

COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 24 JUNE 2014
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Gerry Kelly MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Kieran McCarthy MLA
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA
Mr Alban Maginness MLA
Lord Morrow MLA
Mr George Robinson MLA

In attendance: Ciara McKay (Clerk)
Nick Mitford (Senior Assistant Clerk)
Neil Currie (Assistant Clerk)

1.01pm The meeting opened in public session.

1. Apologies

Mr Samuel Gardiner MLA
Mr Barry McElduff MLA

2. Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 27th May 2014

Agreed: Members agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 27th May 2014.

3. Matters arising

(a) Correspondence from Mairaid McMahan

The Chairperson advised Members that, as agreed, the Clerk met with Mairaid McMahan on 4th June 2014 in relation to her e-petition project. The Chairperson advised Members that the Committee would receive an oral briefing from Mairaid McMahan later in the meeting.

(b) Exceptional Further Consideration Stage

The Committee noted a draft insertion to the Speaker's admissibility criteria, prepared by the Bill Office, following the Assembly's agreement to amend Standing Orders to provide for an Exceptional Further Consideration Stage.

(c) Review of Topical Questions

The Chairperson advised Members that, as agreed, he had written to the junior Ministers to request outstanding responses to the Committee's letters dated 28th January 2014 and 1st April 2014, in relation to the Review of Topical Questions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the junior Ministers to brief the Committee at its next meeting, scheduled for 23rd September 2014, on the Committee's Review of Topical Questions.

4. Inquiry into the extent to which Standing Orders should permit the Attorney General to participate in proceedings of the Assembly

1.05pm Mr Robinson joined the meeting.

The Committee considered the responses from the Business Committee and the Speaker, in relation to how a Statutory Rule laid by the Attorney General, which is subject to the draft affirmative resolution procedure, might be tabled and debated.

1.08pm Mr Allister joined the meeting.

1.08pm Mr Clarke joined the meeting.

Agreed: It was agreed to explore this issue with the junior Ministers at the Committee meeting scheduled for 23rd September 2014. It was also agreed that the Clerk should prepare an options paper for consideration at the next meeting.

1.16pm Mr McCarthy left the meeting.

5. Public Petition Procedures – briefing from Mairaid McMahon

1.16pm Mairaid McMahon, Project Officer, Make It Happen Project, joined the meeting and briefed Members on her public petition project. This was followed by a question and answer session.

1.38pm The Chairperson thanked Ms McMahon for the briefing, and she left the meeting.

6. Electronic voting in the Chamber

Agreed: Having considered information and cost options to introduce electronic voting in the Chamber, it was agreed not to propose

any changes to the current system of voting. It was also agreed not to consider this issue again for the duration of the mandate.

7. Public Petition Procedures

The Committee returned to its consideration of public petition procedures and the oral briefing from Mairaid McMahon (agenda item 5).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to give further consideration to the public petition project outlined by Mairaid McMahon. It was agreed to commission research into the e-petition systems in operation in other legislatures, as well as information on the current procedures relating to public petitions presented to the Assembly.

8. Forward Work Programme

The Committee was content with the Forward Work Programme.

9. Correspondence

The Committee noted correspondence from the Senior Assistant Clerk to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister in relation to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission annual budget.

10. Any other Business

The Committee was content to delegate authority to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson in relation to submitting views on releasing or withholding information in any non-routine or contentious Freedom of Information requests received during summer recess.

There was no other business.

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on 23rd September 2014 at 1.00pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

1.49pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Gerry Kelly
Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

23 September 2014