



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee on Procedures

Minutes of Proceedings

05 May 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 Sinéad Bradley MLA

Ms Nicola Brogan MLA

Mr Gerry Carroll MLA

Ms Linda Dillon MLA

Mr Gary Middleton MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance by Video-Conference:

Emer Boyle (Committee Clerk)

Paul Gill (Clerk Assistant) (Item 6)

Stewart Kennedy (Assistant Clerk)



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Joanne Keenan (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.33pm in open session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 21 April 2021.

3. Matters Arising

There were no Matters Arising.

4. NDNA Commitments – Simultaneous Interpretation – Briefing by the Assembly Commission

The Committee noted a paper from the Clerk which provided a note of the informal meeting held between the Chairperson, the Speaker and Assembly officials regarding NDNA commitments.

The following Assembly officials joined the meeting at 2.36pm:

- Dr Gareth McGrath, Director, Parliamentary Services;
- Mr Simon Burrowes, Editor of Debates; and
- Ms Susie Brown, Head of Communications.

The Chairperson welcomed the officials to the meeting.



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The Committee noted a briefing paper from the officials on simultaneous interpretation.

The officials briefed the Committee on the simultaneous interpretation of Assembly business in Irish and Ulster Scots, including practical and logistical issues in terms of both infrastructure and costs.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek further information on the following:

- What is currently happening in the other legislatures;
- What is the current position with translation in the NI Assembly;
- What is required to attract interpreters for additional provision of translation and in particular Ulster Scots;
- What further interaction does the Commission require from the Committee in order start the process of securing the budget for simultaneous translation; and
- The total yearly costs to provide simultaneous interpretation in the chamber and also the yearly costs to provide simultaneous translation in committee meetings.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their briefing.

The officials left the meeting at 3.11pm.

5. Review of Private Members' Bill – Briefing by the Bill Office

The Committee noted a further paper from the Clerk.

The following Assembly officials joined the meeting at 3.13pm:

- Dr Frank Geddis, Clerk Assistant; and
- Mr James Gilsenan, Assembly Clerk.

The Chairperson welcomed the officials to the meeting.



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The Committee noted a briefing paper from the officials on existing processes, background and any potential procedural weaknesses in the arrangements currently in place for Private Members' Bills (PMBs).

The officials briefed the Committee which was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for the briefing.

The officials left the meeting at 3.27pm.

Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA joined the meeting at 3.27pm

The Committee considered the paper from the Clerk and discussed possible research that the Committee may wish to commission, potential stakeholders for consultation on its review of PMBs and a proposed programme of work.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek a refresh and update of the current research papers on PMBs.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the list of potential consultees with the view of adding to the list should specific aspects be identified during the review.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the proposed programme of work.

6. Members' Statements

The Committee considered a paper from the Clerk which provided some additional information following consultation with officials from the Speaker's Office and the Business Committee regarding Members' Statements.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the approach to Members' Statements as outlined by the Speaker.

The Committee discussed two options in relation to the frequency with which Members' Statements might be scheduled. Option 1 allowed the business to occur routinely with an agreed frequency. Option 2 was for the Business Committee to determine how frequently Members' Statements were scheduled.

The question was put to Members asking who was in favour with Option 1.



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The Committee divided: Ayes 1; Noes 7; Abstain 0.

AYES: Mr Gerry Carroll

NOES: Mrs Rosemary Barton; Mr Maurice Bradley; Ms Sinéad Bradley; Ms Nicola Brogan; Mr Thomas Buchanan; Ms Linda Dillon; and Mr Gary Middleton.

The question was put to Members asking who was in favour of Option 2.

The Committee divided: Ayes 5; Noes 4; Abstain 0.

AYES: Mrs Rosemary Barton; Mr Maurice Bradley; Ms Sinéad Bradley; Mr Thomas Buchanan; and Mr Gary Middleton.

NOES: Ms Nicola Brogan; Mr Gerry Carroll; Ms Linda Dillon; and Ms Carál Ní Chuilín.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Option 2 and that it would recommend to the Business Committee that Members' Statements be scheduled not less than once a week and usually on a weekly basis.

The Committee considered two options regarding the scheduling of Members' Statements.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to allow the Business Committee to determine the timing of Members' Statements and would recommend to the Business Committee that this item of business be taken towards the start of plenary business.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a number of restrictions it would recommend to potentially accommodate Members' Statements.

Agreed: The Committee agreed not to consider a period to pilot Members' Statements.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for draft a Standing Order to be drafted for consideration at a future meeting.



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7. Legislative Consent Motions – Inquiry Update

The Committee considered a paper from the Clerk which provided an update on the progress of the ongoing Inquiry into the LCM procedures.

The Chairperson advised Members that a draft written submission would be prepared in response to the House of Commons Inquiry for consideration at a future meeting.

The Chairperson informed the Committee that she attended an informal meeting with the Deputy Chairperson and their counterparts in the House of Commons Procedures Committee. The Chairperson advised the Committee that a note of the issues discussed would be brought back to the next committee meeting for Members' review.

8. Proxy Voting – Consideration of Responses

The Committee noted a paper from the Clerk which gave an update on the Committee's review of Proxy Voting procedures.

The Committee also noted submissions from a number of the political parties and independents regarding the inclusion of "unforeseen circumstances" in the scope of the review.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer this item of business and for the Clerk to follow-up the outstanding responses and revert back to the Committee at the next meeting.

9. Correspondence

The Committee considered an email from the Alliance Party which asked the Committee to consider reviewing the current timeframe for the committee stage of a Bill.



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The Committee were of the view that a review of the statutory period for the committee stage of a Bill would be a substantial piece of work and given that the Committee had already agreed its priorities for the remainder of the mandate, it would not be possible to undertake such a review.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to respond to the Alliance Party confirming its decision not to undertake a review of the committee stage of a Bill.

The Committee noted the latest publication of the NI Human Rights Commission newsletter and a response from the Minister of State regarding NDNA commitments.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme as amended.

11. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's business.

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

13. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Agreed: It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Wednesday 19 May 2021 at 2.30pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.11pm.



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Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

**Chairperson, Committee on Procedures
19 May 2021**