



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee on Procedures

Minutes of Proceedings

13 November 2024

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present: Kellie Armstrong MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Donnelly MLA
Maolíosa McHugh MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Robbie Butler MLA
Cara Hunter MLA
William Irwin MLA

Apologies: Sinéad Ennis MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Trevor Clarke MLA
Órlaithi Flynn MLA

In Attendance: Christine Darrah, Assembly Clerk
Stella McArdle, Assembly Clerk
Michael Best, Assistant Assembly Clerk
Veronica Lo Pinto, Clerical Officer

The meeting started at 10.18 a.m. in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2024.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Cara Hunter joined the meeting at 10.19 a.m.

4. Annual Debate on the Executive's Legislative Timetable – Further Legal Advice on Draft Standing Order

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

The meeting moved into closed session at 10.20 a.m.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms Alice McKelvey, Assembly Legal Adviser, to the meeting.

Ms McKelvey outlined the further legal advice requested on a potential Standing Order to provide for an annual debate on the Executive's legislative timetable.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Ms McKelvey and she left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would not give any further consideration to the issue of 'Take Note' debates.

The Committee noted that further consideration of the preferred approach in relation to this potential Standing Order was provisionally scheduled in the Forward Work Programme for the meeting on Wednesday 11 December 2024.

5. Schedule 6B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – Provision for Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee – Consideration of Draft Standing Order and Motion

The Chairperson reminded the Committee that it had agreed the paragraphs of the draft Standing Order to provide for the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 9 October 2024 and had requested an additional paragraph be prepared to cover its section 44 powers.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms Helen Smyth, Assembly Legal Adviser, to the meeting.

Ms Smyth outlined the addition made to the draft Standing Order covering the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee's section 44 powers and the associated legal advice.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Smyth and she left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the additional paragraph covering the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee's section 44 powers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Standing Order be tabled as a motion for debate in Plenary.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee to advise that it had agreed the Standing Order and would be tabling it as a motion for debate in Plenary.

The Committee noted the provisional date for the motion to be debated in Plenary.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write in advance to all MLAs providing information on the background to, and the Committee's consideration of, the Standing Order and give them a copy of the Standing Order and Explanatory Notes to inform the debate on the motion.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee immediately after the Standing Order is approved in Plenary advising that it has immediate effect and that the intention is to review, in autumn 2025, whether the arrangements, including the provision of substitute members, are sufficient to enable that Committee to effectively discharge its statutory functions.

The meeting moved into public session at 10.55 a.m.

Maolíosa McHugh left the meeting at 10.55 a.m.

6. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered an updated Forward Work Programme for November to December 2024 that also included the dates of committee meetings until Easter Recess 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the updated Forward Work Programme.

The Committee noted updated travel costs and the arrangements for the Study Visit to the Scottish Parliament.

7. Correspondence

The Chairperson declared an interest as a member of the Chairpersons' Liaison Group.

The Committee considered a response from the Chairpersons' Liaison Group regarding committees meeting in closed session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that there was no need to include this matter on the list of issues for further consideration.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the Committee for Communities, who had raised the issue, and advise that the Committee has noted the position as outlined by the Chairpersons' Liaison Group and does not intend to consider the matter further.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Clerk to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on the primacy of the PAC over Northern Ireland Audit Office reports and outlining the subject of its next three inquiries.

The Committee considered correspondence from Mr Timothy Gaston MLA requesting that consideration be given to setting out in Standing Orders a number of requirements regarding arrangements for meetings between a Committee Chairperson and witnesses prior to their appearance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add this matter to the list of issues for consideration in due course and to advise Mr Gaston accordingly.

8. Chairperson's Business

None.

9. Any Other Business

None.

10. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 27 November 2024 at 10.00 a.m. in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.02 a.m.

Kellie Armstrong MLA
Chairperson, Committee on Procedures
27 November 2024