



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee on Procedures

Minutes of Proceedings

26 June 2024

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present: Sinéad Ennis MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Órlaithi Flynn MLA
Maolíosa McHugh MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Trevor Clarke MLA
Danny Donnelly MLA
Cara Hunter MLA

Apologies: Kellie Armstrong MLA (Chairperson)
Robbie Butler MLA
William Irwin MLA

In Attendance: Christine Darrah, Assembly Clerk
Stella McArdle, Assembly Clerk
Michael Best, Assistant Assembly Clerk
Karen O'Hare, Clerical Officer

The meeting started at 10.07 a.m. in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2024.

3. Matters Arising

None.

4. Provision of a Final Deadline for the Introduction of a Private Member's Bill to the Assembly – Draft Motion to amend Standing Orders

The Committee considered the wording of a draft motion to amend Standing Order 30(2) to provide for a final deadline of the last sitting day in June of the penultimate session of a mandate for the introduction of a Private Member's Bill to the Assembly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the wording of the motion to amend Standing Order 30(2) to provide for a final deadline for the introduction of a Private Member's Bill to the Assembly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a one hour debate for the motion.

The Committee noted that the debate would take place in September 2024.

5. Provision of Proxy Voting for Parental Leave in Plenary – Committee Consideration

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the meeting should move into closed session.

The meeting moved into closed session at 10.13 a.m.

The Committee considered the Legal Advice and draft Standing Order for the provision of proxy voting for parental leave in Plenary.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to retain the additional provision in draft Standing Order 27A(3),

Agreed: The Committee agreed to delete the additional provision in draft Standing Order 27A(5).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to retain the additional provision in draft Standing Order 27A(7).

The Committee discussed further possible additional provisions to the draft Standing Order.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Standing Order should include a provision that the Speaker, Principal Deputy Speaker and Deputy Speakers should not act as a proxy for other Members.

Trevor Clarke joined the meeting at 10.25 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider alternative wording for draft Standing Order 27A(8).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the amended draft Standing Order at its meeting on 11 September 2024.

The Committee discussed the duration of proxy voting for parental leave in Plenary.

The meeting was suspended at 10.30 a.m. due to technical difficulties.

The meeting resumed at 10.33 a.m.

The following Members were present: Sineád Ennis MLA (Deputy Chairperson); Órlaithí Flynn MLA; and Maolíosa McHugh MLA.

The following Members were present by video or teleconference: Trevor Clarke MLA; Danny Donnelly MLA; and Cara Hunter MLA.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the proxy voting arrangements for foster parents should be a maximum duration of nine months.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the duration for which proxy voting for parental leave can apply should be included in guidance, rather than in Standing Orders.

The Committee considered its preferred approach to the remaining issues relating to the practical and administrative arrangements for proxy voting for parental leave in Plenary.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its preferred approach to the remaining issues relating to the practical and administrative arrangements for proxy voting for parental leave in Plenary.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson should request a meeting with the Speaker to discuss the Committee position on proxy voting for parental leave in Plenary.

6. Schedule 6A of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – Committee Consideration

Mr Trevor Clarke, MLA, asked the Committee to defer consideration of the potential provision in Standing Orders for Schedule 6A of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the democratic consent process to a future meeting.

Cara Hunter left the meeting at 10.45 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the matter until the next meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members should seek the views of their Party on the issue before the next meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to take agenda items 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 next.

The meeting moved into public session at 10.52 a.m.

7. Review of Assembly Oral Questions

The Committee noted a response from the Alliance Party on the potential Review of Assembly Oral Questions (AQOs) and a research paper outlining the number of AQOs that were grouped and withdrawn and the occasions on which all selected AQOs were answered in Plenary for the period from 19 February to 28 May 2024.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer further consideration of the Review of Assembly Oral Questions until it reviewed its strategic priorities in September 2024.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to send a further letter to Assembly Parties and Independent Members indicating the Committee would still welcome views and suggestions on what should be covered in any future Review of Assembly Oral Questions.

8. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme for September to December 2024.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to review its strategic priorities at a working lunch following the meeting on 25 September 2024.

Cara Hunter joined the meeting at 10.57 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister, the Committee on Standards and Privileges, the Assembly and Executive Review Committee and the Audit Committee to provide a further opportunity to submit views/suggestions of issues the Committee may wish to prioritise in its work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that initial research and contact with other legislatures regarding a potential visit in the autumn should be undertaken.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

9. Correspondence

None.

10. Chairperson's Business

The Committee considered arrangements for dealing with Freedom of Information requests during the summer recess period.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to delegate authority to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to submit, during the recess period, views on the releasing or withholding of the information in any non-routine or contentious Freedom of Information requests received by the Committee.

11. Any Other Business

None.

12. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 11 September 2024 at 10.00 a.m. in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was suspended at 11.00 a.m.

The meeting resumed at 11.06 a.m. in public session.

The following Members were present: Sineád Ennis MLA (Deputy Chairperson); Órlaithí Flynn MLA; and Maolíosa McHugh MLA.

The following Members were present by video or teleconference: Trevor Clarke MLA; Danny Donnelly MLA; and Cara Hunter MLA.

13. Schedule 6B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – Legal Advice

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the meeting should move into closed session.

The meeting moved into closed session at 11.07 a.m.

Cara Hunter left the meeting at 11.10 a.m.

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed Ms Helen Smyth, Assembly Legal Advisor, to the meeting. Ms Smyth outlined the legal advice on a potential Standing Order for the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee and the provision of substitute members.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked Ms Smyth and she left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to give further consideration to the potential provision in Standing Orders for Schedule 6B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Stormont Brake and/or Applicability Motions and the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.42 a.m.

Sinéad Ennis MLA

Deputy Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

11 September 2024