

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY
BUSINESS COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 2 FEBRUARY 2021
IN THE SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

MINUTES

The meeting began at 1.07pm.

Present:

The Speaker (Chairperson)
Ms K Armstrong
Ms C Bailey
Mr K Buchanan
Mr R Butler
Ms P Cameron
Ms S Ennis
Ms D Kelly
Mr C McGrath
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
Ms K McDonald	Legal Advisor
Mr R Ramsey	Adviser to the Speaker
Ms F Leneghan	PS to the Speaker
Ms P Devlin	Assistant Assembly Clerk
Mr M O'Hare	Clerical Supervisor

Observers:

Mr D McCreedy The Executive Office

1 Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from junior Minister Kearney and John Stewart.

1.2 Members **noted** that Pam Cameron was attending in place of Gary Middleton and welcomed her to the meeting.

2 **Minutes of previous meetings**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 26 January were **agreed**.

3 **Matters Arising**

3.1 Members **noted** that the Executive had still not provided a legislative programme in response to the Committee's request.

3.2 The Speaker **agreed** to write to seek an update from the Executive.

3.3 There were no other matters arising.

4 **Finalisation of the Order Papers for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 8 February 2021**

4.1 Members **noted** that the Executive's notice of Forthcoming Assembly Business listed five items of Executive Business for Monday 8 February and none for Tuesday 9 February.

4.2 Members **noted** that there were no requests for Committee business for either day and that only a Public Petition from Declan McAleer and a single Question Time were scheduled for Tuesday.

4.3 On that basis Members **agreed** that there would be a single sitting on Monday 8 February and all items scheduled for Tuesday would be brought forward to Monday.

4.4 Members **noted** that Standing Order 10(2) gives the Committee the authority to amend the start time for a sitting and **agreed** that Monday's sitting would begin at 10.30am.

Monday 8 February

Public Petition

4.5 Members **noted** that a Public Petition for Declan McAleer would be rescheduled for Monday.

4.6 Members **noted** that Sinéad McLaughlin was seeking to present a Public Petition to the Speaker entitled Covid support payment for students and that in

accordance with Standing Order 22 this item would last no more than three minutes.

- 4.7 Members **agreed** to schedule the Public Petition for Ms. McLaughlin.
- 4.8 As a result of the number and nature of public petitions currently being requested, Members **agreed** to consider the current criteria for presenting a Public Petition to the Speaker at a future meeting.

Assembly Business

- 4.9 Members **noted** that the DUP had requested a Committee Membership motion.
- 4.10 Members **agreed** to schedule the item as a Business motion with no debate or amendment.

Executive Committee Business

- 4.11 Members **noted** that Question Time would be scheduled for the Executive Office, Minister of Justice and Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.
- 4.12 Members **noted** that the following additional item of business had been scheduled since last week, which had to be taken on Monday:
- The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2021.
- 4.13 Members agreed to schedule an untimed debate for the Regulations.
- 4.14 Members **noted** that all other Executive Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.

Private Members' Business

- 4.15 Members **agreed** that in accordance with their recent decision, no Private Members' motions would be scheduled.
- 4.16 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Monday 8 February.
- 4.17 Members **noted** the possibility of additional items of business which could potentially result in a late adjournment.

- 4.18 Members **agreed** that whips would liaise with party colleagues to encourage individual contributions to be concise and keep the sitting within a reasonable timeframe.

5 **Provisional Arrangements for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 15 February 2021**

Monday 15 February

Executive Committee Business

- 5.1 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister for Communities and Minister for the Economy.
- 5.2 Members **noted** that no Executive business has been scheduled to date.
- 5.3 The TEO Official advised that no further business was expected at that time.

Private Members' Business

- 5.4 Members **agreed** that in line with their earlier discussions, no Private Members' motions would be scheduled.
- 5.5 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Monday 15 February.

Tuesday 16 February

Executive Committee Business

- 5.6 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister of Education.
- 5.7 Members **noted** that no Executive business had been scheduled to date.
- 5.8 The TEO Official advised that no further business was expected at that time.

Private Members' Business

- 5.9 Members **agreed** that in accordance with their recent decision, no Private Members' motions or adjournment debate would be scheduled.

- 5.10 Members **noted** that if no Executive Business was scheduled for this date at the next meeting, they could again consider condensing the week's business into a single sitting.
- 5.11 Members **agreed** to consider this option at the next meeting.
- 5.12 Members **noted** that a motion had been tabled by the Women's Caucus to coincide with International Women's Day which, it was hoped, would eventually be cross-party.
- 5.13 Members **noted** a suggestion that although Private Members Business was not being scheduled at present, this motion could exceptionally be considered for scheduling at a future meeting.
- 5.14 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 16 February.

6 **Any Other Business**

- 6.1 Members noted receipt of statistics on written questions submitted to each Minister during the three weeks since Christmas recess.
- 6.2 Members **agreed** to note and monitor these statistics.
- 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 9 February via MS Teams.

The Speaker brought the meeting to a close at 1.26pm

The Speaker
Chairperson