



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee on Procedures

Minutes of Proceedings

16 September 2026

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present: Kellie Armstrong MLA (Chairperson)
Trevor Clarke MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Órlaithí Flynn MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Andy Allen MLA
Danny Baker MLA
Cheryl Brownlee MLA
Danny Donnelly MLA
Cara Hunter MLA
Philip McGuigan MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Stella McArdle, Assembly Clerk
Christine Darrah, Assembly Clerk
Michael Best, Assistant Assembly Clerk
Veronica Lo Pinto, Clerical Officer

The meeting started at 10.02 a.m. in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

The Chairperson welcomed Andy Allen MLA to his first Committee on Procedures meeting.

Andy Allen declared an interest as a member of the Assembly Commission.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to send a letter to Robbie Butler MLA thanking him for his contribution as a member of the Committee.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2026.

3. Matters Arising

Item 1: Committee Membership

The Committee noted the updated Committee membership list.

Item 2: Updates for Standing Orders

The Chairperson informed the Committee that, following recent changes to Standing Orders, updated inserts for the hard copies had been circulated to Members.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the meeting should move into closed session for the next five agenda items.

The meeting moved into closed session at 10.06 a.m.

4. Standing Order 42A Legislative Consent Motions – Consideration of revised draft Standing Order and draft Motion

The Committee considered the revised draft of Standing Order 42A Legislative Consent Motions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (1) that reflects paragraph (1) of the existing Standing Order 42A with some minor changes to language.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (2) that reflects paragraph (2) of the existing Standing Order 42A with some minor changes to language.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraphs (3) and (4) that reflect paragraph (3) of the existing Standing Order 42A with some minor changes to language and sets out the information to be provided with a consent memorandum and that the Bill and any explanatory notes may be included with the consent memorandum.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (5) that sets out the requirement for a Minister to provide a relevant memorandum within 10 working days.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (6) that sets out the three types of memoranda that a Minister can provide.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraphs (7) and (8) that are new paragraphs that provide for the non-application of the time-period in paragraph (5) in exceptional circumstances and set out the action to be taken by the Minister as soon as possible thereafter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (9) that sets out the action to be taken by a Minister as soon as practicable after laying an indicative memorandum.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (10) that reflects paragraph (5) of the existing Standing Order 42A but removes an erroneous provision at existing paragraph (5)(a) and makes provision where an indicative memorandum has been laid by a Minister.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (11) that reflects paragraph (6) of the existing Standing Order 42A with a minor change to language.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (12) that reflects paragraph (7) of the existing Standing Order 42A with a minor change to language and also provides for the Assembly to determine a period greater than 15 working days for the relevant committee to report to the Assembly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (13) that reflects paragraph (8)(a) of the existing Standing Order 42A with some minor changes to language and amends existing paragraph (8)(b) to include circumstances where the Assembly has agreed an extension of the 15 working day timescale for a Committee to report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (14) that reflects paragraph (9) of the existing Standing Order 42A with a minor change to language.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (15) that defines an indicative memorandum.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (16) that reflects paragraphs (10) and (11) of the existing Standing Order 42A with some minor changes to language and includes a new sub-paragraph at (c) that expands the existing definition of 'relevant day' to cover the day on which an amendment is agreed to or tabled by a Minister of the Crown, or published with the name of a Minister of the Crown in support.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (17) that reflects paragraph (12) of the existing Standing Order 42A with some minor changes to language.

Philip McGuigan left the meeting at 10.15 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the revised Standing Order be tabled as a motion in the Business Office to be scheduled for debate in Plenary.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a letter setting out the background to and rationale for the proposed changes to Standing Order 42A to be issued to all MLAs to inform the debate on the motion.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Speaker, the First Minister and deputy First Minister, the Minister of Justice, the Chairperson's Liaison Group, the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the Committee for Finance, all of whom had corresponded previously with

the Committee on Legislative Consent Motions, to provide them with an update on this issue.

5. Scrutiny Northern Ireland Act 1998 Section 42 – Petitions of Concern – Consideration of Final Draft Standing Orders

The Committee considered the final draft of Standing Order 28. Petition of Concern

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (1) that refers the reader to the relevant legislation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (2) that refers to the number of Members required to present and confirm a petition and the consideration period.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (3) that provides that a statement setting out the rationale for the petition may be presented to the Business Office along with the petition.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (4) that sets the deadline for presentation of a petition as no later than 4.00 p.m. on the last working day before the debate is due to take place.

Philip McGuigan rejoined the meeting at 10.24 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (5) that provides a deadline for the presentation of a petition under exceptional circumstances of no later than one hour before the debate is due to take place.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (6) that provides three matters that are not permitted to be the subject of a petition.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (7) that defines the Speaker as the decision maker in connection with paragraph (6)(c) regarding legal or procedural effect.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (8) that provides that Members presenting or confirming a petition must be from more than one party.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (9) that provides that a petition may not be signed by the Speaker, Principal Deputy Speaker and Deputy Speakers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (10) that relates to the day on which a petition can be confirmed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (11) that provides a definition of 'working day'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (12) that provides definitions of the 1998 Act and the 'consideration period'.

Danny Donnelly stated his concerns that the use of cross-community votes discriminates against Members who do not designate as Unionist or Nationalist.

The Committee considered draft Standing Order 28A. Petition of Concern: Consideration Period.

Andy Allen stated his concerns about bringing this draft Standing Order to Plenary for debate prior to the Committee establishing a mechanism for how the Standing Order would be implemented and that he could not support it.

Trevor Clarke stated that the DUP would not be supporting the draft Standing Order.

The Chairperson put the question that the Committee agree paragraph (1) that informs the reader that the Standing Order supplements Standing Order 28.

The Committee divided: Ayes 6; Noes 3; Abstain 0

AYES

Kellie Armstrong

Órlaithí Flynn

Danny Baker

Danny Donnelly

Cara Hunter

Philip McGuigan

NOES

Andy Allen

Cheryl Brownlee

Trevor Clarke

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (1).

The Chairperson put the question that the Committee agree paragraph (2) that provides that a petition may be referred to a committee established under section 13(3)(a) of the 1998 Act and that the Assembly may consider reports during the consideration period.

The Committee divided: Ayes 6; Noes 3; Abstain 0

AYES

Kellie Armstrong

Órlaithí Flynn

Danny Baker

Danny Donnelly

Cara Hunter

Philip McGuigan

NOES

Andy Allen

Cheryl Brownlee

Trevor Clarke

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (2).

The Chairperson put the question that the Committee agree paragraph (3) that provides definitions of the 1998 Act and the 'consideration period'.

The Committee divided: Ayes 6; Noes 3; Abstain 0

AYES

Kellie Armstrong

Órlaithí Flynn

Danny Baker

Danny Donnelly

Cara Hunter

Philip McGuigan

NOES

Andy Allen

Cheryl Brownlee

Trevor Clarke

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (3).

The Committee considered draft Standing Order 36A. Petition of Concern:
Consideration Stage

Trevor Clarke stated that the DUP would be reserving its position on this draft Standing Order.

The Chairperson put the question that the Committee agree paragraph (1) that explains that the Standing Order supplements Standing Order 28 and applies to petitions on Bills or amendments to Bills at Consideration Stage.

The Committee divided: Ayes 7; Noes 0; Abstain 2

AYES

Kellie Armstrong

Órlaithí Flynn

Andy Allen

Danny Baker

Danny Donnelly

Cara Hunter

Philip McGuigan

ABSTAIN

Cheryl Brownlee

Trevor Clarke

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (1).

The Chairperson put the question that the Committee agree paragraph (2) that removes the deadlines for the presentation of a petition that are applicable under Standing Order 28.

The Committee divided: Ayes 7; Noes 0; Abstain 2

AYES

Kellie Armstrong

Órlaithí Flynn

Andy Allen

Danny Baker

Danny Donnelly

ABSTAIN

Cheryl Brownlee

Trevor Clarke

Cara Hunter

Philip McGuigan

Danny Donnelly

Cara Hunter

Philip McGuigan

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (2).

The Chairperson put the question that the Committee agree paragraph (3) that outlines the deadlines for presentation of a petition on a Bill at Consideration Stage of 4.00 p.m. on the last working day before the first day on which the Consideration Stage is scheduled.

The Committee divided: Ayes 7; Noes 0; Abstain 2

AYES

Kellie Armstrong

Órlaithí Flynn

Andy Allen

Danny Baker

Danny Donnelly

Cara Hunter

Philip McGuigan

ABSTAIN

Cheryl Brownlee

Trevor Clarke

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (3).

The Chairperson put the question that the Committee agree paragraph (4) that provides for a later deadline for the presentation of a petition under exceptional circumstances of no later than one hour before the debate on Consideration Stage is due to take place and for the possibility of a no notice amendment.

The Committee divided: Ayes 7; Noes 0; Abstain 2

AYES

Kellie Armstrong

ABSTAIN

Cheryl Brownlee

Órlaithí Flynn

Trevor Clarke

Andy Allen

Danny Baker

Danny Donnelly

Cara Hunter

Philip McGuigan

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (4).

The Chairperson put the question that the Committee agree paragraph (5) that provides that no further petitions may be presented on a Bill related matter after the first day on which the Consideration Stage is scheduled.

The Committee divided: Ayes 7; Noes 0; Abstain 2

AYES

ABSTAIN

Kellie Armstrong

Cheryl Brownlee

Órlaithí Flynn

Trevor Clarke

Andy Allen

Danny Baker

Danny Donnelly

Cara Hunter

Philip McGuigan

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (5).

The Committee considered draft Standing Order 40A. Petition of Concern after Consideration Stage.

Trevor Clarke stated that the DUP would be reserving its position on this draft Standing Order.

The Chairperson put the question that the Committee agree paragraph (1) that explains that the Standing Order supplements Standing Order 28 and applies to Bills or amendments to Bills at amending stages other than Consideration Stage.

The Committee divided: Ayes 7; Noes 0; Abstain 2

AYES

ABSTAIN

Kellie Armstrong

Cheryl Brownlee

Órlaithí Flynn

Trevor Clarke

Andy Allen

Danny Baker

Danny Donnelly

Cara Hunter

Philip McGuigan

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (1).

The Chairperson put the question that the Committee agree paragraph (2) that removes the deadlines for the presentation of a petition that are applicable under Standing Order 28.

The Committee divided: Ayes 7; Noes 0; Abstain 2

AYES

ABSTAIN

Kellie Armstrong

Cheryl Brownlee

Órlaithí Flynn

Trevor Clarke

Andy Allen

Danny Baker

Danny Donnelly

Cara Hunter

Philip McGuigan

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (2).

The Chairperson put the question that the Committee agree paragraph (3) that defines the amending stages at which the Standing Order applies.

The Committee divided: Ayes 7; Noes 0; Abstain 2

AYES

Kellie Armstrong

Órlaithí Flynn

Andy Allen

Danny Baker

Danny Donnelly

Cara Hunter

Philip McGuigan

ABSTAIN

Cheryl Brownlee

Trevor Clarke

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (3).

The Chairperson put the question that the Committee agree paragraph (4) that provides that paragraphs (3) to (5) of Standing Order 36A apply to this Standing Order.

The Committee divided: Ayes 7; Noes 0; Abstain 2

AYES

Kellie Armstrong

Órlaithí Flynn

Andy Allen

Danny Baker

Danny Donnelly

Cara Hunter

Philip McGuigan

ABSTAIN

Cheryl Brownlee

Trevor Clarke

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph (4).

The Committee considered whether to amalgamate draft Standing Orders 28, 36A and 40A.

Agreed: The Committee agreed not to amalgamate the draft Standing Orders.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that a draft initial report outlining its considerations would be prepared for the next meeting and that draft motions would be prepared thereafter.

6. Standing Order 69C Members' Interests: Rectification of Minor Errors – Unacceptable Behaviours Policy

The Committee considered a request from the Committee on Standards to amend Standing Order 69C Members' Interests: Rectification of Minor Errors to widen the scope to cover the Unacceptable Behaviours Policy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to prioritise work to consider the request from the Committee on Standards to amend Standing Order 69C.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule the attendance of the Clerk to the Committee on Standards and an Assembly Legal Adviser at the meeting on 30 September 2026 to provide further information on the policy and the required changes to Standing Order 69C.

7. Anomalies and Technical Issues with Standing Orders – Publication of Assembly Commission Responses to Written Questions

Trevor Clarke declared an interest as a member of the Assembly Commission.

The Committee considered a response from the Assembly Commission on publication of responses to Assembly Written Questions to the Commission and a proposal to amend Standing Order 19(1)(b) to enable a response to be given in the name of the Commission rather than the individual Member.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission Assembly Legal Services to provide an amended Standing Order 19(1)(b) and associated legal advice.

8. Anomalies and Technical Issues with Standing Orders – Deadline for the Appointment of the Assembly Commission after an Election

The Committee considered a response from the Assembly Commission on the deadline for appointments to the Commission after an election and the potential to amend Standing Order 79(2) .

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission Assembly Legal Services to provide an amended Standing Order 79(2) and associated legal advice to reflect the Assembly Commission's proposed approach.

The meeting moved into public session at 11.13 a.m.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered an updated Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the updated Forward Work Programme.

10. Correspondence

The Committee noted correspondence from the Public Accounts Committee regarding its primacy over Northern Ireland Audit Office reports and the subject of its next inquiry.

The Committee considered correspondence from Deborah Erskine MLA regarding an extension to Standing Order 27A Proxy Voting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to discuss the correspondence at the meeting on 30 September 2026.

11. Chairperson's Business

None

12. Any Other Business

None.

13. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 30 September 2026 at 10.00 a.m. in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.15 a.m.

Kellie Armstrong MLA

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

30 September 2026