

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

**TUESDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2020**  
**IN THE SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

**MINUTES**

*The meeting began at 1.03pm. (C) denotes attendance via conference call*

**Present:**

**The Speaker (Chairperson)**

**Ms K Armstrong**

**Ms C Bailey**

**Mr K Buchanan**

**Mr R Butler**

**Ms S Ennis**

**Mrs D Kelly**

**Mr C McGrath**

**Mr G Middleton**

**Mr A Muir**

**Mr J O'Dowd**

**In attendance:**

**Dr A McGarel**

**Mr P Gill**

**Ms L Hogg**

**Mr A Hicks**

**Mr R Ramsey**

**Ms F Leneghan**

**Ms P Devlin**

**Mr M O'Hare**

**Clerk of Business**

**Clerk Assistant**

**Clerk/Chief Executive**

**Legal Advisor**

**Adviser to the Speaker**

**PS to the Speaker**

**Assistant Assembly Clerk**

**Clerical Supervisor**

**Observers:**

**Mr D Kearney**

**Ms C Kerr**

**Junior Minister**

**Executive Office**

**1 Apologies**

1.1 Apologies were received from John Stewart.

**2 Minutes of previous meetings**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 2 September were **agreed**.

### 3 **Matters Arising**

- 3.1 Members **noted** a letter which had been sent by the Speaker to the Executive in early August about preparing for Assembly Business in September.
- 3.2 Members **agreed** that the Committee's correspondence to TEO regarding the lack of Executive Business scheduled for September would be framed in the context of this letter.
- 3.3 Having had time to consider an advice paper on the issue, Members **agreed** that the current 2 metre social distancing arrangements in the Chamber should be retained.

### 4 **Business Committee motion on Amendments to the Flags Regulations**

- 4.1 Members **noted** that the Secretary of State (SoS) had written to the Speaker advising of his intention to amend the Flags Order 2000, and that the Assembly must first consider his proposals and provide a report, which the SoS has a duty to consider before laying the amended regulations. SoS has requested a response from the Assembly by 14 September.
- 4.2 Members **agreed** to schedule a motion for debate on 14 September calling on the Assembly to take note of the revised regulations.
- 4.3 Members **agreed** that the debate would have no time limit applied but a three-minute limit would be placed on individual Members' contributions, to allow for as many views as possible to be reflected.

### 5 **Finalisation of the Order Papers for the Plenary Meetings on Week Commencing 14 September 2020**

#### **Monday 14 September**

#### **Assembly Business**

- 5.1 Members **noted** that the Business Committee motion on amendments to the Flags Regulations would be scheduled, as had just been agreed.

### Executive Committee Business

- 5.2 Members **noted** that the Executive Office and Minister for the Economy would respond to oral questions.
- 5.3 Members **noted** that the possible statement which had been notified to them last week would not now be scheduled.
- 5.4 Members **noted** that the Executive Office had not scheduled any other Executive Business for this date.

### Private Members' Business

- 5.5 Members **noted** that they had previously agreed to schedule the following Private Members' motions:
- Living Over the Shops Scheme (DUP)
  - Race Equality (SF)
- 5.6 TEO Officials confirmed that Ministers would be available to respond to the selected motions.
- 5.7 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Monday 14 September.

## Tuesday 15 September

### Assembly Business

- 5.8 Members **noted** that no Assembly Business had been requested to date.

### Executive Committee Business

- 5.9 Members **noted** that the Ministers of Education and Finance would respond to oral questions.
- 5.10 Members **noted** that the Executive Office had not scheduled any other Executive Business for this date.

### Private Members' Business

- 5.11 Members **noted** that they had previously scheduled the following Private Members' motions:

- Kickstart Scheme (UUP)
- Mental Health Crisis Support (DUP)

5.12 Members **noted** the UUP's request to change the motion they had selected and **agreed** to allow an alternative motion to be scheduled, as follows:

- Hardship Fund for Businesses Excluded from Existing COVID-19 Support Packages (UUP)

5.13 Members **noted** that they had previously agreed to schedule the following Adjournment debate:

- Funding for the Crisis Intervention Service in Londonderry (DUP)

5.14 Junior Ministers/TEO Officials confirmed that Ministers would be available to respond to the selected motions.

5.15 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 15 September.

## 6 **Provisional Arrangements for the Plenary Meetings on Week Commencing 21 September 2020**

### **Monday 21 September**

#### Assembly Business

6.1 Members **noted** that no Assembly Business had been requested to date.

#### Executive Committee Business

6.2 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Health and Infrastructure Ministers.

6.3 Members **noted** that no other Executive Business had been scheduled to date.

6.4 Junior Ministers/TEO Officials advised that an Oral Statement from the Minister for Communities was now expected for this date.

#### Private Members' Business

6.5 Members **agreed** to schedule two Private Members' motions.

- 6.6 Members **noted** that the selections were for SF and SDLP, but that a cross-party motion on Promoting Dementia-Friendly Policy had been tabled which, if signed by all parties, would precede the party motions.
- 6.7 Members **noted** that the motion had not yet been signed by the UUP but **agreed** to schedule provisionally the cross-party motion on Promoting Dementia-Friendly Policy as the first item of Private Members' Business with usual timings.
- 6.8 SDLP representatives **agreed** to defer their Private Members motion to allow for this.
- 6.9 The following Private Members' motion was selected with the usual timings:
- Honouring the EU Withdrawal Agreement Protocol (SF)
- 6.10 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Monday 21 September.

## **Tuesday 22 September**

### Assembly Business

- 6.11 Members **noted** that no Assembly Business had been requested to date.

### Executive Committee Business

- 6.12 Members **noted** that the Ministers of Justice and Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs would respond to oral questions.
- 6.13 Members **noted** that the Executive Office had not scheduled any other Executive Business for this date.

### Private Members' Business

- 6.14 Members **agreed** to schedule two Private Members' motions.
- 6.15 Members **noted** that the selections were for SDLP and DUP.
- 6.16 Members **agreed** that SDLP Members could defer selection of their motion until the next meeting as their subject matter of their preferred motion overlapped with that of a motion already selected by another party.
- 6.17 The following Private Members' motion for DUP was selected with the usual timings:

- Introduction of Legislation Equivalent to Helen's Law (DUP)
- 6.18 Members **agreed** to schedule an Adjournment debate, and **noted** that the topic selection was for SF.
- 6.19 The following Adjournment debate topic was selected with the usual timings:
- COVID-19 Outbreak in Craigavon Area Hospital (SF)
- 6.20 The Junior Minister/TEO official confirmed that Ministers would be available to respond to the selected business.
- 6.21 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 22 September.

## 7 Correspondence

- 7.1 Members **noted** receipt of a memo from the Clerk to the Committee on Procedures, seeking the Committee's view on an extension of the temporary Standing Orders 110-116 that were set in place in response to the pandemic.
- 7.2 Members **agreed** that a response should issue advising of the Committee's support for the proposal to extend these temporary Standing Orders.

## 8 Any Other Business

- 8.1 Members **noted** that audio issues in the Chamber were occurring as a result of Members not speaking into microphones.
- 8.2 Members **agreed** that Whips would remind their party members to ensure they are sitting at a location where microphones are placed and that they avoid turning away from them when speaking.
- 8.3 Members **noted** that, now that Question Time had resumed in its usual format, some issues were being experienced due to the limit on numbers in the Chamber, resulting in some Members being unable to be in place in time to ask a supplementary.
- 8.4 Members requested that flexibility should be shown where possible and that the situation would be kept under review.
- 8.5 Members **noted** a potential issue with proxy voting if the Member holding the proxy for other Members was unexpectedly unable to vote on their behalf.

8.6 Members **noted** that the deadline for allocating a proxy vote was provided for in Standing Orders and thus was absolute. While there is no deadline in standing orders for a proxy who is unable to act nominating another member to carry out their functions, any such nomination could not take place if there was insufficient time for the necessary administrative arrangements to be put in place in advance of a division being held.

8.7 Members **noted** that some Members had found the temperature in the Chamber uncomfortable recently, and while not within the remit of the Committee, the Chief Executive advised that the issue was known and was being addressed.

8.8 There was no other business.

9 **Date and time of next meeting**

9.1 Members **agreed** that the next meeting would take place at 1pm on Tuesday 15 September in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

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

**The Speaker  
Chairperson**