

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY
BUSINESS COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2021
VIA MS TEAMS

MINUTES

The meeting began at 1.05pm.

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

Mr P Gill

Ms L Hogg

Dr G McGrath

Mr J McMillan

Mr R Ramsey

Ms F Leneghan

Ms P Devlin

Mr M O'Hare

Clerk of Business

Clerk Assistant

Clerk/Chief Executive

**Director of Parliamentary
Services**

Head of Legal Services

Adviser to the Speaker

PS to the Speaker

Assistant Assembly Clerk

Clerical Supervisor

1 Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from John Stewart.

1.2 The Speaker formally welcomed Pam Cameron as a member of the Committee.

2 **Minutes of previous meetings**

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

3 **Matters Arising**

- 3.1 Members **noted** that the Speaker had written to the Executive to request a legislative programme following the Committee's discussions at the last meeting, and had specifically requested details of legislative business for the period until Easter.
- 3.2 There were no other matters arising.

4 **Finalisation of the Order Papers for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 15 February 2021**

- 4.1 Members **noted** that the Executive's notice of Forthcoming Assembly Business indicated no Executive Business for either Monday 15 February or Tuesday 16 February.
- 4.2 Members **noted** that there were no requests for Committee business for either day and that the only other business were two requests to schedule Public Petitions.
- 4.3 Members expressed concern at the lack of business forthcoming from the Executive and **agreed** that the Speaker would again highlight the Committee's concerns to the Executive.
- 4.4 Following discussion, Members **agreed** that there would be a single sitting on Tuesday 16 February.
- 4.5 Members **agreed** that if insufficient Executive business was forthcoming for week commencing 22 February, they would reconsider scheduling Private Members' Business.

Monday 8 February

Public Petitions

- 4.6 Members **noted** that Jemma Dolan was seeking to present a Public Petition to the Speaker entitled 'Adoption of Ravensbrea Waste Water Treatment Plant, Garrison' and that in accordance with Standing Order 22 this item would last no more than three minutes.

- 4.7 Members **noted** that Joanne Bunting was seeking to present a Public Petition to the Speaker entitled 'Sanctions for Cyber Bullying' and that in accordance with Standing Order 22 this item would last no more than three minutes.
- 4.8 Further to discussions at the previous meeting, Members **noted** that petitions were included on the Committee on Procedures' forward work programme and therefore **agreed** not to make changes at this time to current scheduling procedures.
- 4.9 Members **noted** that Standing Order 22 placed clear limitations on statements made by a Member when introducing a Public Petition which had not necessarily been observed in recent weeks.
- 4.10 Members **noted** the Speaker's intention to apply a strict interpretation of Standing Order 22 going forward and **agreed** that they would remind party colleagues of the requirements of Standing Order 22.
- 4.11 Members **agreed** to schedule the Public Petitions.

Assembly Business

- 4.12 Members **noted** that Standing Order 20(1) requires that Question Time commences at 2pm and in order to avoid a long suspension **agreed** to schedule a motion to suspend the Standing Order to allow Question Time to commence immediately after other business had been disposed of.

Executive Committee Business

- 4.13 Members **noted** that Question Time would be scheduled for the Minister for Communities, Minister for the Economy and the Minister of Education.

Private Members' Business

- 4.14 Members **agreed**, per their earlier discussions that no Private Members' motions would be scheduled.
- 4.15 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 16 February.

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

Monday 22 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 two items of Executive business had been scheduled:

Tuesday 23 February

Executive Committee Business

- 5.3 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister of Education.
- 5.4 Members **noted** that no Executive business had been scheduled to date.
- 5.5 Members **agreed** in light of earlier discussions that no Provisional Order Papers would issue this week pending a decision being taken on scheduling Private Members' business at the next meeting.
- 5.6 The Speaker advised in response to a Member's query that he was hopeful work to facilitate remote participation in plenary would be completed in the next few weeks.

6 **Any Other Business**

- 6.1 Members **noted** receipt of statistics on written questions submitted to each Minister during the last three weeks and the inclusion of information on the number of Priority Written Questions.
- 6.2 Members **agreed** to note and continue to 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 on Tuesday 16 February in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, and would either be at 1pm or following the Assembly's adjournment.

The Speaker brought the meeting to a close at 1.34pm

The Speaker
Chairperson