

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY
BUSINESS COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 25 MAY 2021
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

MINUTES

The meeting began at 1.02pm.

Present:

The Speaker (Chairperson)

Mr A Allen
Ms K Armstrong
Ms C Bailey
Mr R Butler
Mr K Buchanan
Ms S Ennis
Mrs D Kelly
Mr G Middleton
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
Mr J McMillen	Head of Legal Services
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 G Lyons	Junior Minister
Mr D McCreedy	The Executive Office

1 Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were received from John Stewart and Colin McGrath.
- 1.2 The Speaker welcomed Andy Allen, who was attending in place of John Stewart.

2 Minutes of previous meeting

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 18 May were **agreed**.

3 Matters Arising

3.1 The Speaker acknowledged that a number of Members had raised concerns about scheduling plenary business on a weekly basis and agreed that it was not a sustainable approach in the longer term. The Speaker suggested that the Committee continues with the approach until summer recess, and that it reviews the arrangements at its last meeting before recess, with a view to giving the Executive an indication of how it intends to schedule business in September. The Speaker suggested that they could also consider the seating arrangements in the Chamber at that time.

3.2 Members **agreed** to proceed as the Speaker had proposed.

3.3 There were no other matters arising.

4 Finalisation of the Order Papers for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 31 May 2021

Monday 31 May

4.1 Members **noted** that the Assembly would not sit on 31 May as it was a public holiday.

Tuesday 1 June

Public Petition

4.2 Members **noted** that Ms. Claire Sugden would present a petition calling for age appropriate care for teenagers and young adults who have life threatening illnesses.

Assembly Business

4.3 Members **agreed** to schedule a committee membership motion for the UUP.

Executive Committee Business

4.4 Members **noted** that, in addition to the business agreed at last week's meeting, the Executive Office had listed a motion to affirm the Departments (Transfer of Functions) Order (NI) 2021.

- 4.5 Members agreed to schedule an untimed debate for the motion.
- 4.6 Members **noted** that the Minister for Communities had initially listed Final Stage of the Pension Schemes Bill for Monday 24 May, but that it was subsequently removed and listed for 1 June.
- 4.7 The junior Minister indicated that no other business was expected at that time.

Committee Business

- 4.8 Members **agreed** to schedule a Committee for Infrastructure motion on Un-adopted Roads with the usual timings.

Private Members' Business

- 4.9 Members **agreed** that insufficient time was available to schedule Private Members' motions.
- 4.10 Members **agreed** to schedule the following adjournment debate:
- Street Lighting in the Rural Areas of Mid Ulster (SF)
- 4.11 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 1 June.

5 Provisional Arrangements for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 7 June 2021

Monday 7 June

- 5.1 Members **noted** that Ms Kellie Armstrong was seeking to present a Public Petition relating to Carer's Week 2021 and that in accordance with Standing Order 22 this item would last no more than three minutes.
- 5.2 Members **agreed** to schedule the petition for Ms Armstrong.

Executive Committee Business

- 5.3 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister for the Economy and Minister of Education.
- 5.4 Members **noted** that the Minister of Finance had listed a motion to suspend Standing Orders 10(2) to 10 (4).

- 5.5 Members **agreed** to schedule the motion as a business motion with no amendment or debate.
- 5.6 Members **noted** that the Minister of Finance had listed a motion on the Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2021-2022.
- 5.7 Members **agreed** to schedule a four and a half hour debate for the motion, with 30 minutes for the Minister to use at his discretion for the move and wind, 10 minutes for the Finance Committee Chair and 7 minutes for all other speakers.
- 5.8 Members **noted** that the Minister of Finance had listed the first stage of the Budget (No. 2) Bill.
- 5.9 Members **agreed** to schedule the bill stage and allocated no time limit.
- 5.10 The junior Minister indicated that no other business was expected at that time.

Committee Business

- 5.11 Members **noted** that the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs was seeking to schedule a debate on nature friendly farming.
- 5.12 Members **agreed** to schedule one hour for the debate with 10 minutes to move and wind, and five minutes for all other speakers.

Private Members' Business

- 5.13 Members **noted** that there was unlikely to be sufficient time for Private Members' business, but **agreed** to confirm this at the next meeting.
- 5.14 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 7 June.

Tuesday 8 June

Executive Committee Business

- 5.15 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister of Finance.
- 5.16 Members **noted** that the Minister for Communities had listed Consideration Stage of the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill.
- 5.17 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for the bill stage.

- 5.18 Members **noted** that the Minister of Finance had listed Second Stage of the Budget (No.2) Bill, and that it could only proceed subject to receipt of confirmation from the Committee for Finance that there has been appropriate consultation on the expenditure proposals, as required by Standing Order 42(2).
- 5.19 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for the bill stage.
- 5.20 The junior Minister indicated that no other business was expected at that time.

Private Members' Business

- 5.21 Members **noted** that there was unlikely to be sufficient time for Private Members' business, but **agreed** to revisit this at the next meeting.
- 5.22 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 8 June.

6 Recess Dates

- 6.1 Members **noted** the dates currently in place for the forthcoming summer recess were agreed in February 2020, but since that time the Covid-19 pandemic had made it necessary for the Committee to review and, if necessary, revise the agreed dates as each recess period approached to take account of the circumstances and business need at that time.
- 6.2 Members **noted** that they had been provided with an advice paper containing recommendations for summer recess as well as the two remaining recess periods before the end of the current Assembly mandate.
- 6.3 Following discussion, Members **agreed** to increase spring term by a further week, so that summer recess would commence on 10 July rather than 3 July as previously agreed.
- 6.4 Members **agreed** that the autumn term would commence on Monday 6 September, with Business Committee meeting on 7 September to finalise order papers for plenary sittings on week commencing 13 September.
- 6.5 Members **agreed** that the Halloween recess period would commence on 23 October and end on 1 November 2021.
- 6.6 Members **agreed** that the three week Christmas recess would commence on 18 December and end on 9 January 2022.

- 6.7 The Speaker advised that he had arranged for the Committee to have advance sight of a memo on recalls during recess periods which he would be issuing to all Members later that day. The Speaker gave a summary of its contents and encouraged Members to share his messages with party colleagues and those they represent.

7 **Correspondence**

- 7.1 Members **noted** receipt of a memo from the Clerk to the Committee on Procedures seeking the views of the Business Committee on options for extending the temporary provisions provided by Standing Orders 110 – 116.
- 7.2 Following discussion, Members **agreed** to write to the Committee on Procedures to recommend that the temporary provisions are extended until the end of the year.
- 7.3 Members **noted** receipt of a letter from the Minister of Finance offering his thanks to the Committee for agreeing to reschedule his Budget debate that week at very short notice.

8 **Any Other Business**

- 8.1 A Member referred to a point of order made in the Chamber earlier that morning in reference to remote participation, and advised that the same issue had affected her party colleagues also.
- 8.2 The Speaker advised that he was looking into the issue and would update Members in due course.

9 **Date and time of next meeting**

- 9.1 Members **agreed** that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 1 June in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Speaker brought the meeting to a close at 1.22pm

**The Speaker
Chairperson**