

COMMITTEES

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- (2) Where the First Minister and Deputy First Minister acting jointly are in charge of a Bill, the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee of the Centre unless the Assembly shall order otherwise; and the provisions of this Standing Order and of Standing Order 33 shall apply in relation to the Committee of the Centre acting by virtue of this paragraph as they apply in relation to a Statutory Committee.

48. NON-STATUTORY COMMITTEES

- (1) Unless otherwise specified in Standing Orders there shall be two types of Non-Statutory Committee in the Assembly, namely Standing Committees and Ad Hoc Committees.
- (2) Standing Committees shall be permanent Committees of the Assembly.
- (3) The Chairs and Deputy Chairs of Standing

Committees (with the exception of the Business Committee) shall be filled in the manner prescribed in paragraphs (3)-(13) of Standing Order 46. This shall be done as part of a process that is separate and distinct from the process of filling the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of Statutory Committees.

- (4) Standing Committees unless otherwise specified in Standing Orders shall be constituted in the manner prescribed in Standing Order 47.
- (5) Paragraphs (6), (7) and (9) of Standing Order 47 shall also apply to Standing Committees.
- (6) Unless otherwise provided for in Standing Orders, the quorum of Standing Committees shall be the same as that for Statutory Committees.
- (7) Ad Hoc Committees shall be established from time to time to deal with any specific time-bounded terms of reference that the Assembly may set. The Assembly shall decide the membership of any such Committee and may direct its method of operation.

49. COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES

- (1) There shall be a Standing Committee of the Assembly to be known as the Committee on Procedures to consider and review on an ongoing basis the Standing Orders and procedures of the Assembly.
- (2) The procedures of the Committee shall be such as the Committee shall determine.

50. BUSINESS COMMITTEE

- (1) There shall be a Standing Committee of the

Assembly to be known as the Business Committee which shall make arrangements for the business of the Assembly and perform such other duties as the Speaker may request or the Assembly determine.

- (2) The Speaker shall be Chairperson of the Business Committee.
- (3) The Speaker shall nominate two members of the Committee, either of whom, in his/her unavoidable absence shall act as Chairperson of the Business Committee.
- (4) The procedures of the Business Committee shall be such as the Committee shall determine.
- (5) The Business Committee shall consist of thirteen members.
- (6) Each party delegation shall be entitled to cast the number of votes equivalent to the number of members who adhere to the Whip of that party.
- (7) The Business Committee shall determine the dates of Recess.

51. PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

- (1) There shall be a Standing Committee of the Assembly designated “the Public Accounts Committee” to consider accounts, and reports on accounts laid before the Assembly.
- (2) The Committee shall have power to send for persons, papers and records and to report from time to time.
- (3) Neither the Chairperson nor Deputy Chairperson of

the Committee shall be a member of the same political party as the Minister of Finance & Personnel or of any junior Minister appointed to the Department of Finance and Personnel.

52. COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS AND PRIVILEGES

- (1) There shall be a Standing Committee of the Assembly called the Committee on Standards and Privileges:
 - (a) to consider specific matters relating to privilege referred to it by the Assembly;
 - (b) to oversee the work of the Assembly Clerk of Standards; to examine the arrangements for the compilation, maintenance and accessibility of the Register of Members' Interests and any other registers of interests established by the Assembly; and to review from time to time the form and content of those registers;
 - (c) to consider any matter relating to the conduct of Members, including specific complaints in relation to alleged breaches of any code of conduct to which the Assembly has agreed and which have been drawn to the Committee's attention;
 - (d) to recommend any modifications to the code of conduct mentioned in paragraph (c);
 - (e) to perform the functions described in Standing Order 64(6) and (7);
 - (f) to make a report to the Assembly on any matter falling within this Standing Order.
- (2) The Committee shall be appointed at the commencement of every Assembly and shall have power to send for persons, papers and records that are relevant to its enquiries.

- (3) There shall be an officer of the Assembly, to be known as the Assembly Commissioner for Standards, who shall carry out an investigation into any matter falling within paragraph (4) referred to him by the Assembly Clerk of Standards and shall make a report thereon to the Committee on Standards and Privileges.
- (4) Those matters are:
- (a) matters relating to Members and Assembly privilege, including alleged breach of privilege;
 - (b) specific complaints about Members made in relation to the registering or declaring of interests; and
 - (c) matters relating to the conduct of Members, including specific complaints in relation to alleged contravention of:
 - (i) the Code of Conduct for Members of the Assembly; or
 - (ii) the Guide to the Rules Relating to the Conduct of Members, approved by the Assembly on 14 December 1999.
- (5) A report made under paragraph (3) may not include any recommendations for any sanction or penalty to be imposed upon any Members of the Assembly.
- (6) The Assembly Commissioner for Standards shall not, in the exercise of any of his functions, be subject to the direction or control of the Assembly.
- (7) The Assembly Commissioner for Standards shall not be dismissed unless:
- (a) the Assembly so resolves; and
 - (b) the resolution is passed with the support of a number of Members of the Assembly which equals or exceeds two-thirds of the total number of seats in the Assembly.

53. AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Assembly, by resolution, shall establish a Committee to exercise the functions laid upon the Assembly by Section 66 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. In accordance with Section 66(2) of the Act, no more than one Member of the Committee shall at the same time be a Member of the Public Accounts Committee.

The Committee shall have a membership of five and a quorum of two.

54. COMMITTEE OF THE CENTRE

- (1) There shall be a Standing Committee of the Assembly to be known as the Committee of the Centre, to examine and report on the following functions carried out in the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister, and on any other related matters determined by the Assembly:
 - (a) Economic Policy Unit (other than the Programme of Government);
 - (b) Equality Unit;
 - (c) Civic Forum;
 - (d) European Affairs and International Matters;
 - (e) Community Relations;
 - (f) Public Appointments Policy;
 - (g) Freedom of Information;
 - (h) Victims;
 - (i) Nolan Standards;
 - (j) Public Service Office;
 - (k) Emergency Planning; and
 - (l) Women's Issues.
- (2) This Committee shall also have the functions

conferred by virtue of Standing Orders 31(2) and 41(2).

- (3) This Committee shall replace the Standing Committees on European Affairs and Equality, Human Rights and Community Relations. Standing Orders “Standing Committee on European Affairs” and “Committee on Equality, Human Rights and Community Relations” are revoked.
- (4) The Committee shall consist of 17 Members.
- (5) The Committee shall have the power to send for persons and papers.
- (6) The procedures of the Committee shall be such as the Committee shall determine.

55. CONFORMITY WITH EQUALITY REQUIREMENTS – SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON

- (1) The Assembly may appoint an Ad Hoc Committee to examine and report on whether a Bill or proposal for legislation is in conformity with equality requirements (including rights under the European Convention on Human Rights or any Northern Ireland Bill of Rights).
- (2) The Committee shall have the power to call for people and papers to assist in its consideration of matters referred to it.
- (3) The Assembly shall consider all reports of the Committee and determine the matter in accordance with the procedures on cross-community support within the meaning of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
- (4) Where there is a Petition of Concern the Assembly

shall vote to determine whether the measure or proposal for legislation may proceed without reference to the above procedure. If this fails to achieve support on a parallel consent basis the procedure as at (1) – (3) above shall be followed.

56. SERVICE ON COMMITTEES

Within one week of the establishment of any Committee of the Assembly, the Speaker shall seek nominations of Members to serve on that Committee from party leaders (or their nominees).

57. COMMITTEE MEMBERS VOTING IN THE CHAMBER

Where it is known to a Committee of the Assembly that a vote of any kind is to be taken imminently at a sitting of the Assembly in Plenary, the Chairperson of the Committee or a Deputy acting in his stead shall suspend the proceedings of the Committee to enable Members to vote.

58. SUB COMMITTEES

- (1) Each Committee (“the parent Committee”), in the discharge of its functions, may establish sub-Committees.
- (2) Unless with the approval of the Business Committee and the Assembly, a parent Committee shall establish no more than one sub-Committee to operate at any one time.
- (3) A sub-Committee shall be appointed to consider specific, time-bounded matters within the terms of

reference set by the parent Committee and shall:

- (a) report only to that Committee; and
- (b) stand dissolved on disposal of those matters.

- (4) A sub-Committee shall not take any decision on behalf of the parent Committee.
- (5) A parent Committee may appoint a member to be the Convenor of a sub-Committee.
- (6) Each sub-Committee shall, in as far as is practicable, reflect the party strengths in the Assembly.
- (7) The quorum of a sub-Committee shall be determined by the parent Committee.
- (8) The proceedings of a sub-Committee shall be such as the parent Committee shall determine.

59. OVERLAP OF COMMITTEE BUSINESS

- (1) Where legislation or other subject matter due for consideration appears to fall within the remit of more than one Committee, the Chairpersons of the affected Committees shall consult and agree upon which Committee the matter should fall to for disposal. Where the matter remains unresolved, the Chairpersons affected should make their views known to the Business Committee which shall rule on the matter.
- (2) A Committee taking the lead on a matter that affects another Committee shall, as a matter of course, seek the views and establish the interests of the other Committee on the subject at issue before arriving at any conclusions and may invite the other Committee to carry out the consideration of any stated issue and provide it with a draft report.