



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee on Standards and Privileges

## Minutes of Proceedings

**15 January 2025**

**Meeting Location:** Room 106, Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

Connie Egan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Stewart Dickson MLA

Paul Frew MLA

Harry Harvey MLA

Brian Kingston MLA

Cathy Mason MLA

Colin McGrath MLA

**Present by video or teleconference:**

Jemma Dolan MLA

**Apologies:**

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA (Chairperson)

**In Attendance:**

Shane McAteer, Committee Clerk

Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk

Laura Gourley, Clerical Supervisor

Alison Ferguson, Clerical Officer

**Present by video or teleconference:**

Nick Mitford, Senior Assistant Clerk

The meeting commenced at 10.01 a.m. in closed session

**1. Apologies**

As noted above.

**2. Declaration of interests**

The Chairperson advised Members of the ongoing requirement to declare relevant financial or other interests as and when they arise and before taking part in any Assembly proceedings, including Committee proceedings, relating to that matter.

**3. Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2024.

**4. Matters Arising**

None.

## **5. Further consideration of decision on inadmissible complaint**

The Assistant Clerk briefed the Committee on the procedures in relation to this agenda item.

The Commissioner for Standards, Dr Melissa McCullough, joined the meeting at 10.05 a.m.

The Commissioner for Standards briefed the Committee on the further consideration of her decision that a complaint was inadmissible. This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Dickson joined the meeting at 10.24 a.m.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it concurs with the Commissioner's decision that the complaint is inadmissible.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the secretariat will prepare an options paper on potential improvements to the procedures for considering complaints – particularly in terms of whether complaints about service or performance standards, which are clearly outside the scope of the Code of Conduct, should be open to further consideration when deemed inadmissible by the Commissioner – which would be informed by comparative research and other applicable advice and information.

The Chairperson thanked the Commissioner for her attendance at the meeting.

## **6. Adjudication of complaints on alleged breaches of the Ministerial Code of Conduct – next steps**

The Clerk briefed the Committee on the next steps in considering potential procedural changes to provide the Committee with a role in adjudicating on complaints of alleged breaches of the Ministerial Code of Conduct.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reissue the consultation paper on this matter to the Assembly parties and Independent Members who had not responded to the consultation (with a new deadline of 5 February 2025 for response) and to defer consideration of the matter until the meeting scheduled for 12 February 2025.

## **7. All-Party Group issues**

The Assistant Clerk briefed the Committee on a proposal for an All-Party Group (APG) on Policy and Public Data.

Mr Dickson declared an interest as a member of the proposed APG on Policy and Public Data.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to approve the establishment of an APG on Policy and Public Data.

## **8. Correspondence**

None.

## **9. AOB.**

None.

## **10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee on Standards and Privileges is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 12 February 2025 at 10.00 a.m. in Room 106.

The meeting was adjourned at 10.40 a.m.

**Cathy Mason MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee on Standards and Privileges**

**12 February 2025**