



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee on Procedures

Minutes of Proceedings

13 March 2024

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Kellie Armstrong MLA (Chairperson)

Robbie Bulter MLA

Danny Donnelly MLA

Órailthí Flynn MLA

Maolíosa McHugh MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Trevor Clarke MLA

Apologies:

Sinéad Ennis MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Gary Middleton MLA

Matthew O'Toole MLA

In Attendance:

Christine Darrah, Assembly Clerk

Stella McArdle, Assembly Clerk

Michael Best, Assistant Assembly Clerk

Kevin Marks, Clerical Officer

Jonathan McMillen, Head of Legal Services (Agenda Item 4)

Ray McCaffrey, Research Officer (Agenda Items 5 and 6)

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

1. Apologies

Apologies as above.

Robbie Butler joined the meeting at 10.03 a.m.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2024.

3. Matters Arising

The Committee noted the updated membership of the Committee.

4. Role of Assembly Legal Services – Introductory Briefing

The Chairperson welcomed Jonathan McMillen, Head of Assembly Legal Services, to the Committee. Mr McMillen gave a presentation to the Committee on the Role of Assembly Legal Services.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr McMillen and he left the meeting.

5. Role of Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe) – Introductory Briefing

The Chairperson welcomed Ray McCaffrey, Assembly Research Officer to the Committee.

Mr McCaffrey provided an introductory briefing to the Committee on the role of the Assembly Research and Information Service and the support that it offers the Committee.

6. Research Paper on Issues under consideration by Procedures Committees in other legislatures

Mr McCaffrey provided an overview of a research paper on the issues being considered by Procedures Committees in other legislatures.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr McCaffrey and he left the meeting.

The Chairperson informed the Committee that it is normal procedure for committee research papers to be published on the relevant committee web pages once they have been presented to the Committee.

Trevor Clarke left the meeting at 10.50 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Committee on Procedures research papers should automatically be published on its web pages once presented to the Committee, unless the Committee decides otherwise.

7. Committee Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson informed Members that the Committee's strategic planning session has been scheduled for Wednesday 10 April 2024, and that Members should

prepare for the session by considering the issues they think should be prioritised in the Forward Work Programme.

The Committee considered an initial list of potential key issues and noted that some of the recommendations in the previous Committee's Inquiry into Private Members' Bills and its Inquiry into Legislative Consent Motions fall to other business areas in the Assembly to implement, rather than requiring changes to Standing Orders.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Assembly's Director of Parliamentary Services to request an update on the position regarding implementation of the relevant recommendations in both reports.

The Chairperson advised Members that recommendations in the Report on the Inquiry into Legislative Consent Motions calls for full compliance by Executive Ministers with Standing Order 42A.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Executive regarding the measures being taken to ensure full compliance with recommendations in the Report.

The Chairperson informed Members that recommendation 6 in the Report on the Inquiry into Legislative Consent Motions concerned procedural enhancements and improved communication between the UK Parliament and the Assembly. The previous Committee had written to its corresponding Committees in the Commons and Lords on this issue.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the relevant committees and to request a research paper on whether, since publication of the inquiry report, there has been procedural enhancements or improved transparency and communication between the UK Parliament and the Scottish Parliament and the Senedd in relation to Legislative Consent Motions.

The Committee considered the proposed venue and arrangements for the strategic planning session on Wednesday 10 April 2024.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the proposed venue and arrangements for the strategic planning session on Wednesday 10 April 2024.

8. Correspondence

The Chairperson informed Members that the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee (DSC) had replied to the letter from the Committee seeking views and suggestions on potential priority issues. Its response highlighted a number of issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include these issues on the list of potential priorities for consideration at the strategic planning session.

9. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised Members that it would be helpful to set up a WhatsApp group so that Members can be contacted at short notice if necessary.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to the formation of a Committee WhatsApp group.

10. Any Other Business

None.

11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The strategic planning session will take place on Wednesday 10 April 2024 at the Mount Conference Centre, Belfast.

The next meeting is provisionally scheduled for Wednesday 17 April 2024 at 10 a.m. in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.23 a.m.

Kellie Armstrong MLA

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures