



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee on Procedures

Minutes of Proceedings

12 June 2024

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

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

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Robbie Butler MLA
Trevor Clarke MLA
Danny Donnelly MLA
Órlaithi Flynn MLA
Cara Hunter MLA
William Irwin MLA

Apologies: Kellie Armstrong MLA (Chairperson)

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

The meeting started at 10.04 a.m. in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Deputy Chairperson should send best wishes to the Chairperson, Kellie Armstrong MLA, on behalf of the Committee.

Trevor Clarke joined the meeting at 10.06 a.m.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 29 May 2024.

3. Matters Arising

The Committee noted the additional information provided by the Acting Assembly Head of Communications, Michael Cairns, following his briefing at the meeting on 29 May 2024 on the broadcasting and remote participation issues experienced by the Committee.

4. Provision of a Final Deadline for the Introduction of a Member's Bill to the Assembly – Legal Advice and Draft Standing Order

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

The meeting moved into closed session at 10.08 a.m.

Robbie Butler joined the meeting at 10.13 a.m.

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed Ms Alice McKelvey, Assembly Legal Advisor, to the meeting. Ms McKelvey outlined the draft Standing Order and associated legal advice to provide for a final deadline for the introduction of a Private Member's Bill to the Assembly of the last sitting day in June of the penultimate session of a mandate.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked Ms McKelvey for her briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a revision to 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 that a draft motion to bring forward the revision to Standing Orders would be considered at the next meeting.

The Committee noted that the consistency issue that had been highlighted in the advice provided regarding the wording of Standing Orders would be added to the list for consideration in due course.

5. Annual Debate on the Executive's Legislative Timetable – Legal Advice

Alice McKelvey, Assembly Legal Advisor, outlined the legal advice requested on two issues relating to the potential provision in Standing Orders for an annual debate on the Executive's legislation timetable.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request the provision of a draft Standing Order from Assembly Legal Services to illustrate the different approach outlined in the advice.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked Ms McKelvey for her briefing and she left the meeting.

The meeting moved into public session at 10.44 a.m.

6. Provision of Proxy Voting for Parental Leave in Plenary – Briefing by Assembly Officials

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed Mr Paul Gill, Clerk Assistant, to the meeting. Mr Gill gave a briefing on the recommendations in the Speaker's letter to the Committee on proxy voting for parental leave in Plenary.

Cara Hunter left the meeting at 11.00 a.m.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked Mr Gill for the briefing.

7. Provision of Proxy Voting for Parental Leave in Plenary – Legal Advice

The meeting moved into closed session at 11.11 a.m.

Mr Jonathan McMillen, Head of Assembly Legal Services, outlined the draft Standing Order and legal advice on provision of proxy voting for parental leave in Plenary.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked Mr McMillen for his briefing and he and Mr Gill left the meeting.

The meeting moved into public session at 11.47 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members should seek the views of their Party on the draft Standing Order including the possibility of some additional provisions.

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

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

considered the responses to its letter seeking views on proxy voting, from People Before Profit and the Alliance Party.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to People Before Profit and the Alliance Party acknowledging their response and indicating it had considered their input.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Committee and Members Support Office to investigate if there were administrative solutions to recording Members parental absence in attendance data.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an example of how proxy voting in Plenary would be recorded in Minutes of Proceedings and the Official Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the majority of its preferred approach to the practical and administrative arrangements for proxy voting for parental leave in Plenary. The Committee agreed to consider its approach to a number of new matters at a future meeting.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme and noted the dates for meetings from September to December 2024.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to the rescheduling of the briefing and research paper on electronic voting from 26 June 2024 to 25 September 2024.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the legal advice requested regarding the potential provision in Standing Orders for the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee including the use of substitute members and proxy voting on the dates currently scheduled in the Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

10. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following:

- (i) Correspondence from the Acting Assembly Head of Communications, Michael Cairns, on the operation of Zoom links and devices in committee meetings.
- (ii) Correspondence from the Assembly Head of Information Technology, Mary- Ellen Nutt, on the provision of new devices.

11. Chairperson's Business

None.

12. Any Other Business

None.

13. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 26 June 2024 at 10.00 a.m. in room 21, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.30 p.m.

Sinéad Ennis MLA

Deputy Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

26 June 2024

