



Commissioner for Standards
222 Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 9052 1220
Email: standardscommissioner@niassembly.gov.uk

Ms Cathy Mason MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Standards and Privileges
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw, Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

22nd June 2026

Case ID: 202500119 & 202500120

Dear Chair and Committee Members

In a letter dated 11th June 2026, the Committee afforded me the opportunity to respond to Ms Ní Chuilín's representations regarding my report in respect of complaints 202500119 & 202500120. In responding, I do continue to rely on the findings in my report and do not intend to repeat those findings nor to reiterate my comments made to the Committee.

Ms Ní Chuilín is correct that the findings in my report are contingent on whether the Belfast City Hall incident was a matter under consideration by the Committee on each of the two occasions.

The Guide to the Rules makes clear that the obligation to declare an interest exits '*when considering any matter*' without providing further clarity or restriction. In the absence of further directions or guidance this must therefore be interpreted in a broad sense.

Each case must be considered on its' own merits but any rational assessment would include a consideration of the nature and duration of any discussion on a matter and would require more than just an incidental or tangential comment on a matter.

In this case, at the November 2025 meeting, the question was specifically permitted by the Chair and further questions ruled inadmissible only after the witness had provided such responses as to satisfy the Chair that the initial question had been addressed. A substantial conversation had by then taken place extending to over 7 minutes after which a discussion occurred regarding a proposal on the matter which was agreed by the Committee. It is notable that Ms Ní Chuilín did participate in this discussion relating to the proposal.

In these circumstances my assessment is that a reasonable objective observer would conclude that the City Hall Incident was a matter under consideration by the Committee on 26th November 2026 and therefore a requirement to declare any relevant interest would arise.

I am content that there is no inconsistency in my assessment of both meetings. The witness present before the Committee was different on each occasion and therefore it is reasonable that what may not have been appropriate for discussion at the first meeting may have been relevant to the witness in the second.

It is evident from her response to the Committee that Ms Ní Chuilín is not content or in agreement with the conclusions I have reached. This is not an uncommon occurrence when a member is found in breach of the Code, and I fully respect Ms Ní Chuilín's right to disagree with my conclusions.

Thank you for providing the opportunity of reply.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Stephen Wright.

Stephen Wright
Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards