



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Chairpersons' Liaison Group

## Minutes of Proceedings

**14 January 2025**

**Room 21, Parliament Buildings**

**Present:**

Cáral Ní Chuilín MLA (Chairperson)

Kellie Armstrong MLA

Robbie Butler MLA

Phillip Brett MLA

Joanne Bunting MLA

Nick Mathison MLA

Daniel McCrossan MLA

Matthew O'Toole MLA

**Apologies:**

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Jonathan Buckley MLA

Alan Chambers MLA

Deborah Erskine MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Colm Gildernew MLA

Liz Kimmins MLA

Philip McGuigan MLA

**In Attendance:**     Roisin Kelly (Assembly Clerk)  
                              Mary Kerr (Senior Assistant Clerk)  
                              Charmaine McBride (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
                              Jenny Massey (Clerical Supervisor)

                              Lesley Hogg (Chief Executive/Clerk to the Assembly)  
                              Frank Geddis (Clerk Assistant)  
                              Paul Gill (Clerk Assistant)  
                              Stephanie Mallon (Clerk Assistant)

The meeting commenced at 1:07pm in closed session.

*Joanne Bunting joined the meeting at 1:08pm.*

The Chairperson welcomed members to the sixth meeting of the CLG and provided an overview of the items of business.

### **1. Apologies**

As above.

### **2. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

**Agreed:** Chairpersons agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2024.

### **3. Matters Arising**

#### **Parliamentary Excellence Programme (PEP)**

Members noted the upcoming PEP sessions for Winter 2025 and the updated paper on the Effective Questioning sessions that took place in Autumn 2024 with John Sturrock KC of Core Solutions.

**Agreed:** Members agreed that the Clerking and Member Support Office (CAMS) would circulate more information on a further two sessions with John Sturrock KC, specifically for Chairpersons, to reinforce learning from the previous sessions.

*Paul Gill joined the meeting at 1.12pm*

*Claire Maguire joined the meeting at 1:12pm*

### **Engagement Opportunities and the Balmoral Show 2025**

The Chairperson welcomed Clare Maguire (Public Engagement Manager) to the meeting.

Clare briefed the Members on options for formal and informal committee engagement at the Balmoral Show 2025 and noted that a formal note would be issued to all statutory committees.

Members briefly discussed committee engagement at the Balmoral Show and had the opportunity to ask Clare questions.

**Agreed:** Members noted the briefing from Clare Maguire and were content that Chairpersons with an interest would pursue via their committees.

The Chairperson thanked Clare for her briefing.

*Clare Maguire left the meeting at 1.20pm*

*Daniel McCrossan joined the meeting at 1:21pm*

### **Update – Report on Strengthening Scrutiny**

**Agreed:** Members noted the latest report on the progress of the predecessor CLG's recommendations on Strengthening Scrutiny (2022-27 mandate) and agreed to receive further updates in future meetings of CLG.

Members had a question and answer session with the Clerk Assistants.

### **Update from Clerk Assistants on work to progress improvements to the scrutiny of statutory rules and the implementation of post legislative scrutiny**

Paul Gill and Frank Geddis updated Members on the measures being implemented to support the Assembly's scrutiny function.

**Agreed:** Members noted the Clerk Assistants' paper on the Provision of Additional Resources to Strengthen Committee Scrutiny; noted that officials will now take forward the finalisation of these proposals and; agreed that officials will report back to CLG for its consideration and approval prior to implementation.

The Chairperson thanked Paul Gill and Frank Geddis for their update.

### **Chairpersons' Liaison Group – Letter to Ministers**

Members noted the letter from Chairpersons' Liaison Group to Ministers regarding the late provision of papers to Committees and which also drew Ministers' attention to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' view regarding a breach of the 21-day rule for laying of Statutory Rules.

## **4. Chairpersons' Liaison Group Development**

Members noted the clerk's memo referring to the meeting in June 2024, at which members agreed to commission research on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Committees.

*Ray McCaffrey joined the meeting at 1:34 pm via video conference*

The Chairperson welcomed Ray McCaffrey from the Assembly's Research and Information Service (RaISe) and Ray briefed Members on his paper 'AI in Legislatures.'

*Matthew O'Toole left the meeting at 1:38pm*

*Phillip Brett left the meeting at 1:46pm*

Members noted the briefing from Ray McCaffrey.

**Agreed:** Members agreed that they would further investigate how other legislatures were navigating the future of Artificial Intelligence.

The Chairperson thanked Ray McCaffrey for his briefing.

*Ray McCaffrey left the meeting at 1:49pm*

## **5. Correspondence**

### **Letter from Shauna Mageean (EU Affairs Manager) to Chairpersons' Liaison Group dated 15 December 2024.**

Members noted the paper from Shauna Mageean which provided a summary of the sixth meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum (IPF) hosted on the 15 November 2024 at the Northern Ireland Assembly. Members also noted the meeting agenda and joint statement.

### **Letter from Shane McAteer, Clerk to the Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC) to Chairpersons' Liaison Group dated 3 December 2024.**

Members were content to note that the Assembly and Executive Review Committee will not be taking forward Recommendation 7 (previous CLG Report on Strengthening Committee Scrutiny) which was in relation to how committees could be given amending powers in relation to subordinate legislation. This decision was based on legal advice at its meeting on 3 December 2024.

## **6. Draft Forward Work Programme**

**Agreed:** Members noted the clerk's memo and agreed that on the basis of the two strategic priorities, which form the CLG's draft forward work programme, to ask the CAMS Office to circulate information regarding the following:

- To extend an invitation to Franklin De Vrieze from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) to brief Members on guidelines of using AI in parliaments, at a future meeting of the CLG.
- To circulate information on a course called 'Utilising Evidence in Decision Making' (delivered by the Civil Service College, London) and seek Members' interest in attendance.

## **7. Any Other Business**

The Chairperson requested the clerk speak on the 'Building Personal Resilience' course scheduled for Members on 16 January 2025 (as part of the Parliamentary Excellence Programme). The course is fully booked and the clerk noted that the CAMS office would circulate information on further dates, if Members were interested in scheduling the course for a future meeting of the Chairpersons' Liaison Group.

## **8. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 25 February 2025 at 1pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:52pm.

**Cáral Ní Chuilín MLA (Chairperson)**

**14 January 2025**