

COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 25 MARCH 2014
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

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

In attendance: Nuala Dunwoody (Clerk Assistant)
Nick Mitford (Senior Assistant Clerk)
Neil Currie (Assistant Clerk)
Jennifer Breslin (Clerical Officer)

1.01pm The meeting began in closed session.

1. Apologies

Paula Bradley MLA.

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

The Committee considered a briefing paper plus a revised draft report on its inquiry.

The Chairperson informed Members that the Clerk Assistant was in discussion with the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister regarding the handling of a Statutory Rule, subject to the draft affirmative resolution procedure, which may come to the Assembly before the summer recess.

The Committee noted that the arrangements for this particular Statutory Rule would be dealt with independently of the inquiry, and should not be binding on any future conclusions of the Committee.

Agreed: It was agreed to write to the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, the Attorney General for Northern Ireland and the Committee for Justice, to seek their views on mechanisms for managing guidance (Statutory Rules) laid by the Attorney General which is subject to the negative resolution or draft affirmative resolution procedures.

3. Review of the current organisation of the business week

1.10pm Mr Gardiner joined the meeting.

The Committee considered an initial draft report and agreed some issues relating to the review.

Agreed: It was agreed to consider a revised draft report at the next meeting.

1.24pm Mr Maginness joined the meeting.

4. Amending Bills after Further Consideration Stage

The Committee noted legal advice on the proposed Standing Order to provide for an Exceptional Further Consideration Stage.

The Chairperson informed Members that consequential amendments were being prepared by the Bill Office and that these would be brought to the Committee for consideration as soon as they were available.

1.25pm The meeting moved into public session.

5. Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2014

Agreed: Members agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2014.

6. Technical Groups (Emergence of new political parties/groupings during a mandate)

In view of the proposals which were put forward at the meeting on 28 January 2014 in relation to the establishment of Technical Groups (which the Committee had divided on without a decision being reached) the Chairperson suggested that the Committee revisit the proposals.

Mr Clarke proposed that there should be no change to the current arrangements and that Technical Groups should not be established at this time.

The Committee divided on the proposal. Ayes 8; Noes 2.

Ayes

Noes

Trevor Clarke
Samuel Gardiner
Gerry Kelly
Kieran McCarthy
Barry McElduff
Oliver McMullan
Lord Morrow
George Robinson

Jim Allister
Alban Maginness

The proposal accordingly was agreed to.

Agreed: It was agreed that the Clerk should inform the Clerk to the Assembly and Executive Review Committee on the outcome of its deliberations regarding the establishment of Technical Groups.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a letter to the Speaker advising the Business Committee on the outcome of its deliberations regarding issues relating to the emergence of new political parties or groupings during a mandate.

7. Review of Standing Order 56 – Public Accounts Committee

The Committee considered the response from the Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) confirming that the PAC was content with the proposed amendment to Standing Order 56(1) and that it met the requirements of the PAC.

Mr Clarke declared an interest as a member of the PAC.

The Committee considered a draft amendment to Standing Order 56(1) and a draft motion for the plenary debate.

Mr Allister proposed that Standing Orders should also provide that the Chairperson of the PAC cannot be a member of any party included in the Executive Committee.

Agreed: It was agreed that Members should consult with their parties on the proposal, and to consider the matter at the next meeting.

8. Review of Topical Questions

The Chairperson informed Members that a response from the junior Ministers on behalf of the Executive Committee had still not been received.

Agreed: It was agreed to write back to the junior Ministers to remind them of their outstanding response, and to ask for their comments on some specific issues that had emerged during the review.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee was content with the Forward Work Programme.

10. Correspondence

There was no other correspondence.

11. Any other Business

Mr McElduff raised the issue of electronic voting in the Chamber and asked if consideration could be given to this matter.

Agreed: The Clerk was asked to provide a briefing paper on this issue for consideration at the next meeting.

12. Date, time and place of next meeting

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

1.40pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Gerry Kelly
Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

29 April 2014