



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Chairpersons' Liaison Group

## Minutes of Proceedings

**21 October 2025**

**Room 21, Parliament Buildings**

**Present:**

Phillip Brett MLA (Chairperson)  
Paula Bradshaw MLA  
Paul Frew MLA  
Colm Gildernew MLA  
Nick Mathison MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Daniel McCrossan MLA

**Apologies:**

Kellie Armstrong MLA  
Jonathan Buckley MLA  
Robbie Butler MLA  
Alan Chambers MLA  
Ciara Ferguson MLA  
Peter Martin MLA  
Cathy Mason MLA  
Philip McGuigan MLA  
Matthew O'Toole MLA

**In Attendance:**     Roisin Kelly (Clerk)  
                          Mary Kerr (Senior Assistant Clerk)  
                          Charmaine McBride (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
                          Danielle Saunders (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 1:30pm in closed session.

## **1. Apologies**

As above.

## **2. Chairperson's Business**

The Chair expressed appreciation on behalf of Members to Joanne Bunting for her valuable contribution to the work of Chairpersons' Liaison Group (CLG) during previous sessions and wished her all the best in her role as Junior Minister.

The Chairperson extended a warm welcome to new Chairs, Paul Frew, and Peter Martin on behalf of Members and noted that a letter has been issued to outgoing Chair of CLG, Deborah Erskine, to convey Members' congratulations and best wishes on the birth of her first baby.

### **3. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

**Agreed:** Chairpersons agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2025.

### **4. Matters Arising**

#### **Letter issued from Chairpersons' Liaison Group (CLG) to the Committee on Procedures**

Members noted a letter that was issued from CLG to the Committee on Procedures on 24 September 2025, regarding Legislative Consent Motions.

#### **Update on Strengthening Scrutiny Arrangements**

Members noted an update from Stephanie Mallon (Clerk Assistant) confirming that in accordance with recommendations 24 and 25 of the CLG Report on Strengthening Committee Scrutiny (2017-22 mandate), a full complement of Senior Assistant Clerks (SACs) has now been recruited to support committee scrutiny. Stephanie noted that staff deployment has been aligned with the legislation workload of each committee and that SAC's may operate across two committees to enable a more agile approach. All staff are expected to be in place for 3 November 2025 and will provide support with scrutiny of primary legislation (pre-legislative and post-legislative) and scrutiny of delegated legislation.

*Colm Gildernew joined the meeting at 1:36pm*

### **5. Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC) Review – Assembly Committee Engagement on Executive Cross-Cutting Strategies**

Members noted the draft response to the AERC review of Assembly Committee Engagement on Executive Cross-Cutting Strategies and agreed the CLG response paragraph by paragraph, for submission to the AERC.

**Agreed:** CLG agreed that it was content to include the section: General Comments (Para 5 – 6) in its response.

**Agreed:** CLG agreed that it was content to include the section: Issues that have arisen in relation to committee scrutiny of cross-cutting Executive strategies and legislation (Para 7 to 12) in its response.

**Agreed:** CLG agreed that it was content to include the section: Experiences of dealing with Matters of Joint Concern under the options provided for in Assembly Standing Order 64 (Para 13 – 16) in its response.

**Agreed:** CLG agreed that it was content to include the suggestions in the section: What specific reforms would you propose to the existing procedures and practices? (Para 17 – 23) in its response.

**Agreed:** CLG agreed that it was content to include the case studies in Appendix A: Examples of Issues Relating to Cross-Cutting Scrutiny Provided by Individual Chairpersons (Para 24 – 26) in its response.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to write to AERC with the CLG response, as agreed, at today's meeting.

## **6. Committee Meeting Etiquette**

Members noted that at the meeting of CLG in May 2025, they considered correspondence from the Speaker on dress code at committee meetings and that the Speaker had referred this matter to CLG as neither the Assembly Commission nor the Speaker has a role in relation to dress code in committees. Subsequently, CLG wrote to the Speaker on 5 June 2025 to advise that it agreed it would return to the matter at a future meeting of CLG.

At the same meeting in May 2025, Members discussed camera use during hybrid meetings, and it was agreed that the Clerking and Member Support (CAMS) Office would collate and review existing guidance on both issues of standards of dress and camera use, including practice in other legislatures, for consideration at a future meeting.

*The Chair asked the Clerk to speak to the information in the briefing note provided.*

The Clerk took Members through each section of the briefing note in relation to standards of dress and camera etiquette, which included practice in other legislatures and the Assembly's current guidance on **Hybrid Proceedings – Committee Meetings**.

**Agreed:** Members were content that the CAMS Office update the current guidance note on **Hybrid Proceedings – Committee Meetings** with a supplementary paragraph regarding the Northern Ireland Assembly virtual background which has been developed by the Assembly Communications Office, for corporate use across the organisation.

**Agreed:** Members agreed that once updated, the guidance should be re-circulated to all Members, and that CLG will write to the Speaker to update him on the outcomes of CLG consideration of this matter.

## **7. Correspondence**

### **Letter from Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI) regarding Committee Amendments**

Members noted correspondence from CiNI on 25 September 2025, regarding the Committee for Education's amendments to the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill.

**Agreed:** CLG will write to CiNI to; thank it for its letter, advise that the Speaker's decision on selection of committee amendments is final, and that this matter falls outside the remit of the Chairpersons' Liaison Group.

### **Letter from Committee for Finance to Chairpersons' Liaison Group in reference to correspondence from the Minister of Finance regarding the Northern Ireland Civil Service Advertising Policy**

Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance on 15 September 2025, informing CLG that the Minister of Finance wrote to the Committee to advise

that the mandatory requirement to advertise all external civil service recruitment opportunities in the three daily newspapers has been removed.

**Letter from Committee on Procedures to Chairpersons' Liaison Group regarding Legislative Consent Motions – Standing Order 42A**

Members noted correspondence from the Committee on Procedures on 14 October 2025, to advise that the committee recently undertook a review of its strategic priorities and has decided to add consideration of Legislative Consent Motions and Standing Order 42A to its list of priority work areas and, that the Committee would also welcome further engagement with CLG on this issue at the appropriate time.

**8. Draft Forward Work Programme**

Members noted that due to three substantive items of business being scheduled for CLG's November meeting, and given constraints on Members' time, no additional topic from CLG's Forward Work Programme would be selected for discussion at November's meeting.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to consider their strategic priorities and forward work programme in December's meeting along with any outstanding business.

**9. AOB**

Members noted an issue with a digital application that enables them to effectively markup committee meeting papers on their device.

**Agreed:** The Clerking and Member Support Office will engage with the relevant Assembly staff to escalate the issue and work towards resolving the application problem.

**10. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 18 November 2025, at 1:15pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:56pm.

**Phillip Brett (Chairperson)**

**21 October 2025**