

COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2016
ROOM 21, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Gordon Lyons MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Steven Agnew MLA
Mrs Rosemary Barton MLA
Mr Chris Lyttle MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Mr Barry McElduff MLA
Mr Colin McGrath MLA

In attendance: Ciara McKay (Clerk)
Neil Currie (Assistant Clerk)
Alex Carter (Clerical Officer)

1.16pm The meeting began in closed session.

1. Apologies

Mr Edwin Poots MLA

2. Draft minutes of the meeting held on 13th September 2016

Agreed: Members agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 13th September 2016.

3. Official Opposition

The Committee considered a briefing paper including draft Terms of Reference for its Review of provisions for Standing Orders as set out in the Assembly and Executive Reform (Assembly Opposition) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Terms of Reference for the review.

The Committee considered the proposed timescale and approach for the review.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the proposed timescale and approach for the review.

1.20pm Mr Agnew joined the meeting.

1.20pm Mr McElduff joined the meeting.

Agreed: It was agreed that the Clerk should write to the Clerk to the Assembly and Executive Review Committee to establish if that Committee has considered, or intends to consider, sections 12 to 14 of the Act, relating to provisions for an Assembly and Executive Transfer of Responsibilities motion.

Agreed: It was agreed that the Clerk should arrange for officials in the Bill Office to provide a briefing for the meeting on 25th October 2016, in relation to section 15(3) of the Act which provides for an annual debate on the Executive legislative timetable.

1.21pm The meeting moved into public session.

4. Introduction of an e-Petitions process

Agreed: The Committee discussed and agreed the verification process in relation to petitioners who submit an e-Petition.

The Committee discussed the threshold number of signatures that should apply before any admissible e-Petition is taken forward for action by the Assembly.

Mrs Barton proposed that the threshold should be set at 1000 signatures.

The question was put:

‘That the Committee on Procedures is agreed that the threshold for referral of e-Petitions to the relevant Committee is 1000 signatures’.

The Committee divided on the proposal. Ayes 6; Noes 1.

Ayes:

Mr Gordon Lyons MLA; Mrs Rosemary Barton MLA; Mr Chris Lyttle MLA; Mr Fra McCann MLA; Mr Barry McElduff MLA; Mr Colin McGrath MLA.

Noes:

Mr Steven Agnew MLA.

The proposal accordingly was agreed to.

1.50pm Mr McElduff left the meeting.

Agreed: It was agreed that the Chairperson should write to the Assembly Commission to ask that arrangements are put in place to facilitate e-Petitions.

Agreed: It was agreed that the Chairperson should write to the Chairpersons of statutory and standing committees to inform them of the Committee's decision in relation to e-Petitions.

5. Correspondence

The Committee considered correspondence from the Speaker requesting that the Committee consider reviewing the current procedures for Private Members' Bills.

1.53pm Mr McGrath left the meeting.

Agreed: It was agreed that the Committee should carry out a review.

Agreed: It was agreed that the Committee seek advice from Bill Office officials on issues relating to Private Members' Bills, at its meeting on 25th October 2016.

6. Forward Work Programme

The Committee was content with the Forward Work Programme.

7. Any other Business

As Mr Agnew had not yet joined the meeting when agenda item 3 was discussed, he asked if the Committee had decided to invite Mr John McCallister to submit his views in relation to the Committee's review of provisions in Standing Orders as set out in the Assembly and Executive Reform (Assembly Opposition) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

Agreed: It was agreed that Mr John McCallister should be added to the list of stakeholders who will be invited to submit views on the Committee's review.

8. Date, time and place of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Tuesday, 11th October 2016 at 1.15pm in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

1.57pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Gordon Lyons

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

11 October 2016