

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY
BUSINESS COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2021
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

MINUTES

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

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 (C) Mr C McGrath (C) Mr A Muir Mr J O'Dowd	
In attendance:	Dr A McGarel Ms L Hogg Ms T Caul	Clerk of Business Clerk/Chief Executive Director of Legal Governance & Research Services
	Mr R Ramsey Ms F Leneghan Ms P Devlin Mr M O'Hare	Adviser to the Speaker PS to the Speaker Assistant Assembly Clerk Clerical Supervisor
Observers:	Mr D McCreedy	The Executive Office

1 **Apologies**

1.1 Apologies were received from John Stewart.

2 **Minutes of previous meetings**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 16 February were **agreed**.

3 **Matters Arising**

- 3.1 Members **noted** that the Executive Office had provided a document for the Committee outlining anticipated business up to April 2021, and had asked that the Committee notes that the document should not be considered as a final position as further additions are likely.
- 3.2 Members noted that the Executive had taken account of the provisional dates agreed for Easter Recess, from Saturday 27 March to Sunday 11 April and **agreed** to confirm the dates for Easter recess
- 3.3 The Speaker advised Members that he had received a detailed paper from officials on the duration and timing of debates for bill stages, which he would consider and bring proposals to the Committee at a later date.
- 3.4 There were no other matters arising.

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

Monday 1 March

Executive Committee Business

- 4.1 Members **noted** that the Minister of Finance had scheduled a motion to suspend Standing Orders 10(2) to 10(4), which would enable the sitting on 1 March to continue beyond 7pm.
- 4.2 Members **agreed** that this motion would be treated as a business motion with no debate or amendment, and **noted** that it would require cross-community support.
- 4.3 Members **noted** that all other Executive business was as agreed at the last meeting.

Private Members' Business

- 4.4 Members **agreed** that insufficient time was available for Private Members' motions.
- 4.5 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Monday 1 March.

Tuesday 2 March

Assembly Business

- 4.6 Members **agreed** to schedule a motion for the Assembly Commission to agree its Budget for 2021 – 2022.
- 4.7 Members **agreed** to allow one hour for the debate, with 10 minutes to move and wind and five minutes for all other speakers.

Executive Committee Business

- 4.8 Members **noted** that the Minister of Finance had scheduled a motion to suspend Standing Order 42(5) in respect of the Budget Bill.
- 4.9 Members **noted** receipt of a letter from the Minister of Finance to the Speaker explaining why a passage of less than 10 days is required for the Bill.
- 4.10 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for the motion.
- 4.11 Members **noted** that all other Executive business was as agreed at the last meeting.

Private Members' Business

- 4.12 Members **agreed** that insufficient time was available for Private Members business.
- 4.13 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 2 March.

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

Monday 8 March

Public Petitions

- 5.1 Members **noted** that Karen Mullen was seeking to present a Public Petition to the Speaker seeking a detox and addiction facility in her constituency, and that in accordance with Standing Order 22 this item would last no more than three minutes.
- 5.2 Members **agreed** to schedule the Public Petition.

Executive Committee Business

- 5.3 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Executive Office and the Minister for Communities.
- 5.4 Members **noted** that one item of Executive business had been scheduled; Consideration Stage of the Budget Bill.
- 5.5 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for Consideration Stage.
- 5.6 The TEO official indicated that no other business was expected at that time.

Committee Business

- 5.7 Members **agreed** to schedule a motion with an untimed debate from the Committee for Justice to extend the Committee Stage of the Protection from Stalking Bill.
- 5.8 Members **agreed** to schedule a motion from the Committee on Procedures to amend Standing Order 112 and to allow 30 minutes for the debate with five minutes for the move and wind and five minutes for all other speakers.
- 5.9 Members **agreed** to schedule a motion from the Committee for the Economy on its Skills Strategy and Economic Output Micro Inquiry Special Report.
- 5.10 Members **agreed** to schedule one and a half hours for the debate, with ten minutes to move and wind, 15 minutes for the Minister to respond and five minutes for all other speakers.

Private Members' Business

- 5.11 Members **noted** that the Women's Caucus was seeking to schedule a motion to mark International Women's Day and **agreed** to schedule one and a half hours for the debate, to include 10 minutes to move and wind and 5 minutes for all other speakers.
- 5.12 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Monday 8 March.

Tuesday 9 March

Executive Committee Business

- 5.13 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister for the Economy.

- 5.14 Members **noted** that two items of Executive business had been scheduled; Further Consideration Stage and Final Stage of the Budget Bill.
- 5.15 Members **noted** that both stages were by convention untimed but if no amendments to the Bill were tabled, Further Consideration stage would last only a few minutes.
- 5.16 Members **noted** that if there were amendments to the Bill it would be necessary to separate the two stages of the Bill to allow time for competence checks.

Private Members' Business

- 5.17 Members **noted** a request from Mr Givan for the second stage of his bill to be scheduled if there was time.
- 5.18 Members **noted** that scheduling a Private Members' Bill takes precedence over Private Members' motions or Adjournment debates.
- 5.19 Members also **noted** the convention of allowing four weeks between the introduction of a Private Members' Bill and its second stage to allow Members to familiarise themselves with it prior to debate, and that Mr. Givan had introduced his Bill on 16 February.
- 5.20 Following discussion, Members **agreed** to adhere to the convention and defer the Second Stage of Mr Givan's Bill to week commencing 15 March.
- 5.21 Members **agreed** to defer consideration of other items of Private Members Business until the next meeting.
- 5.22 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 9 March.

6 Any Other Business

- 6.1 Members **noted** receipt of statistics on written questions submitted to each Minister during the last three weeks as well as information on the number of Priority Written Questions.
- 6.2 Members **agreed** to note and continue to monitor these statistics.
- 6.3 Some Members raised an issue with a Private Members' motion that had been debated earlier that week and expressed the view that because of the

amendment and high number of interventions, speaking opportunities for non-Executive parties had been inhibited and that this had been raised with the Deputy Speaker at the time.

- 6.4 The Speaker noted the concerns raised but stressed that he always seeks to ensure that there is representation from the smaller parties and independent Members during any timed debate.

7 **Date and time of next meeting**

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

The Speaker brought the meeting to a close at 1.22pm

**The Speaker
Chairperson**