

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

**TUESDAY 26 JANUARY 2021**  
**IN THE SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

**MINUTES**

*The meeting began at 1.01pm.*

**Present:**

**The Speaker (Chairperson)**  
**Ms K Armstrong**  
**Ms C Bailey**  
**Mr K Buchanan**  
**Mr R Butler**  
**Ms S Ennis**  
**Mr C McGrath**  
**Mr G Middleton**

**In attendance:**

<b>Dr A McGarel</b>	<b>Clerk of Business</b>
<b>Mr P Gill</b>	<b>Clerk Assistant</b>
<b>Dr G McGrath</b>	<b>Director of Parliamentary Services</b>
<b>Mr J McMillen</b>	<b>Head of Legal Services</b>
<b>Mr R Ramsey</b>	<b>Adviser to the Speaker</b>
<b>Ms F Leneghan</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:** **Mr D McCreedy** **The Executive Office**

**1** **Apologies**

1.1 Apologies were received from junior Minister Lyons, Andrew Muir, Dolores Kelly, John O'Dowd and John Stewart.

**2** **Minutes of previous meetings**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 19 January were **agreed**.

### 3 **Matters Arising**

- 3.1 Members **noted** receipt of a letter from the Committee on Procedures setting out its proposals for remote participation in plenary proceedings, which had been circulated to all Members prior to the meeting via email.
- 3.2 Members **noted** that they would be asked to consider scheduling a motion to amend Standing Order 110 to enable remote participation later in the meeting.
- 3.3 Further to a query raised at the last meeting about the timings of debates on legislation in other legislatures, Members **noted** that the Speaker expected a paper to be provided to him later that week and he hoped to bring the issue back for discussion soon.
- 3.4 There were no other matters arising.

### 4 **Finalisation of the Order Papers for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 1 February 2021**

#### **Monday 1 February**

##### **Public Petition**

- 4.1 Members **noted** that Mr. McGuigan was seeking to present a Public Petition entitled 'Save Barnish Primary School' and that in accordance with convention this item would last no more than three minutes.
- 4.2 Members **agreed** to schedule the Public Petition for Mr. McGuigan.

##### **Assembly Business**

- 4.3 Members **noted** that Sinn Féin had requested that a Committee Membership motion be scheduled on this date
- 4.4 Members **agreed** to schedule the item as a Business motion with no debate or amendment.

##### **Executive Committee Business**

- 4.5 Members **noted** that other than Question Time no Executive Business had been scheduled for this date.

### Committee Business

- 4.6 Members **noted** that a two-hour debate for the Health Committee motion on its Inquiry Report into the impact of COVID-19 on care homes remained scheduled.
- 4.7 Members **noted** that the Committee on Procedures was seeking to schedule a debate to amend Standing Order 110, which would have the effect of enabling remote participation in plenary proceedings.
- 4.8 Members **agreed** to schedule one and a half hours for the debate, with ten minutes to move and wind and five minutes for all other speakers.

### Private Members' Business

- 4.9 Members **agreed** that in accordance with their recent decision, no Private Members' motions would be scheduled.
- 4.10 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Monday 1 February.

## Tuesday 2 February

### Public Petition

- 4.11 Members **noted** that Mr. McGuigan was seeking to present a Public Petition on a Ballycastle to Ballymoney Greenway, and that in accordance with convention this item would last no more than three minutes.
- 4.12 Members **agreed** to schedule the Public Petition for Mr. McGuigan.

### Executive Committee Business

- 4.13 Members **noted** that Executive business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.

### Private Members' Business

- 4.14 Members **agreed** to schedule Final Stage of the Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill for Mr. Allister.
- 4.15 Members **noted** that in line with their previous decision, no Private Members' motions or adjournment debates would be scheduled.
- 4.16 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 2 February.

5 **Provisional Arrangements for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 8 February 2021**

**Monday 8 February**

**Executive Committee Business**

- 5.1 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Executive Office and Minister of Justice.
- 5.2 Members **noted** that four items of Executive Business had been scheduled.
- 5.3 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for Second Stage of the Protection from Stalking Bill.
- 5.4 Members **agreed** to schedule a single untimed debate to consider the following three items:
- The Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus) (Amendment of Relevant Period for Meetings of Registered Societies and Credit Unions No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020;
  - The Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Amendment of Certain Relevant Periods) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020;
  - The Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus) (Suspension of Liability for Wrongful Trading) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.
- 5.5 The TEO Official advised that no further business was expected at that time.

**Private Members' Business**

- 5.6 Members **agreed** that in line with their earlier discussions, no Private Members' motions would be scheduled.
- 5.7 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Monday 8 February.

**Tuesday 9 February**

**Public Petition**

- 5.8 Members **noted** that Mr. McAleer was seeking to present a Public Petition on Broadband in the Sperrins, and that in accordance with convention this item would last no more than three minutes.

Members **agreed** to schedule the Public Petition for Mr. McAleer.

#### Executive Committee Business

- 5.9 Members **noted** that Question Time would be scheduled for the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.
- 5.10 Members **noted** that no Executive business had been scheduled to date and that if this remained the case they could consider condensing the week's business into a single sitting on Tuesday 9 February.
- 5.11 Members **agreed** to consider this option at the next meeting.
- 5.3 The TEO Official advised that no further business was expected at that time.

#### Private Members' Business

- 5.12 Members **agreed** that in line with their previous decision, no Private Members' motions or adjournment debates would be scheduled.
- 5.13 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 9 February.

### 6 Any Other Business

- 6.1 Members discussed options for monitoring the effectiveness of the voluntary reduction in questions for priority written answer and **agreed** that statistical information on the number of questions submitted to each Executive Minister would be provided at the next meeting.
- 6.2 Members expressed concern about the Health Protection Coronavirus Restrictions Regulations being debated and affirmed retrospectively and asked how this compares with other legislatures. The Speaker agreed to raise the matter with the Executive but reminded the Committee that the Assembly had agreed the primary legislation that made provision for the current approach and that time is needed for the Examiner of Statutory Rules and the Health Committee to scrutinize the regulations after they are laid in advance of debate.
- 6.3 There was no other business.

7 **Date and time of next meeting**

- 7.1 Members **agreed** that the next meeting would take place at 1pm on Tuesday 2 February in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

*The Speaker brought the meeting to a close at 1.17pm*

**The Speaker  
Chairperson**