



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee on Procedures

Minutes of Proceedings

1 May 2024

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Kellie Armstrong MLA (Chairperson)

Trevor Clarke MLA

Maolíosa McHugh MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Robbie Bulter MLA

Danny Donnelly MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

William Irwin MLA

Apologies:

Sinéad Ennis MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Matthew O'Toole MLA

In Attendance:

Christine Darrah, Assembly Clerk

Stella McArdle, Assembly Clerk

Michael Best, Assistant Assembly Clerk

Kevin Marks, Clerical Officer

Karen O'Hare, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 10.02 a.m. in public session

1. Apologies

Apologies as above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 17 April 2024.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Recommendations in the Inquiry Report on Private Members' Bills

The Committee discussed the potential provision in Standing Orders for a final deadline for a Private Members' Bill to be introduced to the Assembly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that provision should be made in Standing Orders for a final deadline for a Private Members' Bill to be introduced to the Assembly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the deadline should be the last sitting day in June of the penultimate session of a mandate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to instruct Assembly Legal Services to provide a draft Standing Order and associated legal advice for consideration at a future meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson should outline the approach agreed by the Committee when meeting with the Speaker.

The Committee discussed the potential provision in Standing Orders for an annual debate on the Executive's legislative timetable and associated issues.

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

The meeting moved into closed session at 10.42 a.m.

The Committee continued the discussions on the potential provision in Standing Orders for an annual debate on the Executive's legislative timetable.

The meeting moved into public session at 10.57 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request legal advice from Assembly Legal Services on two issues relating to the provision in Standing Orders for an annual debate on the Executive's legislative timetable.

5. Provision of Proxy Voting for Parental Leave in Plenary

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed that provision be made in Standing Orders for the provision of proxy voting for parental leave in Plenary; the definition of parental leave; that the proxy can be used for all items of Plenary business; that the MLA who wishes to avail of a proxy vote must notify the Speaker; that proxy votes should be published in the Official Report and the Assembly Minutes of Proceedings; that the Standing Order should be permanent; and that the guidance on the procedures for proxy voting in Plenary should be issued by the Speaker.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to all Assembly parties and independent MLAs informing them of its consideration of this matter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Speaker informing him of its consideration of this matter and seeking his views on the temporary procedures that were used to facilitate proxy voting during the COVID pandemic.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to instruct Assembly Legal Services to provide a draft Standing Order and associated legal advice for consideration at a future meeting.

6. Committee Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme that reflected the key priority areas of work agreed by the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the issue of proxy voting in committees should be included on the list of key priority work items.

7. Correspondence

The Committee considered correspondence on the provision of e-petitions from an individual.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to respond outlining its current priorities, which would be kept under review, and that e-petitions was on the list of work items.

The Committee noted the following:

Correspondence from the Clerk of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on the primacy of the PAC over Northern Ireland Audit Office Reports and its first four inquiries.

A response from the Clerk to the Committee for the Executive Office providing an update on a recent Inter-Parliamentary Forum.

8. Chairperson's Business

None

9. Any Other Business

None

10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 15 May 2024 at 10.00 a.m. in room 21, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.50 a.m.

Kellie Armstrong MLA

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

15 May 2024