

**NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY**  
**BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2020**  
**IN ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

**MINUTES**

*The meeting began at 1.05pm.*

**Present:**

**The Speaker (Chairperson)**  
**Ms K Armstrong**  
**Mr K Buchanan**  
**Mr R Butler**  
**Ms S Ennis**  
**Ms D Kelly**  
**Mr G Middleton**  
**Mr A Muir**  
**Mr J O'Dowd**

**In attendance:**

<b>Dr A McGarel</b>	<b>Clerk of Business</b>
<b>Mr P Gill</b>	<b>Clerk Assistant</b>
<b>Ms L Hogg</b>	<b>Clerk/Chief Executive</b>
<b>Ms A McKelvey</b>	<b>Legal Advisor</b>
<b>Dr G McGrath</b>	<b>Director of Parliamentary Services</b>
<b>Mr R Ramsey</b>	<b>Adviser to the Speaker</b>
<b>Mr P Stitt</b>	<b>PS to the Speaker</b>
<b>Ms P Devlin</b>	<b>Assistant Assembly Clerk</b>
<b>Mr M O'Hare</b>	<b>Clerical Supervisor</b>

**Observers:**

<b>Mr D Kearney</b>	<b>Junior Minister</b>
<b>Ms C Kerr</b>	<b>Executive Office</b>

**1 Apologies**

1.1 Apologies were received from Clare Bailey, Colin McGrath, John Stewart and Junior Minister Gordon Lyons.

**2 Minutes of previous meetings**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 17 February 2020 were agreed.

### 3 **Matters Arising**

3.1 There were no matters arising.

### 4 **Finalisation of the Order Papers for plenary meeting on 2 & 3 March 2020**

#### **Monday 2 March**

##### Executive Committee Business

- 4.1 Members **noted** that Consideration Stage of the budget Bill had been scheduled, and as amendments were unlikely the business should progress as per indicative timings.
- 4.2 Members **noted** that the Executive had added an additional item of Business: a motion calling on the Assembly to note the draft Legislative Programme, as presented in a written statement by the First and deputy First Ministers on 11 February.
- 4.3 Members **noted** that the Executive Office had suggested an hour for the debate, but considered that more time would be appropriate
- 4.4 Following discussion, Members **agreed** to allocate 2 hours to the debate with the Minister(s) being given 10 minutes to move and 10 minutes to wind the motion and all other speakers 5 minutes.
- 4.5 Members **noted** that Question Time will be between 2pm and 3.30pm, and will be for the Executive Office and Minister for Infrastructure.
- 4.6 Members **noted** that two Private Members' motions had been scheduled, on Violent Crime and Ongoing Paramilitarism.
- 4.7 The Executive Office officials indicated that all Ministers were currently available for the proposed business.
- 4.8 Members **noted** that, with the revisions agreed by the Committee, indicative timings take the adjournment to 6.30pm.
- 4.9 Members **agreed** the draft Order Paper for Monday 2 March.

#### **Tuesday 3 March**

##### Executive Committee Business

- 4.10 Members **noted** that Further Consideration Stage of the Budget Bill had been scheduled, and as amendments were unlikely the business should progress as per indicative timings.
- 4.11 Members **noted** that Question Time was listed for the Ministers of Justice and Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs.

#### Private Members' Business

- 4.12 Members **noted** that two Private Members' motions had been scheduled: Crime and Older People and Areas of Natural Constraint.
- 4.13 Members **noted** that an adjournment debate on Investment in the Comber Greenway had been scheduled.
- 4.14 The Executive Office officials indicated that all Ministers were currently available for the proposed business.
- 4.15 Members **noted** that indicative timings take the adjournment to 5pm.
- 4.16 Members **agreed** the draft Order Paper for Tuesday 3 March.

#### **5 Provisional arrangements for plenary meetings in the week commencing 9 March.**

- 5.1 Members **noted** that they had been provided with two order papers, for 9 and 10 March.

#### **Monday 9 March**

##### Executive Committee Business

- 5.2 Members **noted** that four items of business have been requested by the Minister for Communities, all of which are motions seeking the Assembly's approval for Statutory Rules subject to confirmatory resolution.
- 5.3 Members **noted** that the rules have been considered by the Committee for Communities, which had no objections.
- 5.4 Members **noted** that by convention, debates relating to legislation are not time-limited, and that the indicative timings provided were based on feedback from the Clerk of the Committee for Communities.

- 5.5 Members **noted** that Final Stage of the Budget Bill has been scheduled and in line with convention, no time limit has been allocated for the debate.
- 5.6 Members **noted** that Question Time will be between 2pm and 3.30pm, and will be for the Minister for Communities and the Minister for the Economy.

#### Private Members' Business

- 5.7 Members **agreed** that no Private Members' motions would be scheduled.
- 5.8 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Monday 9 March 2020.

### **Tuesday 10 March**

#### Executive Committee Business

- 5.9 Members **noted** that that one item of Business has been requested by the Executive; a motion to approve regulations subject to confirmatory procedure on the Pensions Schemes Act 2015 from the Minister for Communities.
- 5.10 Members **noted** that the rule has been considered by the Committee for Communities, which had no objections.
- 5.11 Members **noted** that by convention debates relating to legislation are not time-limited, and that the indicative timings for this item is based on feedback from the Clerk of the Committee for Communities.
- 5.12 Members **agreed** that Question Time would be scheduled for the Ministers of Education and Finance.

#### Assembly Business/Committee Business

- 5.13 Members **noted** that there had been no formal requests for Assembly or Committee Business to date.

#### Private Members' Business

- 5.14 Members **agreed** to schedule Private Members' motions, and **noted** that the selections were for Alliance and DUP.
- 5.15 The following Private Members' motions were selected with the usual timings:
- Independent Review of Education (ALL)
  - Childcare Strategy (DUP)

5.16 Members **agreed** to schedule an adjournment debate and **noted** that the selection was for SF.

5.17 The following adjournment debate topic was selected:

- Expansion of Ulster University, Magee Campus (SF)

5.18 Members **agreed** the provisional Order Paper for 10 March 2020.

## 6 Questions Rota

6.1 Members **noted** that Standing Order 20(4) requires the Business Committee to determine which Minister should answer oral questions in the Chamber on a particular day.

6.2 Members **noted** a revised Question rota for the period January to Easter 2020, which had been agreed at its meeting of 14 January but had been adjusted to reflect a return to a two-day plenary schedule.

6.3 Members discussed a number of matters related to Question Time, including scheduling, the number of listed and supplementary questions answered and the quality of the responses given by Ministers.

6.4 Members **agreed** a draft Questions rota for the period April to Summer 2020.

## 7 Any Other Business

7.1 Members **noted** that research into practices in other legislatures has been requested and should be available for the Committee next week.

7.2 Members **noted** that that there were several instances of Members being 'off mic' in the Chamber on 24 February which made it difficult for Hansard to capture their remarks. Members **agreed** to encourage their colleagues to ensure that, when speaking, they stand behind a desk with a mic on it and that the mic is pointing towards them.

7.3 Members **noted** that an options paper on the scheduling of plenary sittings will be prepared and brought to the Committee for its consideration.

7.4 A Member raised an issue related to refreshment services that did not fall within the remit of the Business Committee. Members **agreed** that the issue should be referred to the Assembly Commission.

8 **Date and time of next meeting**

- 8.1 Members **agreed** that the next meeting would take place at 1pm on Tuesday 3 March in Room 106.

*The Chairperson brought the meeting to a close at 1.25pm*

**The Speaker**  
**Chairperson**