

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY
BUSINESS COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 30 JUNE 2020
IN THE SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

MINUTES

The meeting began at 1.00pm. (C) denotes attendance via conference call

Present:

Mr K Buchanan (Acting Chairperson)
The Speaker (C)
Ms K Armstrong
Ms C Bailey
Mr R Butler
Mrs D Kelly
Mr G Middleton
Mr A Muir
Mr J O'Dowd

In attendance:

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

Observers:

Mrs K Loveland-Morrison **Executive Office**

1 Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Colin McGrath, Sinead Ennis, John Stewart and junior Ministers Lyons and Kearney.

2 Minutes of previous meetings

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 23 June 2020 were **agreed**.

3 **Matters Arising**

- 3.1 There were no matters arising.

4 **Review of Written Questions/Review of Arrangements for Written & Oral Questions**

- 4.1 Members **noted** that information on questions tabled and responses from Ministers since 23 June had been provided in their packs.
- 4.2 Dr McGarel provided a summary of the information.
- 4.3 Members **noted** that they had agreed to review all interim arrangements pertaining to Assembly Questions, including the voluntary limit on written questions, at today's meeting.
- 4.4 Members **noted** that they had been provided with a paper to inform their consideration of this matter.
- 4.5 The Speaker outlined his proposed way forward.
- 4.6 Members **agreed** that the Question Time scheduled for 7 July would be the last until the Assembly sits in September when normal procedures would resume.
- 4.7 Members **agreed** to continue the suspension of Topical Questions for 7 July.
- 4.8 Members **agreed** that they were content for the current voluntary arrangements pertaining to written questions to be retained until the Assembly goes into recess, and that normal arrangements would resume when the Assembly returns in September.

5 **Finalisation of the Order Paper for Plenary Meeting on 7 July 2020**

- 5.1 Members **noted** that they had previously scheduled one sitting for Tuesday 7 July.
- 5.2 Members **noted** that they had been provided with the latest notice of forthcoming Executive Business which indicated that a significant number of additional items of business had been requested.
- 5.3 On that basis, Members **agreed** to schedule two sittings, on Monday 6 and Tuesday 7 July.

Monday 6 July

Assembly Business

- 5.4 Members **noted** that as the rota previously agreed by the Committee for Ministers to answer questions makes no provision for Monday sittings, there would be no Question Time on Monday 6 July.
- 5.5 Members **agreed** to schedule a Business motion suspending Standing Order 20(1) so that Question Time would not take place.
- 5.6 Members **agreed** to schedule a Committee Membership motion for the UUP as a Business motion with no amendment or debate.
- 5.7 Members **noted** that the Assembly Commission had scheduled a motion to nominate a Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman.
- 5.8 Members **agreed** to schedule thirty minutes for the debate, with ten minutes to move, ten minutes to wind and five minutes for all other speakers.
- 5.9 Members **noted** that no other requests for Assembly Business had been received.

Executive Committee Business

- 5.10 Members **noted** that the Executive Office had scheduled five items of business for Monday 6 July, as follows:
 - 1. First Stage of the Executive Committee (Functions) Bill
- 5.11 Members **noted** that this item would be included on the Indicative Timings when the Speaker had given notification that he is content that the Bill is within the legislative competence of the Assembly.
 - 2. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No.7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020; and
 - 3. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No.8) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020
- 5.12 Members **agreed** to schedule a single untimed debate to consider both items.
 - 4. Suspension of Standing Order 42(1) in relation to the Executive Committee (Functions) Bill
 - 5. Accelerated Passage motion for the Executive Committee (Functions) Bill

6. Second Stage of the Executive Committee (Functions) Bill

- 5.13 Members **agreed** to schedule untimed debates for the above motions.

Private Members Business

- 5.14 Members **noted** that the majority of items scheduled were untimed and on that basis, Members **agreed** not to schedule Private Members Business.
- 5.15 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Monday 6 July.

Tuesday 7 July

Assembly Business

- 5.16 Members **noted** that they had agreed to suspend topical questions for 7 July.
- 5.17 Members **agreed** to table a motion to suspend Standing Order 20A.
- 5.18 Members **agreed** that this would be treated as a business motion with no provision for amendment or debate.

Executive Committee Business

- 5.19 Members **noted** that, in addition to the items scheduled at last week's meeting, the Executive Office had scheduled four additional item of business, as follows:

1. Second Stage of the Pension Schemes Bill for the Minister for Communities.

- 5.20 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for this bill stage.

2. The Sea Fish Industry (Coronavirus) (Fixed Costs) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2020
3. The Sea Fish Industry (Coronavirus) (Fixed Costs) (Amendment) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2020

- 5.21 Members **agreed** to schedule a single untimed debate to consider both items.

4. A Legislative Consent Motion for the Business and Planning Bill from the Minister for Infrastructure

- 5.22 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate to consider the LCM.

- 5.23 Members **noted** that following items of business had previously been scheduled:
- An untimed debate to consider a Statutory Rule; the Rates (Exemption for Automatic Telling Machines in Rural Areas) Regulations.
- 5.24 Members **noted** that Question Time would be for the Executive Office and the Minister of Health.

Committee Business

- 5.25 Members **agreed** to schedule a motion from the Committee for Infrastructure on Concerns over COVID-19 Guidance and Financial Support to Industry Sectors.
- 5.26 Members **agreed** to allow one and a half hours for the debate, with ten minutes to move the motion, ten minutes to wind and five minutes for all other speakers.

Private Members Business

- 5.27 Members **agreed** to schedule an All-Party motion on Disability Services and Family Carer Support.
- 5.28 Members **agreed** to allow one and a half hours for the debate, with ten minutes to move the motion, ten minutes to wind and five minutes for all other speakers.
- 5.29 The TEO Official advised that all Ministers were available.
- 5.30 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 7 July.

6 Executive Business Required during July

- 6.1 Members **noted** that they had agreed to consider the need for additional sittings at the meeting of 7 July, based on the Notice of Forthcoming Business provided by the Executive Office which is to be received on 3 July.
- 6.2 Members **agreed** to consider the requirement for any additional sittings at the meeting of 7 July.

7 **Any Other Business**

- 7.1 Members **noted** that the Executive had issued new guidance on social distancing; reducing it to 1 metre where 2 metres is not possible but with certain restrictions.
- 7.2 Members **agreed** that a revised seating plan showing what seats would be available if 1 metre distancing was introduced in the Chamber would be provided at the next meeting, along with information on the additional restrictions that would be necessary in order to facilitate this.
- 7.3 There was no other business.

8 **Date and time of next meeting**

- 8.1 Members **agreed** that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 7 July in the Senate Chamber.

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

Mr Keith Buchanan
Acting Chairperson