

**NORTHERN IRELAND (ST ANDREWS AGREEMENT) ACT 2006**

**STANDING ORDERS DETERMINED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND  
NOTIFIED TO THE PRESIDING OFFICER UNDER PARAGRAPH 9(2) OF  
SCHEDULE 1 TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND (ST ANDREWS AGREEMENT) ACT  
2006**

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## **1. Meetings of the Assembly**

- (a) The Presiding Officer or any deputy Presiding Officer (in these Standing Orders referred to as “the Speaker” and “Deputy Speaker”) shall, in accordance with Paragraph 1(1) of Schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Act 2006 (“the 2006 Act”), send a notice to each Member:
  - (i) stating that a meeting of the Transitional Assembly (“the Assembly) will be held; and
  - (ii) stating the place, time and date of the meeting
- (b) Such a notice shall be sent at least 3 calendar days before the time stated in the notice.
- (c) Where the Secretary of State has issued a direction under Paragraph 1(2) of Schedule 1 to the 2006 Act the notice referred to in (a) shall comply with the terms of that direction.
- (d) The period referred to in (b) shall not apply to a notice issued in relation to any meeting of the Assembly on 24 November 2006.

## **2. General rule for the conduct of Business**

- (a) The ruling of the Speaker shall be final on all questions of procedure and order.
- (b) The Speaker’s functions may be exercised by a Deputy Speaker if the office of the Speaker is vacant or the Speaker is for any reason unable to act.
- (c) Subject to paragraph (d), the Speaker may authorise a Deputy Speaker to exercise functions on his/her behalf.
- (d) Where the Speaker wishes to authorise a Deputy Speaker to exercise functions on his or her behalf, he or she shall notify the Deputy Speaker of the duties which that person is to perform and the authority which that person is to exercise.
- (e) In these Standing Orders, references to the Speaker shall, unless the context requires otherwise, include a Deputy Speaker exercising the function of Speaker.

## **3. Members to be deemed to have signed the Roll of Membership etc**

- (a) Each person who was a member of the Assembly established under Paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland Act 2006 (“the 2006 Assembly”) shall be deemed to

have signed the Roll of Membership and to have taken his/her seat in accordance with Standing Orders; and

- (b) A person's designation of identity in the 2006 Assembly immediately before the coming into force of Schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Act 2006 shall be deemed to be his/her designation of identity for the purposes of this Assembly, except where a person changes his/her designation in accordance with Standing Order 5.
- (c) Where a vacancy occurs or exists in the membership of the Northern Ireland Assembly, that vacancy shall, for the purposes of Standing Orders, also be taken to exist in the membership of the Assembly.

#### **4. Procedure at first meeting of the Assembly following the election of the Northern Ireland Assembly at the poll on 7 March 2007**

- (a) Members shall take their seats by signing the Roll of Membership. A Member shall be regarded as having taken his/her seat when he/she signs the Roll of Membership. The decision of the Speaker as to whether a Member has taken his/her seat in accordance with this paragraph shall be final.
- (b) All Members shall have the opportunity to take their seats in the manner prescribed in paragraph (a) before any formal business is conducted in the Assembly.
- (c) The Roll of Membership shall be located in the Chamber during sitting days until it has been signed by every Member. A Member may sign the Roll any time during a sitting of the Assembly, but no business shall be interrupted for that purpose.
- (d) A Member shall not participate in Assembly proceedings until he/she has signed the Roll of Membership.
- (e) After the signing of the Roll a Member may enter in the Roll a designation of identity, being Nationalist, Unionist or Other. A Member who does not enter a designation of identity shall be deemed to be designated Other for the purposes of these Standing Orders.
- (f) A Member may change his/her designation of identity in accordance with Standing Order 5.
- (g) Before the meeting of the Assembly, the Clerk shall draw up a list of seats in the Assembly held by members of each party, as it appears to him. A Member may, until one hour before the start of the meeting, correct his or her membership as stated on that list by

writing to the Speaker. Immediately before the start of the meeting the Speaker will publish the list.

- (h) If, on the basis of party size and designation of identity under Standing Order 22, either of the Nominating Officers who made the nominations under Standing Order 20 that are currently notified to the Secretary of State under Standing Order 22(e), would not be entitled to nominate under the terms of that Standing Order, were nominations to be made at this meeting; those nominations currently notified shall cease to have effect and further nominations of persons to hold office as First Minister and deputy First Minister on the restoration of devolved government in Northern Ireland shall be made in accordance with Standing Orders 20 to 22 as the first business of this meeting.

## **5. Changes to Community Designation and Party Membership**

- (a) Subject to Standing Order 4(g), a member may change his/her party membership at any time. Any such change shall take effect immediately after notification in writing is submitted to the Speaker.
- (b) A member designated in accordance with these Standing Orders (or being treated as having so designated) as a Nationalist, as a Unionist or as Other may change his/her designation only if –
- (i) (being a member of political party) he becomes a member of a different political party or he ceases to be a member of any political party; or
- (ii) (not being a member of a political party) he/she becomes a member of a political party.
- (c) Any change referred to at (b) will take effect immediately after notification in writing is submitted to the Speaker.

## **OPERATION OF THE ASSEMBLY**

### **6. Proceedings to be held in public**

Except as otherwise prescribed in Standing Orders the proceedings of the Assembly shall be held in public.

## **7. Prayers**

Each meeting, except that provided for in Standing Order 4, shall begin with the Speaker announcing the commencement of a period of two minutes silent prayer or contemplation. This period shall be known as Prayers; it shall take place in private and shall be the first item on the Order Paper for the day.

## **8. Quorum**

- (a) The quorum of the Assembly shall be ten Members not including the Speaker.
- (b) If at any time, the attention of the Speaker is directed to the fact that a quorum is not present, he/she shall order the division bells to be rung. If at the expiration of five minutes a quorum is not present, the Speaker shall suspend the Assembly without question put; but if a quorum is then present it shall not be in order to draw the attention of the Speaker to the absence of a quorum for a period of one hour from that time. The business suspended shall be the first business when the Assembly next sits.

## **9. Sittings of the Assembly**

- (a) A general announcement shall be made five minutes before the Speaker takes the chair at a sitting or a resumed sitting.
- (b) The Speaker may at any time suspend sittings of the Assembly for up to fifteen minutes, or longer with the leave of the Assembly.

## **10. Business of the Assembly**

The Speaker shall prepare an Order Paper for each sitting day showing the business to be taken, together with such other information as is relevant to the business outlined in the Order Paper.

## **11. Speeches in the Assembly**

- (a) A Member shall not address the Assembly unless called on to speak by the Speaker. When the Speaker rises to speak, the Member addressing the Assembly shall cease speaking and resume his/her place.
- (b) A member may not speak more than once to the same motion, but a right of reply shall be allowed to a Member who has moved a motion or an amendment.

- (c) Notwithstanding paragraph (b) any Member may seek to intervene while another Member is speaking subject to that Member's consent, but may not persist in so doing if the Member refuses to give way.
- (d) The Speaker shall establish the total time to be allocated to each debate and the general arrangements for the debate including those set out in paragraph (e) below.
- (e) The Speaker shall determine the order of speaking and the number of speakers in any debate having due regard to the balance of opinion on the matter, the party strengths in the Assembly and the number of Members who have indicated a desire to speak.
- (f) The Speaker shall announce to the Assembly the established speaking times as above for any debate as a preliminary to the debate.
- (g) The Speaker, after having called the attention of the Assembly to the conduct of a Member who persists in irrelevance or tedious repetition, may direct the Member to discontinue his/her speech.

## **12. Closure of Debate**

- (a) After "the question" of a matter has been proposed, any Member who has not already spoken to it, or to any amendment to it which has been proposed, may move that "the question be now decided"; and unless it shall appear to the Speaker that any of the parties present has not had a reasonable opportunity to contribute to the debate, the question that "the question be now decided" shall be put forthwith and decided without amendment or debate.
- (b) Where a division is held on a question for the closure of debate on an issue the resolution of which requires cross-community support the question shall not be carried unless at least 30 Members have voted in support of it.
- (c) If a question for the closure of debate has been carried, the Speaker shall put forthwith the question on any amendment already proposed to the motion and the question on any other amendment which he/she may then select to be proposed, and shall then put forthwith the question on the motion or (as the case may be) on the motion as amended.

### **13. Business Committee**

- (a) There shall be a Committee 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.
- (b) The Committee shall be chaired by the Speaker and shall additionally consist of two representatives from each party with more than 15 seats held in the Assembly and one representative from any other party with two or more seats.
- (c) The procedures of the Committee shall be such as the Committee shall determine.
- (d) 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.
- (e) For the purposes of (d), where a seat is vacant, the party membership of the person who vacated the seat shall be counted for the purpose of calculating the number of members who adhere to the Whip of that party.

### **14. Motions**

- (a) Any Member may give notice of a motion on any matter by tabling it in the Business Office.
- (b) A motion shall:
  - (i) be in the form of a resolution of the Assembly;
  - (ii) not contain offensive language;
  - (iii) not contravene Standing Order 34; and
  - (iv) where it relates to the establishment of a committee, provide for the committee's terms of reference and membership in accordance with Standing Order 16.
- (c) The Speaker shall decide whether a motion is admissible. The Business Committee may, in making arrangements for the business of the Assembly, consider any admissible motion. The Speaker shall exercise authority over the admissibility of motions.



## 15. Amendments

- (a) Amendments to motions referred to the Assembly shall be given in writing to the Speaker not later than 9.30 am on the day on which the motion is to be taken.
- (b) When an amendment has been moved, the question to be put shall be, “That the amendment be made”. Where an amendment is agreed the Question to be put shall be “That the question, as amended, be agreed”. Where amendments are rejected the question on the substantive motion shall be put.
- (c) In respect of any motion, the Speaker shall have power to select amendments to be proposed and may, if he/she thinks fit, call upon any Member who has given notice of an amendment to give such explanation of the object of the amendment as may enable him/her to form a judgment upon it.
- (d) By leave of the Assembly amendments may be withdrawn before a division is called.
- (e) Amendments may be withdrawn prior to debate with the agreement of the Member or Members proposing the amendments.

## 16. Committees of the Assembly

- (a) Where
  - (i) the Assembly establishes a Committee by a decision carried by cross-community support; or
  - (ii) the Secretary of State establishes a Committee by direction, the Business Committee shall make arrangements to establish that Committee in accordance with any such decision or direction.
- (b) Any decision of the Assembly to establish a Committee shall provide for the Committee’s terms of reference and membership.
- (c) The procedures of any Committee so established shall be such as the Committee itself shall determine, unless otherwise provided for by a decision of the Assembly or direction of the Secretary of State.

## VOTING

### 17. Voting – General

- (a) Except as provided by paragraph (b), every decision of the Assembly shall be taken by a simple majority of those voting.
- (b) The following, namely:
  - (i) A vote on a matter in respect of which a petition of concern has been presented;
  - (ii) A vote on a decision to establish a Committee of the Assembly;
  - (iii) A vote on the election of a Speaker or Deputy Speaker;
  - (iv) A vote on a decision to make, amend or repeal Standing Orders;
  - (v) A vote on a decision to approve the draft Ministerial Code;
  - (vi) A vote on any other matter as directed by the Secretary of State; or
  - (vii) A vote on any other decision which requires cross-community support by virtue of Standing Orders or legislationshall require cross-community support.
- (c) For the purposes of these Standing Orders –
  - “cross-community support” means
    - (i) the support of a majority of those members voting, a majority of the designated Nationalists voting and a majority of designated Unionists voting: or
    - (ii) the support of 60 per cent of the Members voting, 40 per cent of the designated Nationalists voting and 40 per cent of the designated Unionists voting,
- (d) The Speaker, or a Deputy Speaker when in the Chair, shall not be entitled to a vote on any matter.
- (e) The Speaker shall judge whether the motion be carried or not by collecting voices or by a show of hands as he/she considers appropriate.
- (f) A vote shall not be taken on any matter if a Quorum is not present.

- (g) If any Member is present within the precincts of the Assembly and is disabled by infirmity from passing through the lobby, his/her name may be communicated by his/her party whip to the Clerks and Tellers and may be included in the numbers counted.
- (h) Where a right to vote could have been exercised but for a vacancy in the membership of the Assembly, subject to (i), the nominating officer (as defined in Standing Order 22(a)) of the party of the member that held the seat on the vacancy occurring shall be entitled to exercise that vote.
- (i) For cross-community votes, any vote exercised by the nominating officer under (i) shall have the designation of the member who vacated the seat.

## **18. Voting where the Speaker's decision is challenged**

- (a) If the opinion of the Speaker as to the decision of a question is challenged he/she shall direct that the lobby be cleared and the division bells shall be sounded.
- (b) After the lapse of three minutes from this direction he/she shall put the question again and, if his/her opinion is again challenged, he/she may either:
  - (i) call for the nomination of tellers and divide the Assembly in the manner provided below; or
  - (ii) if, in his/her opinion the division is unnecessarily claimed, take the vote of the Assembly by calling upon the Members who support and who challenge his/her decision successively to rise in their places and he/she shall thereupon, as he/she thinks fit, either declare the determination of the Assembly or call for the nomination of tellers and divide the Assembly in the manner provided below.
- (c) When tellers have been nominated, the Speaker shall direct the Assembly to divide, "ayes" to the right and "noes" to the left. The division bells shall be sounded. After the lapse of four minutes from putting the question again he/she shall direct that the doors giving access to the division lobbies be secured. When all Members in the lobby have voted the tellers shall bring the division lists to the Clerk who will announce the result.
- (d) A Member may vote in a division although he/she did not hear the question put.
- (e) A Member shall not be obliged to vote.
- (f) If the votes in a division are equal the amendment or motion shall not be carried.

## **19. Petition of Concern**

- (a) If 30 Members petition the Assembly expressing their concern about a matter which is to be voted on by the Assembly, the vote on that matter shall require cross-community support. The procedure to be followed in petitioning the Assembly is set out in paragraphs b. and c.
- (b) A Petition of Concern in respect of any matter shall be in the form of a notice signed by at least 30 Members presented to the Speaker. No vote may be held on a matter which is the subject of a Petition of Concern until at least one day after the Petition of Concern has been presented.
- (c) Other than in exceptional circumstances, a Petition of Concern shall be submitted at least one hour before the vote is due to occur. Where no notice of the vote was signaled or such other conditions apply that delay the presentation of a Petition of Concern the Speaker shall determine whether the Petition is time-barred or not.

## **MINISTERS**

### **20. Nominations of persons to hold office as First Minister and deputy First Minister**

- (a) Nominations of persons who are members of the Assembly to hold office as First Minister and deputy First Minister on the restoration of devolved government in Northern Ireland shall be made by applying paragraphs (b) to (e).
- (b) When invited to do so by the Speaker-
  - (i) the nominating officer of the largest political party of the largest political designation shall nominate a person to hold office as First Minister on the restoration of devolved government in Northern Ireland; and
  - (ii) the nominating officer of the largest party of the second largest designation shall nominate a person to hold office as deputy First Minister on the restoration of devolved government in Northern Ireland.
- (c) If either person nominated does not indicate acceptance of his/her nomination within 15 minutes of his/her nomination, both nominations shall cease to have effect and further nominations shall be made under (b).

- (d) Paragraphs (b) and (c) shall be applied as many times as may be necessary to secure the nomination of persons to hold the offices of First Minister and deputy First Minister on the restoration of devolved government in Northern Ireland.
- (e) The Speaker shall notify the Secretary of State when persons have accepted nomination to hold the offices of First Minister and deputy First Minister on the restoration of devolved government in Northern Ireland.
- (f) This Standing Order shall be construed in accordance with, and is subject to, Standing Order 22.

**21. Vacancies - nominations of persons to hold office as First Minister and deputy First Minister**

- (a) A person who has accepted nomination to hold office as First Minister or deputy First Minister on the restoration of devolved government in Northern Ireland –
  - (i) May at any time resign as nominee by notice in writing to the Speaker;
  - (ii) Shall cease to be a nominee if he/she ceases to be a member of the Northern Ireland Assembly otherwise than by virtue of a dissolution; and
  - (iii) Shall cease to be a nominee where the circumstances in Standing Order 4(h) apply.
- (b) If either person nominated to hold office as First Minister or deputy First Minister ceases to be a nominee, whether by resignation or otherwise, the other shall cease to be a nominee at that time.
- (c) Where there are no persons nominated to hold the offices of First Minister or deputy First Minister on the restoration of devolved government in Northern Ireland, further nominations shall be made by applying the procedure in Standing Order 20(b) to (e).
- (d) This Standing Order shall be construed in accordance with, and is subject to, Standing Order 22.

**22. Standing Orders 20 and 21: supplementary**

- (a) In Standing Orders 20 and 21 and in this Standing Order, “nominating officer”, in relation to a party means –

- (i) The person registered under Part 2 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 as the party's nominating officer; or
  - (ii) A member of the Assembly nominated by him for the purposes of this Standing Order.
- (b) For the purposes of Standing Orders 20 and 21 and this Standing Order –
- (i) For nominations made on 24 November 2006 and at any time before dissolution of the Northern Ireland Assembly on 30 January 2007-
    - (1) subject to (2), the size of a political party shall be determined by reference to the number of seats in the Assembly which were held by members of the party on 24 November;
    - (2) if a seat is vacant, the number of seats in the Assembly held by members of a party shall be deemed to include that seat if, immediately before the vacancy occurred, the seat was held by a member of the party; but
    - (3) if two or more parties are taken by virtue of (1) to be of the same size, the respective sizes of those parties is to be determined by reference to the number of first preference votes cast for the parties at the last general election of members to the Northern Ireland Assembly.
  - (ii) For nominations made following an election of the Northern Ireland Assembly at the poll on 7 March 2007 –
    - (1) subject to (2), the size of a political party is to be determined by reference to the number of seats in the Assembly which were held by members of the party on the day the Assembly first met following that election;
    - (2) if a seat is vacant, the number of seats in the Assembly held by members of a party shall be deemed to include that seat if, immediately before the vacancy occurred, the seat was held by a member of the party; but
    - (3) if two or more parties are taken by virtue of (1) to be of the same size, the respective sizes of those parties is to be determined by reference to the number of first preference votes cast for the parties at that election.

- (c) For the purposes of Standing Orders 20 and 21 and this Standing Order, a political party to which one or more members of the Assembly belong is to be taken –
- (i) To be of the political designation “ Nationalist” if, at the relevant time, more than half of the members of the Assembly who belonged to the party were designated nationalists;
  - (ii) To be of the political designation “ Unionist” if, at the relevant time, more than half of the members of the Assembly who belonged to the party were designated Unionists;
  - (iii) Otherwise, to be of the political designation “Other”.
- (d) For the purposes of Standing Orders 20 and 21 and this Standing Order –
- (i) The size of the political designation ”Nationalist” is to be taken to be equal to the numbers of members of the Assembly who, at the relevant time, were designated Nationalists;
  - (ii) The size of the political designation ”Unionist” is to be taken to be equal to the numbers of members of the Assembly who, at the relevant time, were designated Unionists;
  - (iii) The size of the designation “Other” is to be taken to be equal to the number of members of the Assembly who, at the relevant time, were neither designated Nationalists nor designated Unionists.
  - (iv) Where a seat is vacant at the relevant time, the designation of the person who vacated the seat shall be counted for the purposes of (i) to (iii), as if the seat was not vacant.
- (e) But if two or more political designations are taken by virtue of (d) to be of the same size, the respective sizes of those designations is to be determined by reference to the aggregate number of first preference votes cast, at the last general election to the Northern Ireland Assembly, for members of the Assembly who, at the relevant time, were –
- (i) Designated Nationalists ( in the case of the political designation “Nationalist”);
  - (ii) Designated Unionists ( in the case of the political designation “Unionist”); or
  - (iii) Neither designated Nationalists nor designated Unionists (in the case of the political designation “Other”).

- (f) If at any time the party which is the largest political party of the largest political designation is not the largest political party –
  - (i) Any nomination to be made at that time under Standing Order 20(b)(i) shall instead be made by the nominating officer of the largest political party; and
  - (ii) Any nomination to be made at that time under Standing Order 20(b)(ii) shall instead be made by the nominating officer of the largest political party with the largest political designation.
- (g) In this Standing Order “the relevant time” means-
  - (i) In the case of a nomination made before the dissolution of the Northern Ireland Assembly on 30 January 2007, the 24 November 2006; and
  - (ii) In the case of any other nomination, the day on which the Assembly first met following the election of the Northern Ireland Assembly at the poll on 7 March 2007.

## **SPEAKER AND DEPUTY SPEAKERS**

### **23. Speaker and Deputy Speakers**

- (a) Subject to paragraphs (b) and (e) and (f), the Assembly may elect a person –
  - (i) To fill any vacancy in the office of Speaker or Deputy Speaker, or
  - (ii) To replace a Speaker or a Deputy Speaker who appears to the members to be unable, unfit or unwilling to perform his/her functions (whether because of illness or otherwise).
- (b) A person shall not be elected under (a) without cross-community support.
- (c) Where a vacancy occurs, the Speaker (or a Deputy Speaker, where the vacancy is in the office of Speaker) shall report the vacancy to the Assembly at the opening of its next meeting and the Assembly shall, proceed to elect a Speaker (or Deputy Speaker) in the manner provided by Standing Order 24 (or Standing Order 25 in the case of a Deputy Speaker).
- (d) Where the vacancy is in the office of Speaker and there is no successful election of a Speaker, meetings of the Assembly shall be chaired by the Deputy Speakers in weekly rotation.



- (e) If it appears to the Secretary of State that a vacancy has not been filled within a period of two weeks beginning on the day on which the vacancy arose, the Secretary of State may appoint a person to fill that vacancy.
- (f) If it appears to the Secretary of State that a Speaker or Deputy Speaker has become unable, unfit or unwilling to perform his/her functions (whether because of illness or otherwise) and that person has not been replaced within a period of two weeks beginning with the day on which he/she became unable, unfit or unwilling to perform his/her functions, the Secretary of State may appoint a person to replace that Speaker or Deputy Speaker.

#### **24. Election of Speaker**

- (a) Any Member, addressing himself or herself to the Speaker or Deputy Speaker in the chair (“the Chair”), may propose a candidate (a Member whether or not present) to the Assembly for the Office of Speaker and move “That ..... be Speaker of this Assembly”. If that motion is seconded, the candidate proposed and seconded may accept nomination by making an oral or written statement to that effect.
- (b) Where a candidate is proposed and seconded and has accepted nomination as a candidate for the Office of Speaker, the Chair shall then ask “Is there any further proposal?” and:
  - (i) if there is no further proposal the Chair shall say “The time for proposals has expired” and a debate relevant to the election may then take place in which no Member shall speak more than once;
  - (ii) if more than one candidate is proposed and seconded and has accepted nomination as a candidate for the office of Speaker, the Deputy Speaker shall say “The time for proposals has expired”, and a debate relevant to the election may then take place in which no Member shall speak more than once.
- (c) Upon the conclusion of the debate, or if there is no debate, the Chair shall put the question, “That ..... (being the only candidate proposed, or the candidate first proposed) be Speaker of this Assembly”.
- (d) If the question be not carried with the cross-community support, the Chair shall put a similar question in relation to the second candidate proposed; whereupon if carried with cross-community support, that candidate shall be declared by the Chair to be elected and shall forthwith take up office; and this shall be done in relation to each candidate

proposed in the order that they are proposed as often as necessary until a candidate is chosen to be Speaker.

## **25. Election of Deputy Speaker**

A Deputy Speaker shall be elected following the procedure set out in Standing Order 24.

## **ORDER IN THE ASSEMBLY**

### **26. Order in the Assembly**

(a) The Speaker may, if any Member:

(i) wilfully assaults, molests, obstructs or acts in a disorderly manner towards the Speaker or any other Member;

(ii) persistently and wilfully obstructs the business of the Assembly;

(iii) is guilty of disorderly conduct;

(iv) wilfully assaults, obstructs or resists any police constable or officer of the Assembly acting under the authority of the Speaker;

(v) uses unparliamentary words which he/she refuses to withdraw;

(vi) persistently or wilfully refuses to conform with Standing Orders; or

(vii) persistently or wilfully disregards the authority of the Speaker

order the Member to withdraw immediately from the Chamber and its precincts during the remainder of that day's sitting and a person authorised by the Clerk shall act upon any instructions as he/she may receive from the Speaker in pursuance of this Standing Order; or whenever a Member shall have been named by the Speaker, immediately after the commission of the offence of disregarding the authority of the Speaker, or of persistently and wilfully obstructing the business of the Assembly by abusing the rules of the Assembly or otherwise, then if the offence has been committed by such Member in the Assembly, the Speaker shall forthwith put the question, on a motion being made, 'That such Member be suspended from the service of the Assembly' for a period of up to five sitting days.

- (b) Where for any reason the Speaker does not declare the suspension of a Member under this Standing Order at the sitting of the Assembly during which the offence occurred, he/she shall inform the Assembly at its next sitting of the Member's offence and shall forthwith put the question on a motion being made, "that such Member be suspended from the service of the Assembly" for a period of up to five sitting days.
- (c) A Member who is suspended under this Standing Order shall not be admitted to the Assembly chamber or its precincts. For the purposes of this Standing Order the precincts shall include any part of Parliament Buildings.
- (d) The Speaker shall take whatever steps he/she deems necessary in the circumstances to prevent conduct which would constitute a criminal offence or a contempt of court.
- (e) In the case of grave disorder arising in the Assembly, the Speaker may, if he/she thinks it necessary, adjourn the Assembly without question put or suspend any sitting for up to one hour.

## **27. Visitors to the Assembly**

- (a) When the Assembly is sitting visitors may be admitted only to such places as may be reserved for them by the Speaker..
- (b) Visitors shall only be admitted to the Public Gallery after Prayers.
- (c) Visitors shall not be permitted to take into the Public Gallery of the Assembly any mobile telephone, device for recording images or sound, briefcase or large bag.
- (d) For the purposes of this Standing Order the term "visitors" includes all persons other than Members, officers and servants of the Assembly.

## **28. Keeper of the House**

The Keeper of the House or any person authorised by the Clerk attending the Assembly shall remove any visitor whom he/she may see, or who may be reported to him/her to be, in any part of the Assembly or gallery appropriated to the Members of the Assembly, and also any visitor who, having been admitted into any other part of the Assembly or gallery, shall misconduct himself/herself, or shall not withdraw when visitors are directed to withdraw, while the Assembly is sitting.

## STANDARDS

### 29. Members' Interests

- (a) A Register of Members' Interests, which shall list the categories of registrable interest, shall be established, published and made available for public inspection.
- (b) The Clerk to the Assembly shall compile, and from time to time publish, a Register of Members' Interests.
- (c) Subject to the requirements of (d) and any amendments required following alterations notified under (e), The Register of Members' Interests established and published under the Standing Orders of the 2006 Assembly shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements under (a) and (b).
- (d) Following the election of the Northern Ireland Assembly at the poll on 7 March 2007 a new Register shall be required under (a) and (b) and every Member of the Assembly shall inform the Clerk to the Assembly, within four weeks of the first meeting of the Assembly following that poll, of such particulars of his or her registrable interests as shall be required.
- (e) Every Member of the Assembly shall inform the Clerk to the Assembly of any alterations to his or her registrable interests within four weeks of each change occurring.
- (f) Before taking part in any debate or proceeding of the Assembly, a Member shall declare any interest, financial or otherwise, which is relevant to that debate or proceeding, where such interest is held by the Member or an immediate relative.
- (g) No Member of the Assembly shall, in any proceeding of the Assembly, in return for payment or benefit mentioned in paragraph 61 of the Guide to the Rules Relating to the Conduct of Members, approved by the Northern Ireland Assembly on 15 October 2001 ["the Guide"]:
  - advocate or initiate any cause or matter on behalf of any outside body or individual;
  - urge any other Member of the Assembly to do so.
- (h) Where it appears to the Speaker that a Member has failed to comply with any provision of this Order or any Code of Conduct agreed by the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Speaker may make a report to the Assembly.

(i) A report made under paragraph f may include a recommendation that the Member:  
be excluded from proceedings of the Assembly for a specified period; and  
have his/her rights and privileges as a Member withdrawn for that period.

(j) In this Standing Order:

“Financial interest” means any registrable interest other than one falling within paragraph 26 or 27 of the Guide;

“Registrable interest” means any category of registrable interest falling within paragraphs 14 to 37 of the Guide.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### **30. News Media**

- (a) The Speaker may, if he/she thinks fit, order the withdrawal of members of the news media from sittings of the Assembly.
- (b) Members of the news media shall not be permitted to take into the Assembly any mobile telephone, device for recording images or sound, briefcase or large bag.
- (c) Unless the prior permission of the Speaker has been sought and granted, members of the news media shall not be permitted to take a camera into the Assembly Chamber or its precincts.
- (d) Unless the prior permission of the Speaker has been sought and granted, members of the news media shall not be permitted to photograph, interview or record in areas not designated for the purpose.

### **31. Official Report**

- (a) A substantially verbatim report of the proceedings at all sittings of the Assembly shall be prepared and published. The report shall be known as the Official Report and shall be a record of the proceedings in the language spoken.
- (b) Editorial control of the Official Report shall rest ultimately with the Speaker but shall be exercised on his/her behalf by the Editor of Debates.

### **32. Office of Clerk and Records of the Assembly**

- (a) All proceedings of the Assembly shall be noted by the Clerk and the minutes of proceedings after being perused and signed by the Speaker, shall be printed and shall constitute the Journal of the Proceedings of the Assembly.
- (b) The Clerk shall have custody of all Journals of Proceedings, records and other documents belonging to the Assembly.
- (c) During any vacancy in the Office of Clerk, or in his/her absence, the functions and duties of the Clerk shall be exercised and performed by the Deputy Clerk or if there is a vacancy in that office also or he/she is also absent, by the Clerk Assistant.

### **33. Language**

Members may speak in the language of their choice.

### **34. Sub judice**

Subject always to the discretion of the Speaker,

- (a) matters awaiting or under adjudication in any court exercising a criminal jurisdiction and in any court martial should not be referred to:
  - (i) in any Motion, or
  - (ii) in debate.
- (b) matters awaiting or under adjudication in a civil court should not be referred to:
  - (i) in any Motion, or
  - (ii) in debate

from the time that the case has been set down for trial or otherwise brought before the court, as for example by notice of motion for an injunction; such matters may be referred to before such date unless it appears to the Speaker that there is a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the trial of the case.

- (c) Paragraphs (a) and (b) of this Order should have effect:
  - (i) in the case of a criminal case in courts of law, including courts martial, from the moment the law is set in motion by a charge being made;

- (ii) in the case of a civil case in courts of law, from the time that the case has been set down for trial or otherwise brought before the court, as for example by notice of motion for an injunction;
- (d) Paragraphs (a) and (b) of this Order should cease to have effect:
  - (i) in the case of courts of law, when the verdict and sentence have been announced or judgment given, but resumed when notice of appeal is given until the appeal has been decided;
  - (ii) in the case of courts martial, when the sentence of the court has been confirmed and promulgated, but resumed when the convicted person petitions the Army Council, the Air Council or the Board of Admiralty;
- (e) Notwithstanding the above and subject to the discretion of the Speaker reference may be made in Motions or debate to matters awaiting or under adjudication in all civil courts, in so far as such matters concern issues of importance such as the economy, public order or the essentials of life.
- (f) In exercising his or her discretion the Speaker should not allow reference to such matters if it appears that there is a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceedings.