



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee on Standards and Privileges

Minutes of Proceedings

27 May 2026

Meeting Location: Room 106, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Connie Egan (Deputy Chairperson)

Declan McAleer MLA

Stewart Dickson MLA

In attendance by video or teleconference:

Cathy Mason MLA (Chairperson)

Keith Buchanan MLA

Mark Durkan MLA

Paul Frew MLA

Emma Sheerin MLA

In Attendance:

Shane McAteer, Committee Clerk

Ashleigh Mitford, Senior Assistant Clerk

Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk

Laura Gourley, Clerical Supervisor

Alison Ferguson, Clerical Officer

The Deputy Chairperson took the chair due to the Chairperson attending the meeting remotely.

The meeting commenced at 10.02 a.m. in closed session, in accordance with agreed procedure.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declaration of interests

The Chairperson advised Members of the ongoing requirement to declare relevant financial or other interests as and when they arise and before taking part in any Assembly proceedings, including Committee proceedings, relating to that matter.

The Chairperson declared an interest in relation to the investigation case to be considered under agenda item 5 and advised that she would recuse herself from that agenda item.

3. Minutes

Noted: The Committee noted that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2026 had previously been agreed by the Chairperson following delegation of authority by the Committee to do so, in order that the minutes could be included in a Committee report published on 1 May 2026.

4. Matters Arising

None.

Mark Durkan joined the meeting at 10.04 a.m.

Cathy Mason recused herself from the next agenda item and left the meeting at 10.04 a.m.

5. Complaints against a Minister – investigation by the Commissioner for Standards

The Committee Clerk briefed the Committee on this agenda item and the draft letter for issue to the Commissioner requesting that he undertakes further investigation of the ministerial complaint case.

The Deputy Chairperson put the question that the Committee issues the draft letter to the Commissioner requesting that he undertakes further investigation of the complaint case referred to.

The Committee divided: Ayes 5 Noes 2; Abstain 0.

AYES

Connie Egan

Stewart Dickson

Mark Durkan

Declan McAleer

Emma Sheerin

NOES

Keith Buchanan

Paul Frew

The proposal was carried.

The Committee considered advice from Assembly Legal Services on further redactions required to the Commissioner's investigation report in order to ensure that the Committee meets its legal obligations.

Noted: The Committee noted that follow-up communication between the Committee Clerk and the Legal Advisor had clarified that the names of the complainants do not require to be redacted from the investigation report, which would align with the Committee's usual practice when publishing complaint investigation reports.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it is content to follow the approach to redactions as suggested in the legal advice when it comes to the publication of the investigation report on the complaint case, which will be appended to the Committee's covering report.

Noted: The Committee noted that the Committee's covering report on the complaint case will be considered at a future meeting, together with any further investigation report from the Commissioner.

6. Revisions to the General Procedures Direction

The Senior Assistant Clerk briefed the Committee on this agenda item.

Cathy Mason rejoined the meeting at 10.27 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft letter for issue to the Commissioner in response to his comments on the proposed amendments to the General Procedures Direction (GPD).

Noted: The Committee noted that the amended GPD will be brought back to the Committee for formal approval and subsequent issue to the Commissioner after the Assembly has approved the Committee's forthcoming report on proposed amendments to the MLA Code of Conduct and Guide to the Rules on the Conduct of Members.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it is content for the Commissioner to attend a future Committee meeting to discuss how the discretionary power of the Commissioner in paragraph 3.3 of the GPD will operate.

7. Correspondence

The Committee Clerk briefed the Committee on the correspondence received from the Committee on Procedures in respect of the proposed repeal of Standing Order 70 and consequential amendments to Standing Orders.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the joint letter from the Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures and the Chairperson of the Committee on Standards and Privileges for issue to all MLAs prior to the plenary motion and debate on this matter.

8. Forward Work Programme

Noted: The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

9. AOB

None.

10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 10 June 2026 at 10.00 a.m. in Room 106.

The meeting was adjourned at 10.39 a.m.

Cathy Mason MLA

Chairperson, Committee on Standards and Privileges

10 June 2026