



COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND PRIVILEGES

WEDNESDAY, 15TH OCTOBER 2014
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr Alastair Ross (Chairperson)
Mr Steven Agnew
Mr Colum Eastwood
Mr David Hilditch
Mr Fra McCann
Mr Ian McCrea
Mr Robin Newton

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

Apologies: Mr Cathal Boylan
Ms Anna Lo (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Declan McAleer
Mrs Sandra Overend

Chairperson's Introduction

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the meeting should commence in open session and then move into closed session from agenda item 6.

The meeting commenced at 1.30pm in open session.

The Chairperson welcomed Committee members to the meeting and informed the Committee that Mr David Hilditch and Mr Robin Newton had replaced Ms Paula Bradley and Mr Mervyn Storey as members of the Committee.

The Committee agreed that the Chairperson should write to Ms Bradley and Mr Storey to thank them for their contribution to the Committee.

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.

Members noted the registered interests of Mr David Hilditch and Mr Robin Newton.

3. Draft minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 24th September 2014 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Review of the Code of Conduct: Evidence Session

Members noted the Clerk's Paper; the Consultation response from the Assembly Commission; and supporting documents.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Trevor Reaney, Clerk to the Assembly/Chief Executive; and Mr Richard Stewart, Director of Corporate Services to the meeting and invited them to give evidence to the Committee on behalf of the Assembly Commission.

2.08pm Mr Steven Agnew left the meeting.

2.09pm Mr Robin Newton left the meeting.

2.12pm Mr Steven Agnew returned to the meeting.

Following discussion the Chairperson thanked Mr Reaney and Mr Stewart for attending the meeting.

The meeting moved into closed session

6. Review of the Code of Conduct: Other issues

The Clerk briefed the Committee on the update from the Association of Professional Political Consultants (APPC).

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would not be necessary to hold a conference call with the Chairman.

Members noted the Clerk's Paper; correspondence from the Office of the First and deputy First Minister; and the 2000 Ministerial Code.

The Chairperson invited the Clerk to brief the Committee on these issues.

Agreed: Following discussion the Committee agreed that the Chairperson should write to the Office of the First and deputy First Minister seeking clarity on the issues set out in the Clerk's Paper.

Members noted that the Chairperson would be visiting the National Assembly of Wales on 16th October 2014 to meet with the Chairperson of the Standards of Conduct Committee and the Welsh Standards Commissioner.

Members also noted that the Chairperson would be meeting with the Chair of the Independent Financial Review Body.

7. Correspondence from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards

Members noted two pieces of correspondence from the Assembly Commissioner for Standards on complaints against two Members and correspondence on his new Protocol with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Bain, Assembly Commissioner for Standards to the meeting and invited him to brief the Committee on his correspondence dated 30th September 2014 on a complaint against a Member.

Following this briefing and discussion, the Chairperson invited Mr Bain to brief the Committee on his correspondence dated 7th October 2014 on a complaint against a Member. The Chairperson declared an interest in this issue as a former member of the Policing Board.

Following this briefing and discussion, the Chairperson invited Mr Bain to brief the Committee on his Protocol with the PSNI.

Following discussion the Chairperson thanked Mr Bain for attending the meeting.

Agreed: Following discussion, the Committee agreed with the Assembly Commissioner for Standards' conclusion that the complaint at agenda item 7.2 was inadmissible.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk write to the Member complained of and the complainant enclosing a copy of the Commissioner's correspondence and informing them of the Committee's decision.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk write to the Commissioner informing him of the Committee's decision.

Agreed: Following discussion, the Committee agreed with the Assembly Commissioner for Standards' conclusion that the complaint at agenda item 7.4 was inadmissible.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk write to the Member complained of and the complainant enclosing a copy of the Commissioner's correspondence and informing them of the Committee's decision.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk write to the Commissioner informing him of the Committee's decision.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the protocol between the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards and that it should be placed on the Committee page on the Assembly website.

8. Correspondence

Agreed: Members noted the tabled correspondence and agreed to seek further legal advice on this matter.

9. Application for an All-Party Group

Agreed: Members approved an application for an All-Party Group on Social Enterprise.

10. Any other business

There was no other business.

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

Members agreed that the next meeting of the Committee should take place on Wednesday, 5th November 2014 in Room 106 at 1.30pm.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 2.38pm.

Mr Alastair Ross MLA
Chairperson, Committee on Standards and Privileges
5th November 2014