2) An objection to a Hybrid Bill received outside the objection period may be lodged only if that objection is approved by resolution of the Assembly, and may not in any case be lodged after the Investigation Stage is concluded.

(3) The Hybrid Bill committee shall consider an objection lodged in accordance with this order and admit it if –

(a) the Objector has shown that his or her property or interests are directly and specially affected by the Bill;

(b) the objection is in such form and accompanied by such information as may be required by the committee; and

(c) the objection is accompanied by such fee as the Assembly Commission may determine.

(4) An Objector may take no further part in committee proceedings unless the objection is admitted.

(5) An Objector cannot subsequently raise any issue not contained in the initial objection.

105. Second Stage

Standing Order 32 shall apply to Hybrid Bills as it applies to Public Bills.

106. Treatment as a Public Bill

Where no objection is received or admitted to a Hybrid Bill during Investigation Stage, the Bill shall be treated as a Public Bill and shall proceed in accordance with Standing Orders 33-42.

107. Treatment as a Hybrid Bill

Where an objection to a Hybrid Bill is received and admitted during Investigation Stage, Standing Orders 88 to 95 and Standing Order 97 shall apply to that Bill as they apply to a Private Bill; and Standing Order 37A shall apply to that Bill as it applies to a Public Bill.

108. Hybrid Bill Committees

(1) The Assembly shall establish a Hybrid Bill committee in respect of each Hybrid Bill proposed to be introduced in the Assembly.

(2) Each committee will discharge the functions conferred on it by Standing Order 103, and, where applicable, the functions conferred on it by Standing Orders 88 and 90.

(3) A member with a personal or constituency interest in the Bill shall not be eligible to sit on the committee.

(4) The committee shall consist of five members, and have a chairperson and deputy chairperson elected by the committee.

(5) The quorum of the committee shall be three. Members linked by a video-conferencing facility shall not count towards the quorum.

(6) All questions at the committee shall be decided by a simple majority. Voting shall be by a show of hands unless otherwise requested by a member of the committee. The chairperson shall have a casting vote.

(7) Members of the committee shall normally attend all meetings of the committee and may be absent from a meeting of the committee only in exceptional circumstances.

(8) A Hybrid Bill committee may exercise the power in section 44(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

(9) A Hybrid Bill committee may permit the Promoter or an Objector to cross-examine any witness giving evidence to it.

109. Interpretation

(1) In these Standing Orders, **"Hybrid Bill"** means a Bill which affects a particular private interest in a manner different from the private interest of other persons or bodies of the same category or class.

(2) In Standing Orders 100 to 108 –

"Objector" means a person objecting to a Hybrid Bill;

"Objection period" means the period of 42 working days following the referral of a Bill to a Hybrid Bill committee;

"Hybrid Bill committee" means a committee established in accordance with Standing Order 108;

"Promoter" means the member of the Assembly who proposes to introduce a Hybrid Bill.

"Statement of legislative competence" means a statement in writing signed by the member of the Assembly who proposes to introduce the Bill, which states that in the view of the member, the Bill would be within the legislative competence of the Assembly.