



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Chairpersons' Liaison Group

Minutes of Proceedings

18 June 2024

Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Cáral Ní Chuilín MLA
Paula Bradshaw MLA
Phillip Brett MLA
Tom Elliott MLA
Deborah Erskine MLA
Liz Kimmins MLA
Nick Mathison MLA

Apologies:

Kellie Armstrong MLA
Jonathan Buckley MLA
Joanne Bunting MLA
Alan Chambers MLA
Colm Gildernew MLA
Daniel McCrossan MLA
Philip McGuigan MLA
Matthew O'Toole MLA

In Attendance: Roisin Kelly (Assembly Clerk)
 Alison Belshaw (Senior Assistant Clerk)
 Pamela Carson (Senior Assistant Clerk)
 Charmaine McBride (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
 Jenny Massey (Clerical Supervisor)

 Lesley Hogg (Chief Executive/Clerk to the Assembly)
 Frank Geddis (Clerk Assistant)
 Paul Gill (Clerk Assistant)
 Stephanie Mallon (Clerk Assistant)
 Christine Darrah (Assembly Clerk)

The meeting commenced at 1:05pm in closed session.

The Chairperson welcomed members to the fourth meeting of the CLG and provided an overview of the items of business.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Agreed: The Chairpersons agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2024.

3. Matters Arising

Parliamentary Excellence Programme

Stephanie Mallon (Clerk Assistant) briefed Members on the planned Members' development activities, now referred to as the Parliamentary Excellence Programme (PEP).

Members noted the information regarding the Parliamentary Excellence Programme and were content to receive an update in September 2024 on further planned activities in the Parliamentary Excellence programme.

The Chairperson thanked Stephanie for providing CLG with an overview of PEP.

Tom Elliott joined the meeting at 1:13pm

Paul Gill joined the meeting at 1:14pm

Gareth McGrath joined the meeting at 1:14pm

Deborah Erskine joined the meeting at 1:14pm

4. Post-Legislative Scrutiny

Frank Geddis (Clerk Assistant) briefed Members on a paper he prepared to update the CLG on progress in relation to the development of proposals to implement a number of recommendations relating to Post-Legislative Scrutiny contained in the *Report on Strengthening Committee Scrutiny*.

The Chairperson thanked Frank for his update on Post-Legislative Scrutiny.

Members were content to note that the business case for additional resources will require consideration by the Assembly Commission, and subsequently the Assembly Commission's budget will need to be considered by the Audit Committee and approved by the Assembly itself.

Agreed: Members agreed that officials will report back to Chairpersons' Liaison Group by 31 March 2025.

Agreed: Members agreed that the update to CLG on Post-Legislative Scrutiny should be shared by Chairpersons' to their respective committees.

5. Strengthening Committee Scrutiny

Paul Gill (Clerk Assistant) briefed Members on a paper he prepared to update the Chairpersons' Liaison Group on progress in relation to the development of proposals to implement a number of its recommendations relating to the scrutiny of statutory rules contained in its *Report on Strengthening Committee Scrutiny*.

Paul Gill and Christine Darrah addressed questions put to them by Members, in relation to the detail of the scrutiny of statutory rules in committee.

Philip Brett left the meeting at 1:27pm

Philip Brett joined the meeting at 1:30pm

The Chairperson thanked Paul and Christine for their contribution and updating CLG on progress of implementing a number of CLG recommendations.

Members noted the update in relation to the development of proposals to implement a number of the recommendations regarding the scrutiny of statutory rules in the Report on Strengthening Committee Scrutiny and the proposed next steps.

Agreed: Members agreed that Paul Gill (Clerk Assistant) would come back to CLG and report on progress in due course.

Agreed: Members agreed that Chairpersons should provide a summary of today's update to their respective committees.

Liz Kimmins left the meeting at 1:39pm

Christine Darrah left the meeting at 1:40pm

6. Chairpersons' Liaison Group Development

The clerk to CLG presented on her paper prepared to update the CLG on proposals for CLG's strategic priorities, a programme of development activities for Chairpersons; and indicative dates for CLG meetings/events.

Liz Kimmins joined the meeting at 1:42pm

Members were content to note the clerk's paper on Chairpersons' Liaison Group Development.

Agreed: Members agreed they were content that meetings of the CLG were not required every calendar month, nonetheless; held as required due to substantive items of business and; non-substantive items could be dealt with by way of correspondence.

Agreed: Members agreed the draft Forward Work Programme and agreed to review it at each meeting of the CLG:

7. Correspondence

Letter received from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly - copied to the Chairperson of CLG.

Members were content to note for information only; that this letter updates the Speaker in regard to the implementation of the Windsor Framework Regulations 2024 and the decision of the Defra Secretary of State not to exercise direction and control over functions concerned with: Animal and Plant Health.

Letter received from the Clerks to the Committee of Procedures to Chairpersons' Liaison Group regarding provision of clear procedural guidance and/or criteria for when Committee sessions should be open or closed.

Agreed: Having considered the matter, Members agreed to respond to the Clerks to the Committee on Procedures to advise, Chairpersons were of the view that the decision on whether to sit in closed session should remain a matter for individual committees and; outlining the procedural provisions and conventions.

Letter received from Finance Committee to Chairpersons' Liaison Group regarding Statutory Committee Scrutiny of the 2024-25 Budget.

Members noted correspondence from the Finance Committee, highlighting that it is its understanding that the Department of Finance issues templates to committees that provide a range of information on the nature of bids and that these assist committees with scrutiny of the budget. Members of the Finance Committee are concerned that colleagues from most Statutory Committees did not receive these bid documents.

The Finance Committee has written to the Finance Minister in regard to this matter and will update CLG once a response is forthcoming.

Email Correspondence from NIAO regarding progress on implementation of RHI Inquiry (Recommendation 38 re: the scrutiny role of the NIA)

Agreed: Members agreed to respond to the NIAO in the following terms:

The current Chairpersons' Liaison Group will continue to review progress against all recommendations, with an update scheduled for a meeting in Autumn 2024.

8. Any Other Business

End of Session Reporting

Members noted that predecessor CLGs agreed that each committee at the end of each session throughout the mandate, produced an *End of Session Report*.

This was published on the committee pages of the Assembly website and provided a single source on the activities and achievements of each committee.

Agreed: Members were content that given that the current session (2023-2024) has been short, with a maximum of 4/5 months of committee meetings, that the first End of Session reports are published in September 2025 following the first full session of the current mandate.

9. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be in September 2024, post Summer Recess, and the date and room will be confirmed in due course.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:56pm.

Deborah Erskine MLA

Deputy Chairperson, Chairpersons' Liaison Group

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