Committee on Procedures

Minutes of Proceedings

24 June 2026

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present: Kellie Armstrong MLA (Chairperson)
Cheryl Brownlee MLA
Robbie Butler MLA
Trevor Clarke MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:
Danny Donnelly MLA
Cara Hunter MLA
Philip McGuigan MLA

Apologies: Órlaithí Flynn MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

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

The meeting started at 10.03 a.m. in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the meeting should move into closed session for the next two agenda items.

The Committee moved into closed session at 10.05 a.m.

3. Inquiry into an Extension of Standing Order 27A Voting by Proxy for long-term illness, bereavement and absence on official Assembly business – Further consideration of final position on absence on official Assembly business

The Committee considered the extension of Standing Order 27A Voting by Proxy to include proxy voting for absence on official Assembly business and correspondence from the Speaker on this issue.

Robbie Butler joined the meeting at 10.19 a.m.

Danny Donnelly joined the meeting at 10.24 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to retain its initial position on the list of organisations/bodies for which proxy voting for absence on official Assembly business should apply.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission Legal Services to prepare a revised draft Standing Order 27A Voting by Proxy to include the organisations/bodies for which proxy voting for absence on official Assembly business should apply.

Trevor Clarke left the meeting at 10.27 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to recommend that the outcome of the review being undertaken by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee of the arrangements for Assembly Members' participation in inter-parliamentary and international bodies should inform the review of the new categories of proxy voting, including proxy voting for absence on official Assembly business, to take place within one year of them becoming operational.

4. Northern Ireland Act 1998 Section 42 – Petitions of Concern - Further consideration of potential provision in Standing Orders – Legal Advice

Trevor Clarke rejoined the meeting at 10.35 a.m.

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

Ms Smyth outlined her legal advice on the issues raised by the Clerk Assistant in relation to petitions of concern and Bills, suggested amendments to draft Standing Order 36A and draft Standing Order 40A and the amendments to draft Standing Order 28 requested by the Committee

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Smyth and she left the meeting.

The meeting was suspended at 11.05 a.m.

The meeting resumed at 11.10 a.m.

The Committee considered the issues raised by the Clerk Assistant relating to petitions of concern and Bills.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the issue of no notice amendments should be addressed in draft Standing Orders 36A and 40A.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the classification of Bill amendments should be considered as part of a review of the Assembly's legislative process in the next mandate.

The Committee considered the paragraphs of draft Standing Order 36A Petition of Concern: Consideration Stage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bank paragraph (1), as revised, for inclusion in any future motion on a new Standing Order 36A.

The DUP Members indicated their opposition to paragraph (1).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bank paragraph (2), as revised, for inclusion in any future motion on a new Standing Order 36A.

The DUP Members indicated their opposition to paragraph (2).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bank paragraph (3), as revised, for inclusion in any future motion on a new Standing Order 36A.

The DUP Members indicated their opposition to paragraph (3).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bank paragraph (4)(a) and (b), as revised, for inclusion in any future motion on a new Standing Order 36A.

The DUP Members indicated their opposition to paragraphs (4)(a) and (b). The UUP Member reserved their position on SO36A(4)(a).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bank paragraph (5), as revised, for inclusion in any future motion on a new Standing Order 36A.

The DUP Members indicated their opposition to paragraph (5).

The Committee considered the options for managing the presentation of petitions in circumstances where a Bill Stage is not moved.

Agreed: The Committee agreed an option that in circumstances where a Bill Stage is not moved the matter could be managed practically by the Speaker. The

Committee agreed to provide further detail on this option in its future Report on petitions.

The DUP Members indicated their opposition to this decision.

The Committee considered the paragraphs of draft Standing Order 40A Petition of Concern after Consideration Stage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bank paragraph (1), as revised, for inclusion in any future motion on a new Standing Order 40A.

The DUP Members indicated their opposition to paragraph (1).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bank paragraph (2), as revised, for inclusion in any future motion on a new Standing Order 40A.

The DUP Members indicated their opposition to paragraph (2).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bank paragraph (3) for inclusion in any future motion on a new Standing Order 40A.

The DUP Members indicated their opposition to paragraph (3).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bank paragraph (4) for inclusion in any future motion on a new Standing Order 40A.

The DUP Members indicated their opposition to paragraph (4).

The Committee considered the potential amalgamation of draft Standing Orders 28, 36A and 40A covering petitions of concern.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to revisit the potential amalgamation of the three draft Standing Orders at a later date.

The Committee considered the paragraphs of draft Standing Order 28 that had not yet been agreed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bank paragraph (6)(c) for inclusion in any future motion on a new Standing Order 28.

The DUP Members indicated their opposition to paragraph (6)(c).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bank paragraph (7) for inclusion in any future motion on a new Standing Order 28.

The DUP Members indicated their opposition to paragraph (7)

Agreed: The Committee agreed that paragraphs 10(a) and (b) should be removed from draft Standing Order 28 and be provided in a separate motion for a new Standing Order 28A.

The DUP Members indicated their opposition to this decision.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to retain the deadline in draft Standing Order 28 for the presentation of a petition of concern in exceptional circumstances as one hour before the start of the debate.

The DUP and UUP Members indicated their opposition to this decision.

The Committee noted information provided by the Clerk Assistant of an example of a late amendment to a Bill and the circumstances in which one may be accepted.

The meeting moved into public session at 12.01 p.m.

Cara Hunter left the meeting at 12.02 p.m.

5. Chairperson's Business

The Committee considered arrangements for dealing with Freedom of Information requests during the summer recess period.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to delegate authority to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to submit, during the recess period, views on the releasing or withholding of the information in any non-routine or contentious Freedom of Information requests received by the Committee.

6. Matters Arising

The Chairperson informed the Committee that the motions to repeal Standing Order 70 Privilege and make consequential amendments and to introduce a new Standing

Order 43A to provide for the scrutiny of delegated powers in Bills were both on the Order Paper for Monday 29 June 2026.

7. Correspondence

None.

8. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered an updated Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the updated Forward Work Programme.

5. Chairperson's Business (continued)

The Committee considered information regarding the current Standing Order folders and noted the rationale for changing the size of the folders .

9. Any Other Business

The Chairperson placed on record her thanks to the Deputy Chairperson of the Committee, Órlaithí Flynn MLA, for chairing the meetings on 27 May and 10 June 2026 in her absence.

10. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 16 September 2026 at 10.00 a.m. in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.08 p.m.

Kellie Armstrong MLA

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

16 September 2026