

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY
BUSINESS COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 23 MARCH 2021
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

MINUTES

The meeting began at 1.11pm. (C) denotes attendance via conference call.

Present:	The Speaker (Chairperson) Ms K Armstrong Ms C Bailey (C) Mr R Butler Ms S Ennis Ms D Kelly Mr G Middleton Mr J O'Dowd	
In attendance:	Dr A McGarel Mr P Gill Ms L Hogg Dr G McGrath Mr S Kelly 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 Legal Advisor 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 junior Ministers Kearney and Lyons, Andrew Muir, John Stewart and Colin McGrath.

2 Minutes of previous meetings

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

3 **Matters Arising**

3.1 There were no matters arising.

4 **Finalisation of the Order Papers for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 22 March 2021**

Monday 12 April

Assembly Business

4.1 Members **noted** that the DUP had requested a Committee Membership motion, which would be treated as a business motion with no amendment or debate.

4.2 Members **agreed** to schedule the motion for the DUP.

Executive Committee Business

4.3 Members **noted** that the Executive had scheduled three items of business:

1. A Statement from the Minister for Communities on the NSMC Language Sectoral Meeting
2. The Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus) (Amendment of Relevant Period in Schedule 8) Regulations (Northern Ireland)
3. The draft Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus) (Change of Expiry Date in section 32(1)) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

4.4 Members **agreed** to schedule a single untimed debate for the Corporate Insolvency and Governance motions.

Private Members' Business

4.5 Members **noted** that sufficient time was available to schedule Private Members' business.

4.6 Members **agreed** to schedule the following Private Members' motion with the usual timings:

- Brexit and Card Fees (Sinn Féin)

4.7 The TEO official indicated that all Ministers were currently available.

4.8 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Monday 12 April.

Tuesday 13 April

Executive Committee Business

4.9 Members **noted** that no Executive business had been scheduled to date.

Private Members' Business

4.10 Members **noted** that sufficient time was available to schedule Private Members' business.

4.11 Members **agreed** to schedule the following Private Members' motions with the usual timings:

- Conversion Therapy (UUP)
- Putting Cancer Services at Centre of the Covid-19 recovery (DUP)

4.12 Members **agreed** to schedule the following adjournment debate:

- Progress of the A5 Dual Carriageway (Sinn Féin)

4.13 The TEO official indicated that all Ministers were currently available.

4.14 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 13 April.

5 Provisional Arrangements for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 19 April 2021

Monday 19 April

Executive Committee Business

5.1 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Executive Office and Minister of Education.

5.2 Members **noted** that no Executive business had been scheduled to date.

5.3 The TEO official indicated that no other business was expected at that time.

Committee Business

- 5.4 Members **noted** that the Committee for Justice had requested a motion to extend the Committee Stage of the Damages Bill.
- 5.5 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for the motion to extend Committee Stage.

Private Members' Business

- 5.6 Members **agreed** to defer consideration of Private Members' business until the next meeting.
- 5.7 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Monday 19 April.

Tuesday 20 April

Executive Committee Business

- 5.8 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister of Finance.
- 5.9 Members **noted** that no Executive business had been scheduled to date.
- 5.10 The TEO official indicated that no other business was expected at that time.

Committee Business

- 5.11 Members **noted** that there were no requests for Committee Business to date.

Private Members' Business

- 5.12 Members **agreed** to defer consideration of Private Members' business until the next meeting.
- 5.13 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 20 April.

6 Duration and Timings for Debates on Primary Legislation

- 6.1 Members **noted** that they had received a discussion paper exploring options to address the issue of long debates on legislation.

- 6.2 Members **agreed** to take more time to consider the paper with their parties and to discuss the matter at the first meeting after recess.

7 **Any Other Business**

- 7.1 A Member raised an issue with the Ad Hoc Committee on Covid-19 response meeting on 18 March being scheduled at the same time as other Committee meetings, which had prevented a number of Members from participating. The Member noted that there had been two plenary sittings that week at which the Minister could have made the statement and asked if Ministers could be asked to schedule Ad Hoc Committee only at times when there was no other Committees scheduled to meet.
- 7.2 The Speaker advised that Members were aware that he had encouraged Ministers to bring any announcements to the Chamber at the earliest possible opportunity and did not want to make requests that might discourage them from doing so. However, the Speaker accepted that other committee meetings may limit Members' ability to attend meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee, and committed to keep the matter under review.
- 7.3 There was no other business.

8 **Date and time of next meeting**

- 8.1 Members **agreed** that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 13 April in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.
- 8.2 The Speaker informed Members that reduced recess periods and recalls of the Assembly had resulted in many staff having excessive annual leave balances. The Speaker asked Members to be mindful that further recalls would compound this problem for staff.

The Speaker brought the meeting to a close at 1.22pm

**The Speaker
Chairperson**