



COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND PRIVILEGES

WEDNESDAY, 18TH FEBRUARY 2015
PRIVATE DINING ROOM, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr Jimmy Spratt (Chairperson)
Ms Anna Lo (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Steven Agnew
Mr Cathal Boylan
Mr Sammy Douglas
Mr Colum Eastwood
Mr David Hilditch
Mr Declan McAleer
Mr Fra McCann
Mrs Sandra Overend

In Attendance: Mr Paul Gill (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Hilary Cleland Bogle (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Kerr (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Newton

Chairperson's Introduction

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the meeting should commence in closed session and move into open session for agenda item 5.

The meeting commenced at 1.34pm in closed session.

The Chairperson welcomed Committee members to the meeting.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests

The Chairperson reminded Members of their obligation to declare any relevant financial or other interests before and during each Committee meeting.

3. Draft minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 21st January 2015 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Review of the Code of Conduct – Evidence Session with the Independent Financial Review Panel

Members noted the Clerk's Paper and associated correspondence.

The Clerk briefed the Committee on the background to this issue.

Following discussion –

1.45pm The Committee moved into open session.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Pat McCartan, Chairperson; Dr Henrietta Campbell; Mr Alan McQuillan; Independent Financial Review Panel and invited Mr McCartan to brief the Committee on two issues. Firstly, to update the Committee on what steps the Panel were taking following the allegations made in the Spotlight programmes broadcasted on November and secondly, in relation to the Panel's interest in the Register of Members' Interests which the Committee is currently looking at as part of its review of the Code of Conduct.

1.52pm Mr McCann joined the meeting.

2.08pm Mr Eastwood left the meeting.

2.32pm Mr Hilditch left the meeting.

Following the briefing and a question and answer session the Chairperson thanked Mr McCartan and his colleagues for attending the meeting.

2.43pm The meeting moved into closed session.

6. Review of the Code of Conduct Legal Advice

Members noted the Clerk's Paper; the request for Legal Advice; and the Legal Advice.

The Clerk briefed the Committee on this issue.

2.45pm Mr Agnew left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, in light of the Legal Advice, the Guide to the Rules should be agreed by the Assembly.

The Committee noted that it could still bring forward amendments to the Guide for the Assembly's agreement as and when it considered necessary to do so.

7. Review of the Code of Conduct – outstanding issues

Mr Bain, Assembly Commissioner for Standards joined the meeting.

Members noted the Clerk's Paper and the various related papers.

2.48pm Mr Hilditch returned to the meeting.

The Clerk briefed the Committee on outstanding issues.

2.50pm Mr Agnew returned to the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the amendments to the Code of Conduct.

2.55pm Mr Douglas left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content that the Guide does not need to address any other rules at this stage.

2.56pm Mr McCann left the meeting.

The Committee considered the draft Guide category by category.

3.01pm Mr McAleer left the meeting.

3.10pm Mr McAleer returned to the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content that the Clerk updates the draft Guide to take account of the comments made by the Committee and that members should then consult their parties on the draft Guide.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek Legal Advice on the Guide's contents before the Committee is asked to consider a final version.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk would prepare a paper on 'earnings bands' for consideration by the Committee at a future meeting.

The Clerk briefed the Committee on the report by Transparency International UK.

Agreed: Following discussion it was agreed to give consideration at a future meeting to the recommendations made in the report by Transparency International UL.

3.40pm The Chairperson thanked Mr Bain for attending the meeting.

11. Application for an All-Party Group

The Committee considered an application for an All-Party Group on Animal Welfare.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to the formation of an All-Party Group on Animal Welfare.

12. Any other business

The Chairperson reminded members that the Committee visit to Dublin is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 25th February 2015 and asked any members who had not already done to confirm if they are available to attend.

13. Date, time and place of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Wednesday, 18th March 2015 the room number to be confirmed by Committee staff.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the meeting be brought forward to 1.00pm.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 3.45pm.

Mr Jimmy Spratt MLA
Chairperson, Committee on Standards and Privileges

18th March 2015