

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY
BUSINESS COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2020
IN THE SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

MINUTES

The meeting began at 1.04pm. (C) denotes attendance via conference call

Present:

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

In attendance:

Dr A McGarel	Clerk of Business
Mr P Gill	Clerk Assistant
Ms L Hogg	Clerk/Chief Executive
Ms M Corrigan	Legal Services
Ms F Leneghan	PS to the Speaker
Ms P Devlin	Assistant Assembly Clerk
Mr M O'Hare	Clerical Supervisor

Observers:

Mr G Lyons	Junior Minister
Ms K Loveland-Morrison	Executive Office

1 Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Kellie Armstrong and Colin McGrath.

2 Minutes of previous meetings

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 22 September were **agreed**.

3 **Matters Arising**

- 3.1 The Speaker informed Members that in response to their comments last week, additional sanitizing wipes are now being provided in the Chamber.
- 3.2 There were no other matters arising.

4 **Finalisation of the Order Papers for the Plenary Meetings on Week Commencing 5 October 2020**

Monday 5 October

Executive Committee Business

- 4.1 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Finance and Health Ministers.
- 4.2 Members **noted** that they had previously agreed an untimed debate for the Pension Protection Fund (Moratorium and Arrangements for Companies in Financial Difficulty) Regulations from the Minister for Communities.
- 4.3 Members **noted** that a statement from the Health Minister on a Surge Planning Strategic Framework has again been provisionally scheduled, but remains unconfirmed.
- 4.4 Members **noted** that a Committee Membership motion had been requested by Sinn Fein.
- 4.5 Members **agreed** to schedule the motion as a business motion with no opportunity for amendment or debate.

Private Members' Business

- 4.6 Members **noted** that they had previously agreed to schedule the following motions:
- Appointment of a Victims of Crime Commissioner (UUP)
 - Consequences of the British Government Breaking International Law (SF)
- 4.7 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Monday 5 October.

Tuesday 6 October

Executive Committee Business

- 4.8 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Infrastructure and Justice Ministers.
- 4.9 Members **noted** that the following item of Executive Business had been scheduled by the Executive Office since last week:
- Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (NI) 2020.
- 4.10 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for this item of business.
- 4.11 Members **noted** the possibility of a statement from the Minister of Finance, but that this was unconfirmed.

Private Members' Business

- 4.12 Members **noted** that they had previously agreed to schedule the following motions:
- Impact of COVID-19 Restrictions on Workers and on the Economy (SDLP)
 - Terminal Illness (ALL)
- 4.13 Members **noted** that they had previously scheduled an Adjournment debate on Protecting the Knock Iveagh Historical and Archaeological Site for UUP.
- 4.14 Members **agreed** that as the Knock Iveagh site is within the South Down constituency, Members from that constituency would be given priority speaking rights in the debate.
- 4.15 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 6 October.

5 Provisional Arrangements for the Plenary Meetings on Week Commencing 12 October 2020

Monday 12 October

Executive Committee Business

- 5.1 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Executive Office and the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

- 5.2 Members **noted** that a motion from the Minister for the Economy on the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Amendment of Certain Relevant Periods) (NI) 2020 had been scheduled and that by convention debate on this would be untimed.
- 5.3 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for the motion.
- 5.4 Members **noted** that no other Executive Business had been scheduled to date.
- 5.5 The junior Minister advised that no other business was expected.

Private Members' Business

- 5.6 Members **agreed** to schedule two Private Members' motions.
- 5.7 Members **noted** that the selections were for DUP and SF.
- 5.8 The following Private Members' motions were selected with the usual timings:
- Increasing the Number of Police Officers in Northern Ireland (DUP)
 - The European Union-United Kingdom Withdrawal Agreement (SF)
- 5.9 The junior Minister confirmed that Ministers would be available to respond to the selected business.
- 5.10 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Monday 12 October.

Tuesday 13 October

Executive Committee Business

- 5.11 Members **noted** that the Communities and Economy Ministers would respond to oral questions.
- 5.12 Members **noted** that the Executive Office had not scheduled any further business for this date.
- 5.13 The junior Minister advised that no other business was expected.
- 5.14 Members **noted** that the Assembly Commission may schedule a motion for which they would like 30 minutes with 5 minutes to move and wind.
- 5.15 Members **agreed** to schedule the motion with the requested timings.

5.16 Members **noted** that the Committee on Procedures had also requested a motion, for which they had requested 45 minutes, with 5 minutes to move and 5 minutes to wind.

5.17 Members **agreed** to schedule the motion with the requested timings.

Private Members' Business

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

5.19 Members **noted** that the selections were for DUP and SF.

5.20 The following Private Members' motions were selected with the usual timings:

- Support for the Modern Slavery (Victim Support) Bill [HL] 2019-21 (DUP)
- Onshore Petroleum Licencing and Drilling (SF)

5.21 Members **agreed** to schedule an Adjournment debate, and **noted** that the topic selection was for DUP.

5.22 The following Adjournment debate topic was selected with the usual timings:

- Acute Mental Health facility at Omagh Hospital and Primary Care Complex (DUP)

5.23 The junior Minister confirmed that Ministers would be available to respond to the selected business.

5.24 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 13 October.

6 Correspondence

6.1 Members **noted** a memo from the Clerk of the Committee on Procedures advising that the Procedures Committee is seeking views on the provisions provided for by Standing Orders 110-116, with a view to considering potential amendments over the coming weeks.

6.2 Members **agreed** to consider the correspondence, discuss it with their respective parties and revisit the matter at a future meeting.

7 **Any Other Business**

- 7.1 The Speaker provided Members with an update on his approach to Question Time since the return to the regular format in September.
- 7.2 The Speaker highlighted the various factors he sought to balance when deciding on how many supplementary questions to accept, noting that many of these may not be apparent to Members.
- 7.3 The Speaker asked Members to advise their parties that his main aim will be to include as many listed questions as possible and that supplementary questions may be limited as a result.
- 7.4 A Member expressed the view that there was a marked difference in the approach taken to calling Members to speak depending on who was in the Speaker's chair and that backbenchers are often still excluded from debates or given a very short time in which to speak. The Member added that if this were to continue, consideration should be given to additional time for debates.
- 7.5 A Member requested an updated Committee schedule, and the Clerk agreed to send this to all Members.
- 7.6 A Member expressed the view that Executive Business continued to be light, and the Speaker responded that improvements had been noted since the matter was formally raised and that it would be kept under review.
- 7.7 There was no other business.

8 **Date and time of next meeting**

- 8.1 Members **agreed** that the next meeting would take place at 1pm on Tuesday 6 October in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Speaker brought the meeting to a close at 1.19pm

**The Speaker
Chairperson**