

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

ALL PARTY NOTICES

Arrangements for the first plenary sitting on Friday 13 May 2022

The order paper for the sitting on Friday 13 May 2022 includes:

- the Undertaking and Roll of Membership;
- the election of Speaker and Deputy Speakers; and
- the appointment of First Minister and deputy First Minister.

This notice sets out relevant procedural information in relation to that business.

Members should note that, if the Assembly does not elect a Speaker and Deputy Speakers with cross-community support, as its first item of business, no further business can be conducted and the sitting will therefore be adjourned.

If a Speaker and at least two Deputy Speakers are elected with cross-community support then the Assembly can move on to other business.

This notice also provides an update in relation to Private Members' Bills and Simultaneous Interpretation.

Arrangements for giving the undertaking and signing the Roll of Membership in the Chamber

- Members should be in their places by 11.55am at the latest and there will be no Prayers or formal Speaker's procession. All Members may be present in the Chamber.
- The Clerk will arrive at the Table at 12pm and will read the formal notice of the first meeting of the Assembly. She will then invite the Speaker to take the Chair.
- The Speaker will announce the procedure for giving the undertaking and the arrangements for signing the Roll of Membership. The documents will be located on each of the two tables in front of the Speaker's table.
- Parties will then be called in alphabetical order (see below) to come forward, through the 'Aye' lobby, as if a division were in progress. Members should emerge through the door nearest the Speaker's table two at a time. Clerks will be in the lobby to assist with the process.
- The undertaking should be given at the first table in front of the Speaker's table with Members entering the date, their name and signature under a copy of the undertaking.
- Members will then be required to move to the second table to sign the Roll of Membership entering the date, their name and their signature.
- After signing the Roll of Membership, Members may enter in the Roll their party affiliation and political designation. A Member's political designation may be "Nationalist", "Unionist" or "Other". A Member not entering a designation will be deemed to be designated "Other".
- After having given the undertaking and signing the Roll of Membership a Member will be deemed to have taken their seat.
- There will be two of each document at each table enabling two Members to sign at the same time.
- A Member may not sign the Assembly's Roll of Membership unless they have given the undertaking in accordance with the procedure outlined by the Speaker. The Clerk to the Assembly and Director of Parliamentary Services will be in attendance to assist Members.

- Members should then return to their places, using the ‘No’ lobby if expedient.
- If exceptional circumstances prevent a Member attending the first sitting in person, that Member may submit a Notice of Political Designation in writing to the Speaker in advance of the sitting. The notice should indicate the Member’s political designation and detail the exceptional circumstances making it necessary for them to submit the notice. The Speaker will report to the Assembly the contents of any notices received. A Member submitting a Notice of Political Designation will not have taken their seat.
- When all Members present have signed the Roll, and the content of any notices received have been reported, the sitting will be suspended to allow the undertaking and Roll to be examined to ensure that Members have taken their seats in accordance with Standing Orders and the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
- A Member who has not signed both the Roll and the undertaking will be deemed not to have taken their seat. Members unable to take their seats on Friday 13 May 2022 will be able to do so at a later date but will not be able to participate in proceedings until they have done so.
- The designations provided by Members on the day of the first sitting, or by Notice of Political Designation, are used to calculate the relative sizes of the political designations and to determine the designations of the political parties. This informs the arrangements for the nomination of First Minister and deputy First Minister.

Order parties will be called in to give the Undertaking and sign the Roll of Membership:

- Alliance Party
- Democratic Unionist Party
- People Before Profit Alliance
- Sinn Féin
- Social Democratic and Labour Party
- Traditional Unionist Voice
- Ulster Unionist Party
- Independent Members

Procedure for the Election of the Speaker – Standing Order 4

- The outgoing Speaker, Mr Alex Maskey, will preside over the election and will commence by asking for nominations.
- Any Member may rise to propose that another Member is elected as Speaker. If two or more Members rise to make a proposal the Speaker will look to the largest party first, in accordance with Assembly precedent.
- The Speaker will then ask for the first proposal to be seconded by another Member and if the proposal is not seconded, there is no valid nomination.
- Once seconded, the Speaker will verify that the candidate is willing to accept the nomination. There will not be an opportunity for speeches at this stage.
- The Speaker will then ask for further proposals and follow the same procedure for each. When there are no further proposals, the Speaker will indicate that the time for proposals has passed and a debate may then take place.
- Members should indicate their intention to speak to the Business Office or to the Speaker's table in the usual way. Members may speak for up to 5 minutes and may not speak more than once. There will be no time limit on the debate.
- At the conclusion of the debate, the Speaker will put the question that the first candidate proposed shall be Speaker of the Assembly. The vote will be on a cross-community basis and any dissenting voices will result in a division.
- Should there be a division, all Members who wish to vote shall have to do so in person. Proxy voting arrangements are not available at the first sitting.
- If the question is not carried, the Speaker will put the question in relation to the next candidate and so on, until a candidate is elected or all nominations are exhausted. Once a Speaker is elected, all other nominations automatically fall.
- If a Speaker is elected he/she will be invited to take the Chair and there will be an opportunity for him/her to address the Assembly briefly. Other Members will have up to 3 minutes to respond.
- If a Speaker is not elected, the business will have to be brought back to the Assembly in due course. No further business shall take place.

Procedure for the Election of Deputy Speakers – Standing Order 5

- The election will be presided over by the newly appointed Speaker.
- The procedure for electing the three Deputy Speakers is the same as for the Speaker.
- Any Member may rise to propose that another Member is elected as a Deputy Speaker. If two or more Members rise to make a proposal the Speaker will look to the largest party first, in accordance with Assembly precedent.
- The Speaker will then ask for the first proposal to be seconded by another Member and if the proposal is not seconded, there is no valid nomination.
- Once seconded, the Speaker will verify that the candidate is willing to accept the nomination. There will not be an opportunity for speeches at this stage.
- The Speaker will then ask for further proposals and follow the same procedure for each. When there are no further proposals, the Speaker will indicate that the time for proposals has passed and a debate may then take place.
- Members should indicate their intention to speak to the Business Office or to the Speaker's table in the usual way. Members may speak for up to 3 minutes and may not speak more than once. There will be no time limit on the debate.
- At the conclusion of the debate, the Speaker will put the question that the first candidate proposed shall be a Deputy Speaker of the Assembly. The vote will be on a cross-community basis and any dissenting voices will result in a division.
- If the question is not carried, the Speaker will put the question in relation to the next candidate and so on, until three candidates have been elected or all nominations are exhausted. Once three Deputy Speakers have been elected, all other nominations automatically fall.
- There will be no opportunity for speeches after the Deputy Speakers have been elected.
- If at least two Deputy Speakers are not successfully elected then no further business can take place.

Arrangements for appointment of First Minister and deputy First minister

- The vacancies of First Minister and deputy First Minister will be filled in accordance with section 16A of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act), most recently amended by the Northern Ireland (Ministers, Elections and Petitions of Concern) Act 2022.
- To avoid each nominee being asked to read out the terms of the Pledge of Office, the Speaker will commence by asking the Clerk to read the terms of the Pledge of Office into the record.
- The nomination process will commence with the Speaker, in accordance with section 16C(6)(a) of the Act, inviting the nominating officer of the largest political party (Sinn Féin), to nominate a Member of the Assembly to be First Minister.
- Sinn Féin's nominating officer should then state that party's nomination. The Speaker will ask the person who has been nominated if he/she is willing to take up office and to affirm the terms of the pledge of office.¹
- The Speaker will then, in accordance with section 16C(6)(b) of the Act, invite the nominating officer of the largest political party of the largest political designation (DUP) to nominate a Member of the Assembly to be deputy First Minister.
- DUP's nominating officer should then state that party's nomination. The Speaker will ask the person who has been nominated if he/she is willing to take up office and to affirm the terms of the pledge of office.¹
- The Speaker will then call on the newly appointed First Minister to address the Assembly. This will be followed by an invitation to the newly appointed deputy First Minister to address the Assembly.
- A representative of all other parties will then be given an opportunity to speak for up to 3 minutes.
- Members should indicate their intention to speak to the Business Office or to the Speaker's table in the usual way.

¹ I confirm that I am willing to take up the Office of First / deputy First Minister and I affirm the terms of the Pledge of Office as set out in Schedule 4 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

- In the event that either a First Minister or a deputy First Minister is not appointed then the offices remain vacant.
- The filling of the office of Minister of Justice may only proceed once the offices of First Minister and deputy First Minister have been filled and the office of the Minister of Justice must be filled before the other Ministerial offices may be filled. Therefore, if a First Minister and a deputy First Minister are not both appointed, the appointment of other Ministers may not proceed.
- Standing Orders provide that Statutory Committees may only be established once all Ministerial offices have been filled following an election of the Assembly.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

Following the election of a Speaker and Deputy Speakers, it will be for the new Speaker to determine the Assembly process for providing support to Private Members' Bills (PMBs) in the 2022-2027 mandate. This will include consideration of the recommendations arising from the Committee on Procedures' Inquiry into PMBs as approved by the Assembly on 14 March 2022.

Revised guidance for the new mandate will issue to all Members to advise on the arrangements for PMBs in due course. This will include the timeframe for the opening of the Assembly-supported PMB service, guidance on the submission of initial proposals and broader information on how the process will operate. The PMB service is not 'first come first served' on the first sitting day, and there is no need for Members to queue at the Bill Office on Friday.

No initial proposals for PMBs accessing Assembly support can be submitted until the service is officially opened by the Speaker. Members may, however, wish to contact the Bill Office for general information on the legislative process, including PMBs. The Bill Office is happy to advise on a range of matters, including procedural guidance on legislation and upcoming training for Members.

In relation to the submission of PMBs for Introduction in the new mandate, it is anticipated that a new Speaker will consider the matter at an early opportunity after taking office. No PMBs will be processed for Introduction until the Speaker has determined the procedural approach, which will be communicated to Members as soon as practicable.

SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION

The Assembly Commission has made the necessary arrangements for the operation of a simultaneous and passive system for the interpretation of Irish and Ulster Scots spoken in Assembly proceedings. Detail on how to use the system, which will be available for use at the first sitting of the Assembly, is included at Annex A to this notice.

All Party Notices can only be issued by the Business Office.

Templates should be forwarded to the Clerk of Plenary Business, Room 32, Parliament Buildings, Stormont or emailed to the Business Office on business.office@niassembly.gov.uk. **Please note that the deadline for submission of templates is 4.00pm and that only one APN is issued each day, as soon as possible after 4.00pm, containing all requested notices.**

Simultaneous Interpretation

Access in the Chamber

A set of earphones is available at each seat in the Chamber to allow Members to access the simultaneous translation service. The earphones are plugged into a small box (pictured below) which has a volume control that can be turned up or down.



If Members want to use their own earphones/headphones they can unplug the earphones provided. Members are asked **not** to remove the Assembly provided earphones from the Chamber.

Accessing Simultaneous Interpretation by Members Contributing Remotely

Any Member contributing to a Plenary session remotely can access the interpretation service, if required, via a dedicated phone service.

Members should contact the Communications Office in B4, Parliament Buildings to get access to the phone number. You can contact the Communications Office on 028 90 521884 or by email info@niassembly.gov.uk.

Members will hear an automated voice welcoming them to the conference call and advising them that they are muted. They will then hear the translated audio from the Chamber.

Internal TV System

On Channel 1 (Plenary) viewers will hear the translated audio - that is to say viewers will hear English spoken at all times.

On Channel 2 (Broadcast – Plenary) viewers will hear audio from the Chamber as spoken.

External Web Stream

The external web stream for the Plenary available via <http://niassembly.tv> will carry the translated audio – that is to say viewers will hear English spoken at all times.