Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee on Procedures

Minutes of Proceedings

30 September 2026

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

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

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

Apologies: Danny Baker MLA
Philip McGuigan 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 16 September 2026.

Andy Allen joined the meeting at 10.05 a.m.

3. Matters Arising

The Chairperson informed the Committee that the motion to amend Standing Order 42A Legislative Consent Motions was on the Order Paper for Monday 5 October 2026.

4. End of Session Committee Report 2025-26 – Consideration and Agreement of Draft Report

The Committee considered a draft End of Session Report which provided a summary of its key activities, outputs and outcomes for the period September 2025 to end of August 2026.

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed the sections of the report on the time period covered by the report and the Committee's formal and informal meetings during this period, paragraphs 4 to 6.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on Key Activities, Outputs and Achievements 2025-26, paragraphs 7 and 8.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on Scrutiny of Delegated Powers in Bills - Standing Order 43A, paragraphs 9 to 13.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on the Repeal of Standing Order 70 and consequential amendments to Standing Orders, paragraphs 14 to 17.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on the Inquiry into the Extension of Standing Order 27A Voting by Proxy, paragraphs 18 to 20.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on the Northern Ireland Act 1998 Section 42 - Petitions of Concern, paragraphs 21 to 23.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on Standing Order 42A Legislative Consent Motions, paragraphs 24 to 27.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on a Review of Assembly Oral Questions, paragraphs 28 to 30.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on Assembly Written Questions, paragraphs 31 to 35.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on anomalies and technical issues with Standing Orders, paragraphs 36 to 38.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on a Review of the operation of Standing Order 59A Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee, paragraphs 39 to 41.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on Assembly sitting days, paragraphs 42 to 44.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on costing requirements of Private Members’ Bills, paragraphs 45 to 47.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on Assembly Bills – provision in Standing Orders for corrective/tidying up amendments by the Executive, paragraphs 48 to 50.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on electronic voting in Plenary, paragraphs 51 and 52.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on expenditure, paragraph 53.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on the key priorities for the next Assembly session, paragraph 54.

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the End of Session Report 2025 - 26, as agreed, should be published on the Assembly website.

The Chairperson thanked Members for their contributions to the work of the Committee during the 2025-26 session.

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

The meeting moved into closed session at 10.13 a.m.

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

The Committee considered the main body of the draft report on Petitions of Concern.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Introduction section of the report, paragraphs 1 to 6.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report that outlined the approach taken by the Committee, paragraphs 7 and 8.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report that outlined how the Committee considered Section 42 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, paragraphs 9 and 10.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report that outlined the Committee's consideration of Section 42(1), paragraphs 11 to 13.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report that outlined the Committee's consideration of Section 42(2), paragraphs 14 to 16.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report that outlined the Committee's consideration of Section 42(3), paragraphs 17 to 19.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report that outlined the Committee's consideration of Section 42(4), paragraphs 20 to 25.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report that outlined the Committee's consideration of Section 42(5), paragraphs 26 to 28.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report that outlined the Committee's consideration of Section 42(6)(a), paragraphs 29 to 36.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report that outlined the Committee's consideration of Section 42(6)(b), paragraphs 37 to 42.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report that outlined the Committee's consideration of Section 42(6)(c), paragraphs 43 and 44.

Cara Hunter joined the meeting at 10.30 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report that outlined the Committee's consideration of Section 42(6)(d), paragraphs 45 to 50.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report that outlined the Committee's consideration of Section 42(7) and (8), paragraphs 51 and 52.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report that outlined the Committee's consideration of the provision of a statement accompanying a petition of concern and that a petition be signed in person, paragraphs 53 to 62.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report that outlined the Committee's consideration of the optional provisions for Bills, paragraphs 63 to 66.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report that outlined the approach the Committee took to its consultation, paragraphs 67 and 68.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report that outlined the concerns raised during the consultation, paragraphs 69 to 71.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report that outlined the approach the Committee took to the concerns raised, paragraphs 72 and 73.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on the amendments made to draft Standing Order 28 as a result of the consultation, paragraph 74.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on the amendments made to draft Standing Orders 36A and 40A as a result of the consultation, paragraphs 75 to 78.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on the petitions of concern that had been tabled in the Assembly during the period of the Committee's consideration, paragraphs 79 to 83.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the section of the report on its approval of the final versions of the draft Standing Orders, paragraphs 84 to 87.

Trevor Clarke left the meeting at 10.42 a.m.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the full report, with the remaining draft sections, and the draft motions will be considered at the next meeting on 14 October 2026.

6. Standing Order 69C Members' Interests: Rectification of Minor Errors – Unacceptable Behaviours Policy

The Chairperson welcomed Shane McAteer, Clerk to the Committee on Standards, and Rebecca Ellis, Assembly Legal Adviser, to the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Assembly Trainee Solicitor could attend the closed session as an observer in the public gallery.

Mr McAteer and Ms Ellis briefed the Committee on the development of the Unacceptable Behaviours Policy and the proposed changes to Standing Order 69C.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr McAteer and Ms Ellis and they and the Assembly Trainee Solicitor left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to proceed with the request to widen the scope of Standing Order 69C to cover the Unacceptable Behaviours Policy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission Assembly Legal Services to provide a draft amended Standing Order and associated legal advice.

7. Inquiry into an Extension of Standing Order 27A Voting by Proxy – Absence on Official Assembly Business – Revised Draft Standing Order 27A and Associated Legal Advice

The Chairperson welcomed Adam Leitch, Assembly Legal Adviser, to the meeting.

Mr Leitch outlined the revised draft Standing Order 27A to provide for proxy voting for absence on official Assembly business and associated legal advice.

Andy Allen left the meeting at 11.12 a.m.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Leitch and he left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to retain its initial preferred position that the list of organisations to which a proxy vote for absence on official Assembly business would apply should reflect those listed in the ‘Incidental Cost of Parliamentary Travel’ document published by the Assembly Commission and the organisations specified for certain purposes in the Assembly Members Code of Conduct and the Guide to the Rules.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the list of organisations to which this type of proxy vote should apply in Standing Order 27A.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request two revisions to the draft Standing Order 27A provided by Assembly Legal Services.

The Committee considered correspondence from Deborah Erskine MLA requesting that it investigate the possibility of extending proxy voting in Plenary to provide for

circumstances in which an MLA has significant caring responsibilities, particularly where a person they care for is ill or requires hospitalisation at short notice.

Cara Hunter declared an interest as a carer.

Kellie Armstrong declared an interest as a carer.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission research on the position in other legislatures on proxy voting for significant caring responsibilities and the position regarding the introduction of carer's leave by the Department for the Economy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request information on the position regarding carer's leave for Assembly Secretariat staff.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Deborah Erskine MLA to provide an update on its consideration of her request and express its sympathy for her situation.

Órlaithí Flynn left the meeting at 11.31 a.m.

The Committee lost quorum at 11.31 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.31 a.m.

Kellie Armstrong MLA
Chairperson, Committee on Procedures
14 October 2026