



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Chairpersons' Liaison Group

Minutes of Proceedings

Tuesday 19 October 2021

Meeting Location: Virtual Meeting via StarLeaf

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Dr Caoimhe Archibald MLA
Ms Paula Bradley MLA
Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA
Mr William Humphrey MLA
Mr Chris Lyttle MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA (Chairperson)

Apologies:

Dr Steve Aiken OBE MLA
Ms Linda Dillon MLA
Mr Colm Gildernew MLA
Ms Emma Sheerin MLA
Mr Mervyn Storey MLA
Mr Peter Weir MLA



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In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Mrs Lesley Hogg, Chief Executive/Clerk to the Assembly

Dr Gareth McGrath, Director of Parliamentary Services

Ms Stella McArdle, Committee Clerk

Mr Trevor Allen, Senior Assistant Clerk

Mrs Bronagh Irwin, Assistant Clerk

Mr Neal Flanagan, Assistant Clerk

Mr Stewart Kennedy, Clerical Supervisor

Dr Frank Geddis, Clerk Assistant (agenda item 4)

Ms Emer Boyle, Committee Clerk (agenda item 5)

Mr Paul Gill, Clerk Assistant (agenda item 5)

Dr Dan Hull, Senior Research Officer (agenda item 6)

Mr Aidan Stennett, Research Officer (agenda item 6)

The meeting commenced at 1:19 pm in closed session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Chairperson's Business

Chairpersons noted that Colin McGrath has resigned as Chairperson of the Committee for the Executive Office and therefore is no longer a member of the Chairpersons' Liaison Group (CLG); and that Sinead McLaughlin now joins the



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group. Chairperson thanked Mr McGrath for his contribution to the work of CLG, both as a member and Deputy Chairperson. Members also noted that as the SDLP currently hold the position of Deputy Chairperson to CLG, committee staff will contact SDLP Chairpersons to seek their nomination for a replacement. Committee staff will be in touch with all Chairpersons when this has been confirmed.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting of 5 October 2021, as circulated and agreed by correspondence, were noted.

4. Matters Arising

Legislative Pressures

Chairpersons noted correspondence from the Speaker regarding legislative pressures on Assembly time until the end of the current mandate and the intention of the Business Committee to meet on this issue following the Halloween Recess.

Agreed: Chairpersons to convene an extra meeting of CLG before 12 November 2021 to meet with the Speaker to discuss legislative pressures facing committees.

Connectivity Issues

Chairpersons noted correspondence from (i) the Committee on Standards and Privileges; and (ii) the Head of Information Systems (IS) regarding Wi-Fi connectivity in Parliament Buildings. It was noted that the IS Office is currently undertaking a review of the system and plans to fully replace the Wi-Fi network infrastructure in order to improve signal coverage and provide reliable access for video conferencing platforms. Members also noted remedial action that is in place in the interim.



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Further expansion of streaming fully virtual meetings

Chairpersons discussed options regarding the expansion of fully virtual meetings.

Agreed: Chairpersons agreed to request that initially one additional StarLeaf stream is provided, with the option on bringing on the second additional stream if and when required; and that the situation is reviewed at the end of November to ascertain if a need has been identified for an additional hybrid meeting space.

5. Committee on Procedures Ongoing Inquiry – Private Members’ Bills (PMBs)

Chairpersons received a briefing from Emer Boyle, Committee Clerk, on the Terms of Committee on Procedures Inquiry on Private Members’ Bills

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Boyle for the presentation.

Agreed: Chairpersons agreed to draft response to the Inquiry for consideration and agreement by correspondence.

6. Research and Information Service (RaISe) Digital Strategy

Chairpersons received a briefing from Dr Dan Hull, Senior Research Officer and Aidan Stennett, Research Officer, on RaISe’s Digital Strategy.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Dr Hull and Mr Stennett for their presentation.

Agreed: Chairpersons agreed to share the strategy with all committees.



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7. Use of Citizen Space

Chairpersons welcomed Mrs Louise Close, Outreach Manager, Northern Ireland Assembly, to the meeting.

Chairpersons discussed the use of Citizen Space and its aim of improving calls for evidence / consultation; and noted the committees of the Assembly that have used the platform. Chairpersons further noted the collaborative approach taken by committee teams who work with Communications and Engagement on other means of publicity such as social media, contacting stakeholders and events.

Agreed: Chairpersons agreed that (i) Citizen Space is used as the primary tool for Call for Evidence for committees, where appropriate; (ii) Committees are provided with a presentation on how Citizen Space can enhance the scrutiny role of the committee; (iii) officials continue to explore how to address 'the digital divide' to maximise accessibility to Citizen Space and, to further explore how Citizen Space may assist in strengthening committee scrutiny, bringing forward recommendations as appropriate; (iv) responses to calls for evidence via Citizen Space are published to increase transparency; and (v) where possible, feedback is provided to respondents on the impact of their submission on committee scrutiny.

Mr Buckley left the meeting at 2:05 pm

Ms Bradley left the meeting at 2:07 pm

8. Correspondence

Chairpersons noted correspondence from the Clerk Assistant on the provision of live sign language interpretation of NI Assembly Question Time to the Executive Office. A pilot will run from November 2021 to March 2022. The interpretation is to be in British Sign Language and Irish Sign Language.



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9. Forward Work Programme

Members noted the draft Forward Work Programme covering October – December 2021.

10. Any Other Business

None.

11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next Chairpersons' Liaison Group meeting is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 16 November 2021 at 1.15 pm via StarLeaf.

Chairpersons noted that an additional meeting with the Speaker is to be arranged.

The meeting was adjourned at 2.09 pm.

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA
Chairperson, Chairpersons' Liaison Group