

THE NEW NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

SHADOW COMMISSION

Minutes of Proceedings

Friday 18 September 1998 at 2.30 pm
Room 152, Parliament Buildings

Present: Lord Alderdice (Initial Presiding Officer)
Mrs E Bell
Rev R Coulter
Mr J Fee
Mr F Molloy
Mr P Robinson MP

In the chair: Lord Alderdice

In attendance: Mr N Carson, Mr T Evans, Ms G Campbell, Mr N Johnston

1. The Commission's terms of reference

- The Initial Presiding Officer set out key issues for the meeting — terms of reference, quorum and operating arrangements. Members agreed a quorum of four which could be reconsidered if it proved problematic.
- The Initial Presiding Officer reminded Members of the need for confidentiality, as the Commission will be dealing with sensitive issues.
- Notice of meetings, a minimum of one week in advance with papers to Members at least two days prior to meetings. Members agreed that decisions, where possible, should be by general agreement; votes being very much the exception.
- The Initial Presiding Officer referred to issues raised in the Assembly on 14 September. Mr Molloy asked that fair employment principles are applied to staff recruitment. Members asked for details of all staff employed on behalf of the Assembly and contracted services. Copy of Assembly staffing was made available at the meeting. Members asked that work is commissioned on staffing options post-devolution. Members also wanted a paper setting out the respective staffing responsibilities of the Commission and the Secretariat. Key Assembly staff to be included in Members' Handbook.
- Rev Coulter asked about arrangements for handling complaints. Monitoring arrangements to be put in place. Mr Carson informed Members that the Secretariat will be developing a management plan which will include a complaints procedure. The Secretariat would like to adopt the Business Excellence model.

2. Childcare Facilities

The Initial Presiding Officer reported that childcare facilities had been discussed at the Committee Advising the Presiding Officer (CAPO) meeting and proposed that a working group be established. Members agreed that a survey of all Parliament Buildings personnel is required and also research should be carried out on Westminster and European practice to establish if a working group is needed.

3. **Accommodation pending and following DFP departure**

The Initial Presiding Officer reported that the move will commence on 23 September and be completed by early November. Members asked for a more definitive timetable and a tour of the buildings at the end of the next meeting.

4. **Procedure for appointing the First Clerk**

There was a general discussion.

5. **Extent of the Commission's Remit in Relation to the Stormont Estate**

Mr Robinson asked for clarification on extent of Assembly's control of Stormont Estate post-devolution. Members agreed that the Assembly should have responsibility for all of the Stormont Estate. Agreed that legal advice should be taken and an early meeting arranged with Secretary of State (SOS) to communicate Commission's remit in relation to the Stormont estate and SOS's accommodation requirements.

6. **Any Other Business**

The Initial Presiding Officer reported on the Senior Salaries Review Body (SSRB), study of pay and allowances for the Assembly. Members had not seen the SSRB letter which is taking written evidence up to 30 September. Relevant papers to be copied to Members. The Initial Presiding Officer asked for views to be discussed at the next meeting of the Shadow Commission. Members suggested that parties may want to take individual action.

7. **Date, Time and Venue of next meeting**

The next meeting arranged for Thursday 24 September at 3.30 pm in room 152 to be followed by a tour of Parliament Buildings.

TOM EVANS
Committee Clerk