



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee on Procedures

Minutes of Proceedings

26 March 2025

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present: Kellie Armstrong MLA (Chairperson)
Órlaithí Flynn MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Trevor Clarke MLA
Danny Donnelly MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Robbie Butler MLA
Aoife Finnegan MLA
Cara Hunter MLA
William Irwin MLA
Maolíosa McHugh MLA

Apologies: None

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

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

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2025.

3. Matters Arising

The Chairperson informed the Committee that the Proxy Voting Scheme, giving effect to Standing Order 27A, had been published on 14 March 2025.

The Committee noted that the Proxy Voting Scheme was now available.

4. Inquiry into Extension of Standing Order 27A Voting by Proxy – Long-Term Illness – Legal Advice

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

The meeting moved into closed session at 10.07 a.m.

Cara Hunter joined the meeting at 10.11 a.m.

The Committee noted a research briefing note on definitions or descriptions of long-term illness or injury and serious long-term illness or injury in use by other organisations.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms Caroline Byers, Assembly Legal Adviser, to the meeting. Ms Byers outlined legal advice on the definitions of long-term illness and injury and serious long-term illness and injury with reference to their potential use in a Standing Order.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Byers and she left the meeting.

The Committee discussed issues relating to the potential definition and terminology to be used and a number of practical/administrative issues.

Cara Hunter left the meeting at 10.45 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request the views of the Speaker on a range of issues relating to documentation to inform further consideration of the matter.

Robbie Butler left the meeting at 11.16 a.m.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that discussions on the provision of proxy voting for bereavement and absence on official Assembly business was scheduled to take place at the meeting on 9 April 2025 and a further discussion on the outstanding issues relating to proxy voting for (serious) long-term illness or injury would be scheduled in due course.

5. Northern Ireland Act 1998 Section 42 – Petitions of Concern – Committee Consideration

The Committee discussed a number of issues relating to Petitions of Concern.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Business Office regarding the presentation of a petition and any accompanying statement.

The Committee noted an indicative position that the procedures for presenting and confirming a Petition of Concern should be the same.

The Committee noted an indicative position regarding the use of Petitions of Concern on a motion or question that already requires cross-community consent.

William Irwin left the meeting at 12.28 p.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek information from the Speaker on previous Speaker's rulings on Petitions of Concerns.

The meeting moved into public session at 12.36 p.m.

Trevor Clarke left the meeting at 12.36 p.m.

6. Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson drew the Committee's attention to an updated Forward Work Programme.

7. Correspondence

None.

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 9 April 2025 at 10.00 a.m. in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.37 p.m.

Kellie Armstrong MLA

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

9 April 2025