



COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Wednesday 20 January 2021
VIDEO-CONFERENCE**

Video-Conference: Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mrs Rosemary Barton MLA
Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA
Mr Gerry Carroll MLA
Mr Gary Middleton MLA

In attendance: Ms Linda Dillon MLA
Nick Mitford (Committee Clerk)
Stewart Kennedy (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Ms Susie Brown (Head of Communications)
Mr Paul Gill (Clerk Assistant)

Apologies: Mr Maurice Bradley MLA
Ms Nicola Brogan MLA

The meeting commenced in open session at 2.33pm.

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA advised the Committee that she had had replaced John O'Dowd MLA on the Committee and resumed her role as Chairperson. The Chairperson thanked Mr O'Dowd and Ms Linda Dillon MLA.

The Chairperson informed Members that the Clerk would join the meeting via video-conference.

The Committee Clerk informed Members that he had received notification from Ms Nicola Brogan MLA that she had nominated the Chairperson to vote on her behalf.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the issue of potentially introducing Hybrid Proceedings in the Chamber had become more of a pressing matter and that the agenda had been amended to allow the Committee to progress this issue and receive briefings on the practicalities of introducing Hybrid Proceedings and the potential procedural issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to closed session at the end of the meeting to receive a briefing from the Clerk Assistant on the procedural issues.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16 December 2020.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 The Chairperson informed the Committee that, on receipt of legal advice in relation to the 9.30am deadline to nominate a proxy vote, there appeared to be more detail for the Committee to consider than originally anticipated.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to receive a briefing from Legal Services at its next meeting.

3.2 The Chairperson advised the Committee that the committee motion to amend Standing Order 110 had been scheduled for 26 January 2021.

4. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- The Audit Committee's call for evidence from expert witnesses in relation to its "Review of the governance and accountability

arrangements for the Audit Office and the Public Services Ombudsman”.

- The latest publication of the NI Human Rights Commission newsletter.

5. Forward Work Programme

Given the change to the agenda to allow for Hybrid Proceedings to be progressed, the Committee agreed for the following items of business to be scheduled for the next meeting:

- further consideration to proxy voting;
- a briefing on the Legislative Consent Motion procedures;
- a briefing from Legal Services on the 9.30am deadline for Proxy Voting; and
- strategic planning

6. Chairperson’s Business

There was no Chairperson’s Business.

7. Any Other Business

Linda Dillon thanked Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA for the opportunity to Chair the Committee during her temporary absence and for the support provided to her by officials.

8. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Agreed: It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Wednesday 3 February 2021 at 2.30pm in Room 29.

9. Hybrid Proceedings – Briefing by the Head of Communications

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence in relation to Hybrid Proceedings:

- an email from the Chief Whip of the Alliance Party requesting the Committee enables remote access to plenary;

- a press article in relation to Hybrid Proceedings in the Assembly;
- a letter from the Executive to the Speaker which was copied to the Chairperson.
- the Speaker's response to the Executive; and
- a letter from the Speaker to the Committee.

The Committee also noted a proposed layout for screens in the Chamber.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms Susie Brown to the committee meeting.

Ms Brown briefed the Committee on the equipment that is being procured and the arrangements for its installation. This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Brown for her briefing.

The meeting moved to closed session at 3.08pm.

10. Hybrid Proceedings – Briefing by the Clerk Assistant

The Chairperson advised the Committee that it would receive a briefing from Paul Gill (Clerk Assistant) on the procedural issues of implementing Hybrid Proceedings in the Chamber. The Chairperson also advised the Committee that Mr Jonathan McMillen (Head of Legal Services) was also in attendance to answer any questions if required.

The Committee noted a paper from the Clerk on the potential procedural issues of introducing Hybrid Proceedings.

Mr Paul Gill briefed the Committee which was followed by a question and answer session.

During discussions, the Committee gave consideration to a number of important issues including the purpose of introducing Hybrid Proceedings and whether there should be limitations on who could join a sitting remotely. The Committee also considered its approach to how Hybrid Proceedings are provided for in Standing Orders.

Agreed: Following discussions, the Committee agreed to introduce a facility for remote participation in plenary proceedings which would not only accommodate those Members who cannot come to the Chamber because they are self-isolating but also to reduce the number of Members who need to travel to Parliament Buildings and therefore participate remotely.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bring forward a standing order that allows for the general principle of remote participation in plenary, subject to the discretion of the Speaker.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a draft standing order and a motion to amend Standing Order 110.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the following to provide an update on the Committee's deliberations and to inform them of the decisions made:

- The Speaker;
- The Assembly Commission;
- The Business Committee;
- All MLAs to provide further detail of how Hybrid Proceedings will operate; and
- The Chief Whip of the Alliance Party

The Chairperson thanked Mr Gill for his briefing.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 3.43pm.

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA
Chairperson, Committee on Procedures
3 February 2021