



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee on Procedures

Minutes of Proceedings

24 March 2021

Meeting Location: Virtual Meeting (Room 29)

Present by Video-Conference:

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mrs Rosemary Barton MLA

Mr Maurice Bradley MLA

Ms Nicola Brogan MLA

Mr Gerry Carroll MLA

Ms Linda Dillon MLA

Apologies: Mr Gary Middleton MLA

In Attendance by Video-Conference:

Emer Boyle (Committee Clerk)

Paul Gill (Clerk Assistant)

Stewart Kennedy (Assistant Clerk)

Joanne Keenan (Clerical Officer)



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Mr Trevor Reaney (Independent Parliamentary Consultant)
(Item 4 only)

The meeting commenced at 2.34pm in open session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to closed session at the end of the meeting to discuss its strategic planning.

The Chairperson reminded the Committee that, in accordance with the temporary provisions in Standing Order 116, the Committee agreed to not meet on 3 March 2021 and to agree any actions by way of correspondence.

The Chairperson further reminded the Committee that the actions agreed by way of correspondence included agreement to receive a briefing on the Review of Statement of Entitlements for an Official Opposition and for further information to be brought back on the topics of Private Members' Bills and EU Exit implications.

The Clerk confirmed that she had not received notice from a Member who has delegated authority to another member of the committee to vote on his or her behalf.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 17 February 2021.



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3. Matters Arising

The Chairperson reminded the Committee that its motion to amend Standing Order 112(8) was agreed by the Assembly on Monday 8 March 2021.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Speaker to the Chairperson which included updated guidance on the amendment to Standing Order 112(8) which was being issued to all MLAs.

4. Statement of Entitlements for an Official Opposition - Briefing by Mr Trevor Reaney (Independent Parliamentary Consultant)

Mr Trevor Reaney joined the meeting at 2.37pm.

The Chairperson informed the Committee that Mr Reaney was appointed, through a tender process, by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee, to undertake a review of the Statement of Entitlements for an Official Opposition.

The Committee noted a paper from the Clerk which provided background context to the briefing and the Terms of Reference for the review.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Reaney to the meeting.

Mr Reaney briefed the Committee on the review which was followed by a question and answer session. During discussions, Mr Reaney informed Members that he had also written to all parties and Independent Members for consultation.

The Chairperson asked Members to encourage their parties to respond to the consultation letter.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Reaney for his briefing.

Mr Reaney left the meeting at 2.52pm.



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5. Legislative Consent Motions Inquiry – Update

The Chairperson provided the Committee with an update on its Inquiry into the Legislative Consent Motion procedures following engagement with other devolved legislatures. In particular, the Chairperson drew Members' attention to the ongoing Inquiry being undertaken by the House of Commons Procedures Committee which makes particular reference to LCMs and on which it would strongly welcome a submission from the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for a written submission to be prepared in response to the House of Commons Inquiry and brought back to the Committee for consideration.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to hold an informal joint meeting with the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of House of Commons Procedures Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Institute for Government to provide a written submission and to attend a future meeting in order to address the specific issues being considered as part of the Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Executive to remind it that the Committee's Inquiry is imminent and to seek an update on its response to the Committee's Inquiry.

6. Proxy Voting – Further Consideration

The Committee gave further consideration to the intent regarding the extent of the proposed amendment to SO 27(11) in relation to proxy voting.

Members discussed whether they wished to consider extending the scope of the previously agreed policy position to include "unforeseen circumstances".

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the party Whips, the Speaker and the Business Committee to seek their views with regard to the inclusion of



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“unforeseen circumstances” in this review, in order to ascertain if there would be broader support for this proposal.

7. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- a memo from the Clerk of the Public Accounts Committee in respect of the Audit Office reports in which PAC holds primacy over:
- the latest publication of the NI Human Rights Newsletter;
- an email from the World Peace Foundation India; and
- a memo from the Chairperson’s Liaison Group in respect of correspondence received from the Committee for Justice regarding the Executive’s decision to allow a condensed Committee Stage of the Damages (Return on Investment) Bill.

The Committee also noted correspondence from the Business Committee which asked the Committee whether it might consider Petitions as part of its strategic planning.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to discuss this issue during the strategic planning session at the end of the meeting.

8. Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson advised the Committee that it would consider which options it wishes to take forward at the strategic planning session at the end of the meeting. This would then inform the Committee’s work programme.

9. Chairperson’s Business

There was no Chairperson’s business.



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10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Agreed: It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Wednesday 21 April 2021 at 2.30pm.

The meeting moved to closed session at 3.01pm.

12. Strategic Planning

The Committee noted a response from the First and deputy Ministers regarding the commitments in the NDNA agreement which may impact the work of the Committee.

The Committee also noted a response from the Speaker which covered a number of potential items of work for the Committee to consider as part of its strategic planning. These included Private Members' Bills, NDNA commitments in relation to the use of Irish and Ulster Scots and Assembly Business and Members' Statements.

The Committee considered a paper from the Clerk on the work areas which could be included in the Committee's plans for the rest of the mandate.

The Chairperson provided the Committee with an update on the current position of each item of work.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the Clerk to arrange a meeting with the Chairperson, the Speaker and his officials to further discuss the use of Irish and Ulster Scots in Assembly business.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Secretary of State to seek an update on commitments within NDNA to bring forward amendments to legislation in relation the Petition of Concern and the Timing of the Formation of the Executive.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to progress PMBs as an item of work and for a further paper, including draft Terms of Reference, to be provided to Members for consideration at a future meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was now an appropriate time for the Committee to return to the issue of Members' Statements in its forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the Clerk to bring back a paper with further information on Petitions and E-Petitions and to outline the different options for consideration should the Committee wish to proceed with a review of procedures for either Petitions or E-Petitions and the associated differences between the two.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for a paper to be brought to a future meeting relating to the EU exit related issues for the Committee on Procedures to progress.

The meeting was adjourned at 3.15pm.

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA
Chairperson, Committee on Procedures
21 April 2021