Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee on Procedures

Minutes of Proceedings

8 October 2025

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present: Kellie Armstrong MLA (Chairperson)
Cheryl Brownlee MLA
Trevor Clarke MLA
Maolíosa McHugh MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:
Órlaithí Flynn MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Danny Donnelly MLA
Aoife Finnegan MLA
Cara Hunter MLA

Apologies: Robbie Butler MLA

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

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

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2025.

3. Matters Arising

The Committee noted an updated Committee membership list.

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

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

4. Repeal of Standing Order 70 and Consequential Amendments to Standing Orders – Legal Advice

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

Ms Smyth outlined a draft motion and associated legal advice to provide for the repeal of Standing Order 70 and consequential amendments to Standing Orders.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Smyth and she left the meeting.

The Committee considered the draft motion to repeal Standing Order 70 and make consequential amendments to Standing Orders.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph 1 of the motion which repeals Standing Order 70.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph 2 of the motion which removes a reference to breach of privilege in Standing Order 22(2) and replaces it with a reference to matters of sub judice.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph 3 of the motion which removes references in Standing Order 57 to privileges in the Committee name, and replaces a reference to matters of privilege with a reference to unauthorised disclosure of information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph 4 of the motion which removes reference in Standing Order 69A to privilege and removes reference to privileges in the Committee name.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph 5 of the motion which removes reference in Standing Order 69B to privileges in the Committee name.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraph 6 of the motion which removes reference in Standing Order 69C to privileges in the Committee name.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the motion, as agreed, be tabled in the Business Office to be scheduled for debate in Plenary.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a one hour debate for the motion.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee on Standards and Privileges to provide an update on progress to repeal Standing Order 70 and the consequential amendments.

The Committee noted that the necessary administrative amendments to the content pages, divider page and header pages of Standing Orders will be undertaken by Committee staff once the motion is agreed by the Assembly.

5. Northern Ireland Act 1998 Section 42 – Petitions of Concern – Consideration of Potential Provision in Standing Orders

The Chairperson welcomed Helen Smyth, Assembly Legal Adviser, Paul Gill, Assembly Clerk Assistant, and Liz Marsh, Assembly Bill Clerk, to the meeting.

Ms Smyth outlined the draft illustrative Standing Orders and associated legal advice to the Committee.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session with the Assembly officials.

The Chairperson thanked the officials and they left the meeting.

The Committee considered the draft illustrative Standing Orders.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the draft illustrative Standing Orders be sent to the political parties, independent MLA, and the Speaker's Office for their views and comments.

The meeting moved into public session at 11.51 a.m.

6. End of Session Report 2024-2025

The Committee considered a draft End of Session Report which provided a summary of its key activities, outputs and outcomes for the period February 2024 to end of August 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the remit, powers and membership section, paragraphs 1 to 3.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the sections on the Committee's formal and informal meetings and its study visit to Scotland, paragraphs 4 to 6.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on Key Activities, Outputs and Achievements 2024-25, paragraphs 7 and 8.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on Proxy Voting for Parental Leave in Plenary - Standing Order 27A, paragraphs 9 to 13.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on the Inquiry into the Extension of Standing Order 27A Voting by Proxy, paragraphs 14 to 16.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on the Provision of a Deadline for the Introduction of a Private Member's Bill - Standing Orders 30(2A) and (2B), paragraphs 17 to 19.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on the Provision for an Annual Debate on the Executive's legislative programme - Standing Order 18C, paragraphs 20 to 22.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee – Standing Order 59A, paragraphs 23 to 27.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on consideration of Schedule 6A of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – Democratic Consent Process and implications for Standing Orders, paragraphs 28 and 29.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on the Northern Ireland Act 1998 Section 42 - Petitions of Concern, paragraphs 30 to 32.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on Scrutiny of Delegated Powers in Bills by the Examiner of Statutory Rules to the Assembly, paragraphs 33 to 35.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on the Repeal of Standing Order 70 and consequential amendments, paragraphs 36 to 38.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on Electronic Voting in Plenary, paragraphs 39 and 40.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on a Review of Assembly Oral Questions, paragraph 41.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on expenditure, paragraph 42.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section on the key priorities for the next Assembly session, paragraphs 43 and 44.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include Annex A – Committee Expenditure in the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the End of Session Report 2024 – 25, as agreed, should be published on the Assembly website.

7. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered an updated Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the updated Forward Work Programme.

8. Correspondence

The Committee considered correspondence from the Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs setting out that Committee's concerns regarding the Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) process and requesting that this Committee consider a review of the LCM process as a priority.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs advising that, following a recent review of its strategic priorities, the Committee has added consideration of Standing Order 42A and LCMs to its list of priority work areas.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Chairpersons' Liaison Group (CLG) outlining its support for this Committee to consider the operation of Standing Order 42A to identify what can be done to strengthen and enhance opportunities for Assembly scrutiny of LCMs.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to CLG advising that, following a recent review of its strategic priorities, the Committee has added consideration of Standing Order 42A and LCMs to its list of priority work areas and is happy to engage further when taking forward this work.

The Committee considered a response from the Speaker to the Committee's letter regarding the issues he had raised in Plenary in June 2025 regarding LCMs. The response set out the Speaker's concerns with LCMs and indicated that he would welcome this Committee taking forward the recommendations in the report of the Review of LCMs undertaken in the last mandate by the previous Committee on Procedures.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Speaker advising that, following a recent review of its strategic priorities, the Committee has added consideration of Standing Order 42A and LCMs to its list of priority work areas.

9. Chairperson's Business

None.

10. Any Other Business

None.

11. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 22 October 2025 at 10.00 a.m. in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.02 p.m.

Órlaithí Flynn MLA
Deputy Chairperson, Committee on Procedures
22 October 2025