

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY
BUSINESS COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2021
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

MINUTES

The meeting began at 1.04pm.

Present:

The Speaker (Chairperson)
Mr A Allen
Ms C Bailey
Ms P Bradshaw
Ms J Bunting
Mr R Butler
Mr T Clarke
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
Ms T Caul	Director of Legal, Governance and Research
Mr J McMillan	Head of Legal Services
Mr R Ramsey	Adviser to the Speaker
Ms F Leneghan	PS to the Speaker
Ms E Lynn	Speaker's Office
Ms P Devlin	Assistant Assembly Clerk
Mr M O'Hare	Clerical Supervisor

Observers:

Mr G Middleton	Junior Minister
Mr D McCreedy	The Executive Office

1 Apologies

1.1 No apologies were received.

2 **Minutes of previous meeting**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 7 September were **agreed**.

3 **Matters Arising**

3.1 Members **noted** that provision for the Ad Hoc Committee on Covid-19 response would expire at the end of September and that if the Committee wished to extend the provision, it would be necessary to schedule a motion before then.

3.2 Members **noted** that an options paper would be prepared by officials and brought to the Committee at the next meeting.

4 **Correspondence**

4.1 The Speaker advised that he had received a letter from the Minister of Finance raising concerns about the scheduling of the Defamation Bill and outlining the reasons for his objection, and that the Minister's correspondence and the Speaker's response were included in Members papers.

4.2 Members **noted** the correspondence from the Minister and the Speaker's response to the Minister.

5 **Finalisation of the Order Papers for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 20 September**

Monday 20 September

Members' Statements

5.1 Members **agreed** to consider the inclusion of Members' Statements when all other business had been scheduled.

Assembly Business

5.2 Members **agreed** to schedule a Committee Membership motion for the UUP and for it to be treated as a business motion with no debate.

5.3 Members **agreed** to schedule, as above, a Committee Membership motion for the DUP, and were content for the wording to be confirmed after the meeting when the Committee had considered the redistribution of committee seats.

Executive Committee Business

- 5.4 Members **noted** that, in addition to the business agreed at last week's meeting, the Executive Office had listed a further item of business.
- 5.5 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate to consider a subsequent Legislative Consent Motion on Westminster's Environment Bill from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Committee Business

- 5.6 Members **noted** that no Committee Business had been scheduled.

Private Members' Business

- 5.7 Members **noted** that no Private Members' Business had been scheduled.

Members' Statements

- 5.8 Members **agreed** not to schedule Members' Statements.
- 5.9 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Monday 20 September.

Tuesday 21 September

Executive Committee Business

- 5.10 Members **noted** that no Executive business had been scheduled.

Committee Business

- 5.11 Members **noted** that no Committee Business had been scheduled.

Private Members' Business

- 5.12 Members **noted** that an untimed debate for Second Stage of the Autism (Amendment) Bill remained scheduled.
- 5.13 Members **noted** that an untimed debate for Second Stage of the Political Appointments Bill remained scheduled
- 5.14 Members **noted** that no Private Members' motions or an adjournment debate had been scheduled.

Members' Statements

- 5.15 Having assessed scheduled business, Members **agreed** to schedule Members' statements.
- 5.16 Following discussions, Members **agreed** to review their approach to scheduling Members' Statements in the coming weeks.
- 5.17 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 21 September

6 Provisional Arrangements for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 27 September

Monday 27 September

Public Petition

- 6.1 Members **agreed** to schedule a Public Petition for Mr Muir on a Strategy to Expand the Electric Vehicle Charging Network.

Assembly Business

- 6.2 Members **noted** that if they decided next week to extend the Ad Hoc Committee on Covid-19 response, a motion would need to be tabled by the Committee.

Executive Committee Business

- 6.3 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Executive Office and Minister of Finance.
- 6.4 Members **noted** that the Minister for Communities had scheduled Second Stage of the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements Bill
- 6.5 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for the Bill stage.
- 6.6 Members **noted** that the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs had scheduled Second Stage of the Climate Change (No. 2) Bill.
- 6.7 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for the Bill stage.
- 6.8 The junior Minister indicated that no other business was expected at that time.

Committee Business

6.9 Members **noted** that no Committee business had been requested.

Private Members' Business

6.10 Members **agreed** that insufficient time was available for Private Members motions.

Members' Statements

6.11 Members **agreed** to consider scheduling Members' Statements at next week's meeting before finalising the Order Paper.

6.12 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Monday 27 September.

Tuesday 28 September

Executive Committee Business

6.13 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister of Health.

6.14 Members **noted** that no Executive business had been scheduled.

6.15 The junior Minister indicated that no other business was expected at that time.

6.16 A Member requested that the Committee be provided with a timetable for Executive business by The Executive Office. The request was **noted**.

Committee Business

6.17 Members **noted** that no Committee Business had been requested.

Private Members' Business

6.18 Members **noted** that John O'Dowd had requested that Second Stage of his Small-Scale Green Energy Bill was scheduled for debate.

6.19 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for Second Stage of the Bill.

6.20 Members **agreed** to schedule the following Private Members' motion for the DUP:

- Failure to investigate allegations of Irish state collusion

- 6.21 Members **agreed** to schedule the following adjournment debate topic for the SDLP:
- Impact in Foyle of Removal of Universal Credit Uplift
- 6.22 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 5 October.

7 **Redistribution of Committee Seats**

- 7.1 Members **noted** that at the last meeting they had considered the implications of Mr Easton's resignation from the DUP, which included the reduction in the number of Committee seats to which the DUP were now entitled.
- 7.2 Members **noted** that they had agreed to revisit the redistribution of committee seats at this meeting after parties had had an opportunity to consider the implications of the possible changes.
- 7.3 The Speaker reminded Members that the DUP entitlement to seats on both statutory and standing committees reduced by one.
- 7.4 DUP representatives informed the Committee that the party would give up one of its seats on the Committee for the Executive Office.
- 7.5 Following discussion, the Committee **agreed** to establish whether Mr. Easton wished to accept this seat and to revisit the issue at the next meeting.
- 7.6 DUP representatives informed the Committee that if the seat it is to give up was to be allocated to Mr Easton then it would give up a seat on the Assembly & Executive Review Committee (AERC). However, it also said that if the seat it is to give up is to be allocated to the SDLP then it would give up a seat on the Committee on Standards and Privileges.
- 7.7 Following discussion, the Committee **agreed** to consider the reallocation of the seat on the standing committee at the next meeting.
- 7.8 The Committee **agreed** that a paper outlining the options for reallocating the seat on the Committee for the Executive Office if not taken up by Mr Easton, and those for the vacant standing committee seat be provided at the next meeting.

8 **Social Distancing in the Chamber**

- 8.1 Members noted receipt of an advice paper presenting options for social distancing in the Chamber.

8.2 Following discussion, Members **agreed** to seek further advice on issues such as ventilation and other mitigating measures, and to revisit the matter at the next meeting when parties had been able to consult with their members on the various proposals

9 **Any Other Business**

9.1 There was no other business.

10 **Date and time of next meeting**

10.1 Members **agreed** that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 21 September in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Speaker brought the meeting to a close at 1.43pm

**The Speaker
Chairperson**