

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

**TUESDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2020**  
**IN THE SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

**MINUTES**

*The meeting began at 1.05pm. (C) denotes attendance via conference call*

<b>Present:</b>	<b>The Speaker (Chairperson)</b> <b>Ms K Armstrong</b> <b>Ms C Bailey</b> <b>Mr K Buchanan</b> <b>Mr R Butler</b> <b>Ms S Ennis</b> <b>Mrs D Kelly</b> <b>Mr C McGrath</b> <b>Mr G Middleton</b> <b>Mr A Muir</b> <b>Mr J O'Dowd</b>	
<b>In attendance:</b>	<b>Dr A McGarel</b> <b>Mr P Gill</b> <b>Ms L Hogg</b> <b>Dr G McGrath</b>  <b>Mr J McMillen</b> <b>Mr R Ramsey</b> <b>Ms F Leneghan</b> <b>Ms P Devlin</b> <b>Mr M O'Hare</b>	<b>Clerk of Business</b> <b>Clerk Assistant</b> <b>Clerk/Chief Executive</b> <b>Director of Parliamentary Services</b>  <b>Head of Legal Services</b> <b>Adviser to the Speaker</b> <b>PS to the Speaker</b> <b>Assistant Assembly Clerk</b> <b>Clerical Supervisor</b>
<b>Observers:</b>	<b>Mr D Kearney</b> <b>Ms K Loveland-Morrison</b>	<b>Junior Minister</b>  <b>Executive Office</b>

**1 Apologies**

1.1 Apologies were received from John Stewart.

**2 Minutes of previous meetings**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 3 November were **agreed**.

### 3 **Matters Arising**

- 3.1 Members **noted** that, further to their discussions on clarity around cross party and all party motions, all motions on the No Day Named List that have been signed by more than one party will in future be listed on the cross-party / all-party selection rota even if they have not been debated for Members' information.
- 3.2 Members **agreed** to the suggested approach.
- 3.3 Members **noted** a suggestion that the Committee review its definition of an all-party motion and the implications of a motion becoming 'all-party'.
- 3.4 Members **agreed** to review the approach at a future meeting.
- 3.5 A Member requested an update on the Committee's request to the Executive for a legislative timetable. Members **noted** that while a response from the Executive was still pending, officials had sought clarification on exactly what was needed and had agreed to provide this in advance of the Committee's discussions on Christmas recess.
- 3.6 There were no other matters arising.

### 4 **Finalisation of the Order Papers for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 16 November 2020**

#### **Monday 16 November**

- 4.1 Members **noted** that although the draft papers provided indicated that the Second Stage of the Committal Reform Bill would be deferred until 23 November because the Minister was self-isolating, TEO officials had just advised that another Minister had offered to take it forward on her behalf so it could proceed on 16 November as originally scheduled.
- 4.2 Members **noted** that this decision had other implications for items scheduled on the draft Order Papers which the Clerk of Business would highlight as they considered each day's business.
- 4.3 Members **noted** that revised papers would be circulated electronically to them after the meeting to reflect the new arrangements.

### Private Members' Business

- 4.4 Members **noted** that they had scheduled one item of Private Members' Business for the Green Party and that it had been suggested that another Private Members' motion for the DUP was brought forward to replace Second Stage of the Bill, but given the last minute change, this was no longer recommended.
- 4.5 Members **noted** that the Green Party motion had been revised, and the text of the revised motion was circulated for Members' consideration.
- 4.6 Members **agreed** to schedule the revised motion and that this would be the only Private Members' motion scheduled following the reinstatement of Second Stage of the Criminal Justice (Committal Reform) Bill.
- 4.7 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Monday 16 November, subject to the inclusion of Second Stage of the Criminal Justice (Committal Reform) Bill.

### Tuesday 17 November

#### Executive Committee Business

- 4.8 Members **noted** that there had been two items of Executive Business scheduled since the last meeting, two unconfirmed oral statements from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, as follows:
- Basic Payment Scheme and Future Agriculture Policy
  - NSMC Environment Sector
- 4.9 Members **noted** that the Minister of Justice had rescheduled Consideration Stage of the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill having been unable to move it when originally scheduled.

#### Private Members' Business

- 4.10 Members **noted** that the Committee had agreed at the last meeting to schedule two Private Members' motions for the DUP and SDLP.
- 4.11 Members **agreed** to defer these due to the inclusion of Consideration Stage of the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill.
- 4.12 Members **agreed** not to defer the previously scheduled adjournment debate.
- 4.13 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 17 November.

5 **Provisional Arrangements for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 23 November 2020**

**Monday 23 November**

Executive Committee Business

- 5.1 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Communities and Economy Ministers.
- 5.2 Members **noted** that the Executive had scheduled one item of Executive business; First Stage of the Harbours (Grants and Loans Limit) Bill from the Minister for Infrastructure.
- 5.3 Members **noted** that this would be scheduled when confirmation is received that the Bill is within the legislative competence of the Assembly.
- 5.4 The junior Minister advised that there was no further Executive Business expected at that time.

Committee Business

- 5.5 Members **noted** two requests for Committee Business, as follows:
- A motion from the Committee for the Economy on their Special Report on Considerations for the forthcoming Energy Strategy.
  - A motion from the Committee for Health calling for a COVID-19 Strategy with the wording to be confirmed.
- 5.6 Members **agreed** to schedule 1 and a half hours for the Committee for the Economy's debate, with 10 minutes to move and wind, 15 minutes for the Minister to respond and 5 minutes for all other contributions.
- 5.7 Members **agreed** to schedule 2 hours for the Committee for Health debate, with 10 minutes to move and wind, 20 minutes for the Minister to respond and 5 minutes for all other contributions.

Private Members' Business

- 5.8 Members **noted** that the DUP motion which was deferred from 17 November could be scheduled on this date, but that their chosen topic may overlap considerably with the Health Committee's motion.

- 5.9 Members **agreed** to schedule a Private Members' motion for the DUP but that the party could consider the topic of the motion and, if necessary, change it at the next meeting.
- 5.10 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Monday 23 November.

## **Tuesday 24 November**

### **Executive Committee Business**

- 5.11 Members **noted** that Question Time would be for the Education and Finance Ministers.
- 5.12 Members **noted** that the Executive had not scheduled any business for this date.
- 5.13 The junior Minister advised that no other Executive business was expected at that time.

### **Private Members' Business**

- 5.14 Members **noted** that Mr. Allister wished to schedule Consideration Stage of his Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill on this date, but that this would be subject to the Finance Committee agreeing its report on the Bill before that date.
- 5.15 Members **noted** that the debate would by convention be untimed.
- 5.16 Members **noted** that if the Bill could not proceed, there would be time for Private Members' Motions.
- 5.17 Members **agreed** to defer taking a decision on Private Members' motions and an adjournment debate until the next meeting.
- 5.18 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 24 November.

## **6 Any Other Business**

- 6.1 Members **noted** that the Speaker was aware that both in the Chamber and on social media some Members had challenged decisions taken by him in relation to requests for additional business.
- 6.2 The Speaker advised Members that whilst he would not be engaging in any public argument about decisions he had taken, he remained satisfied that

these were taken after careful consideration and in consultation with the relevant officials, and that rules had been applied fairly and consistently.

- 6.3 The Speaker advised that he had already carried out two reviews of his decisions on these requests and intended to do so again before Christmas.
- 6.4 The Speaker asked party whips for their assistance in ensuring that Members are aware that it is not in order to challenge the authority of the Chair and to ensure this is adhered to.
- 6.5 A Member asked for more specific details of how Members were breaching Speaker's Rulings on social media and suggested that the situation might be exacerbated by current circumstances as new Members had not received the usual training provided by the Commission.

## 7 **Date and time of next meeting**

- 7.1 Members **agreed** that the next meeting would take place at 1pm on Tuesday 17 November in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

*The Speaker brought the meeting to a close at 1.26pm*

**The Speaker**  
**Chairperson**