

COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2012
ROOM 144, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Gerry Kelly MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Phil Flanagan MLA
Mr Samuel Gardiner MLA
Mr Chris Lyttle MLA
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA
Mr Alban Maginness MLA
Lord Morrow MLA
Mr George Robinson MLA
Mr Mervyn Storey MLA

In attendance: Alison Ross (Clerk)
Neil Currie (Assistant Clerk)
Christopher McNickle (Clerical Officer)

1.00pm The meeting opened in public session.

1. Apologies

None.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Flanagan to the Committee. Mr Flanagan confirmed that he had no financial or other interests, relevant to the work of the Committee, to declare. The Chairperson reminded Members of the on-going need to declare any interests which are relevant to the work of the Committee.

2. Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2012

Agreed : Members agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2012.

3. Draft End of Session Report

The Committee considered the draft End of Session report detailing the work of the Committee from the start of the current mandate in May 2011 to August 2012.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the End of Session report and was content for it to be published.

1.04pm Mr Lyttle joined the meeting.

1.04pm Mr Robinson joined the meeting.

1.04pm Mr Storey joined the meeting.

4. Amendments to Standing Order 59

The Committee considered proposed amendments to delete paragraphs 3 and 5 of Standing Order 59, now that the Assembly and Executive Review Committee had completed its review of the operation of sections 16A to 16C of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and the report had subsequently been debated by the Assembly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the amendments and the motion to amend Standing Order 59.

5. Assembly grouping of independent Members and single party Members

The Committee considered the written responses from the Alliance Party, the DUP and the SDLP in relation to having an Assembly grouping of independent Members and single party Members. The views of Sinn Féin and the UUP were also expressed at the meeting.

In light of the views expressed by the five main parties, Mr Allister indicated that he did not wish to put forward a proposal on this matter at this stage.

6. Forward Work Programme

The Committee was content with the Forward Work Programme.

7. Written Assembly Questions – briefing from junior Ministers

1.18pm Junior Minister Bell, junior Minister McCann and OFMdFM officials Alan Rogers and Graeme Reid joined the meeting. The junior Ministers briefed Members on responses to written Assembly Questions. This was followed by a question and answer session.

In view of the Committee's ongoing concerns about the poor performance of some departments in meeting the timescales in Standing Orders for providing answers to Members' questions, the junior Ministers agreed to raise the matter once again with the Executive, and to respond in advance of the next

Committee meeting scheduled for 23 October 2012.

1.58pm The Chairperson thanked the junior Ministers for the briefing, and they left the meeting.

Agreed: It was agreed that the Chairperson should write to the junior Ministers to request further information/clarification on a number of issues, some of which were raised at the meeting.

2.02pm Mr Gardiner left the meeting.

8. Amending Bills after Further Consideration Stage – briefing from the Bill Office

2.02pm Patricia Casey and Éilis Haughey from the Bill Office joined the meeting and briefed Members on the paper it had provided on amending Bills after Further Consideration Stage. This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed with the recommendations contained in the briefing paper. The Clerk was asked to obtain legal advice and to bring proposed amendments to Standing Orders to the Committee for its consideration.

2.20pm The Chairperson thanked Ms Casey and Ms Haughey for the briefing, and they left the meeting.

9. Inquiry into Topical Questions

The Committee considered written submissions that had been received after the previous meeting from the SDLP and the Northern Ireland Executive Committee on its inquiry into Topical Questions.

The Committee discussed issues a) to f) under the Terms of Reference for the inquiry.

2.27pm Mr Robinson left the meeting.

2.40pm Mr Maginness left the meeting.

Agreed: It was agreed to consider the outstanding issues at the next meeting scheduled for 23 October 2012.

10. Correspondence

There was no other correspondence.

11. Any other Business

None.

12. Date, time and place of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on 23 October 2012 at 1.00pm in Room 144, Parliament Buildings.

2.43pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Gerry Kelly
Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

23 October 2012