



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee on Procedures

Minutes of Proceedings

11 September 2024

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present: Kellie Armstrong MLA (Chairperson)
Órlaithi Flynn MLA
Maolíosa McHugh MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Sinéad Ennis MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Robbie Butler MLA
Trevor Clarke MLA
Cara Hunter MLA
William Irwin MLA

Apologies: Danny Donnelly 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 10.03 a.m. in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2024.

3. Matters Arising

Item 1 – Correspondence from the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee

The Committee considered a letter from the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee (DSC) requesting that provision for it in Standing Orders to include the potential for substitute members and proxy voting is treated as a priority area of work by the Committee on Procedures.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to respond to the DSC outlining the work that it has carried out on this potential Standing Order and offering a meeting with the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to discuss the position.

Item 2 – Debate on the Committee Motion to Amend Standing Order 30(2)

The Chairperson reminded Members that the debate on the Committee 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 of the last sitting day in June of the penultimate year of the mandate was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 17 September 2024.

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

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Jonathan McMillen, Assembly Head of Legal Services, to the meeting. Mr McMillen outlined to the Committee the legal advice on a potential Standing Order for the provision of proxy voting for parental leave in plenary.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr McMillen and he left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the revised draft Standing Order and to consult with their parties, with the aim of formally agreeing the text, at its meeting on 9 October 2024, as a motion to be tabled for debate in Plenary.

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

The Committee considered the main body of the draft Report on the Provision of Proxy Voting for Parental Leave in Plenary.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on Voting in Plenary, paragraphs 1 to 6.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on Temporary Standing Order 112 Proxy Voting, paragraphs 7 to 10.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on Proxy Voting for Parental Leave in Plenary, paragraphs 11 to 14.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on The Principles of a Standing Order for Proxy Voting for Parental Leave in Plenary, paragraphs 15 to 19, and paragraphs 21 to 25.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that paragraph 20 be amended to reflect a revision to the draft Standing Order.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on Practical and Administrative Matters, paragraph 26.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on the Notification Process, paragraphs 27 to 32.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on the Eligibility for Proxy Voting for Parental Leave in Plenary, paragraphs 33 to 36.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on Duration, paragraphs 37 and 38.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph 39, that when the Assembly has been dissolved for an election, a returning Member's duration of a new notification for proxy voting for parental leave should take account of any previous parental leave, prior to dissolution, and the dissolution period.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on Exercising the Proxy Vote, paragraphs 40 to 49.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the final Report on the Provision of Proxy Voting for Parental Leave in Plenary at its meeting on 9 October 2024.

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

The Committee considered information on the content of Schedule 6A of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 which sets out the mechanism for obtaining democratic consent in Northern Ireland to the continued application of Articles 5 to 10 of the Protocol and legal advice on what requirements there are to make provision in Standing Orders.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was not necessary to make provision in Standing Orders in relation to Schedule 6A of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the democratic consent process.

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

The Chairperson welcomed Ms Helen Smyth, Assembly Legal Advisor, to the meeting. Ms Smyth outlined the legal advice on the potential provision of proxy voting for the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee.

Cara Hunter left the meeting at 10.57 a.m.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Committee discussed the potential provision of substitute members and proxy voting as part of a Standing Order for the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that provision for the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee, to include substitute members, should be made in Standing Orders.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to give further consideration to the wording of the draft Standing Order at its meeting on 9 October 2024 when it could give further consideration to the provision of proxy voting if necessary.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Smyth and she left the meeting.

The meeting moved into public session at 11.21 a.m.

8. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered an updated Forward Work Programme for September to December 2024 and noted the arrangements for the review of its strategic priorities on 25 September 2024.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

9. Correspondence

None.

10. Chairperson's Business

None.

11. Any Other Business

None.

12. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 25 September 2024 at 10.00 a.m. in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.24 a.m.

Kellie Armstrong MLA

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

25 September 2024