



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee on Standards and Privileges

## Minutes of Proceedings

**2 April 2025**

Meeting Location: Room 106, Parliament Buildings

**Present:** Cathy Mason MLA (Chairperson)

Stewart Dickson MLA

Harry Harvey MLA

Brian Kingston MLA

**Present by video or teleconference:**

Connie Egan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Jemma Dolan MLA

Paul Frew MLA

**Apologies:**

Colin McGrath MLA

**In Attendance:**

Shane McAteer, Committee Clerk

Nick Mitford, Senior Assistant Clerk

Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk

Laura Gourley, Clerical Supervisor

Alison Ferguson, Clerical Officer

Caroline Byers, Legal Advisor (agenda item 5)

Ray McCaffrey, Research Officer (agenda item 6)

The meeting commenced at 10.02 a.m. in closed session

**1. Apologies**

As 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.

No interests were declared.

**3. Minutes**

**Noted:** The Committee noted that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2025 had previously been agreed by the Chairperson following the delegation of authority by the Committee to do so, in order that the minutes could be included in a Committee report published on 28 March 2025.

Stewart Dickson joined the meeting at 10.04 am.

#### **4. Matters Arising**

- Committee adjudication training

The Senior Assistant Clerk briefed the Committee on the availability of a trainer for the second session of the adjudication training.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule the second session of the adjudication training with the alternative trainer offered by the training provider.

Jemma Dolan joined the meeting at 10.10 a.m.

#### **5. Draft Unacceptable Behaviours Policy: implementation issues – briefing by Legal Services**

The Committee Clerk introduced this agenda item and explained the background to the request for legal advice.

The Legal Advisor, Caroline Byers, joined the meeting at 10.12 a.m.

The Legal Advisor briefed the Committee on the legal advice and this was followed by a question and answer session.

Jemma Dolan left the meeting at 11.00 a.m.

The Chairperson thanked the Legal Advisor for her briefing.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the draft Unacceptable Behaviours Policy is amended to remove references to the panel of lay members and the related appeals mechanism.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to commission follow-up legal advice on how to exclude the Unacceptable Behaviours Policy from applying to the context of Assembly proceedings or political speech, given the freedom of expression protections afforded by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to commission follow-up legal advice on the draft amendments needed to Standing Orders, the General Procedures Direction, the Code of Conduct and the draft Unacceptable Behaviours Policy to progress the implementation of the Policy.

## **6. Procedures for determining complaint admissibility in other legislatures – briefing by RaISe**

The Committee Clerk briefed the Committee on the background to this agenda item.

The Assembly Research Officer, Ray McCaffrey, joined the meeting at 11.26 a.m.

The Research Officer briefed the Committee and this was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the Research Officer for his briefing.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to commission legal advice on how the General Procedures Direction could be amended to address issues which the Committee had identified.

## **7. Correspondence**

None.

## **8. Any other business**

None.

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

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 7 May 2025 at 10.00 a.m. in room 106.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.42 a.m.

**Cathy Mason MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee on Standards and Privileges**

**7 May 2025**