

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY
BUSINESS COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2021
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

MINUTES

The meeting began at 1.04pm.

Present:

The Speaker (Chairperson)
Ms C Bailey
Mrs R Barton
Ms J Bunting
Mr R Butler
Mr T Clarke
Mrs D Kelly
Mr C McGrath
Mr A Muir
Mr J O'Dowd

In attendance:

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| 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 D Kearney | Junior Minister |
| Mr D McCreedy | The Executive Office |

1 Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Sinéad Ennis and Paula Bradshaw.

2 Minutes of previous meeting

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 16 November 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 29 November**

Monday 29 November

Members' Statements

4.1 Members **noted** that Members' Statements remained scheduled.

Executive Committee Business

4.2 Members **noted** that the Minister for Communities was seeking to introduce the Social Security (Terminal Illness) Bill, which would be included on Indicative Timings when the Bill's legislative competence had been confirmed.

4.3 Members **noted** that all other Executive Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.

Committee Business

4.4 Members **noted** that Committee Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.

Private Members' Business

4.5 Members **noted** that Second Stage of the Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Bill remained scheduled for Rachel Woods and that they had agreed to schedule an untimed debate with limits on individual contributions.

4.6 In response to a Member's query, the Committee **agreed** that it would be reasonable to allocate additional time for a ministerial response, and also a committee chairperson's contribution, should it be considered necessary.

4.7 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Monday 29 November.

Tuesday 30 November

Executive Committee Business

- 4.8 Members **noted** that the Minister for Infrastructure had formally notified the Speaker of her intention to make a statement on the North South Ministerial Council meeting on Inland Waterways.
- 4.9 Members **noted** that the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs had indicated he would make a statement on the British Irish Council summit meeting, which would be added to Indicative Timings once confirmed.
- 4.10 Members **noted** that otherwise Executive Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.

Private Members' Business

- 4.11 Members **noted** that an adjournment debate on a Bypass Road for Moira for the UUP remained scheduled.
- 4.12 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 30 November.

5 **Provisional Arrangements for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 6 December**

Monday 6 December

Members' Statements

- 5.1 Members **noted** that Members' Statements were scheduled as usual.

Public Petition

- 5.2 Members **agreed** to schedule a Public Petition for Mr. Allister entitled 'Fairness for Caravan Owners'.

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 Executive had listed five items of business:
- Further Consideration Stage of the Criminal Justice (Committal Reform) Bill
 - The draft Smoke-free (Private Vehicle Regulations) (NI) 2021
 - The draft Nicotine Inhaling Products (Age of Sale and Proxy Purchasing) Regulations (NI) 2021
 - The draft Tobacco Retailer (Fixed Penalty) (Amount) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2021
 - Consideration Stage of the Non Domestic Rates Valuations (Coronavirus) Bill
- 5.5 Members **noted** that, as the accelerated passage motion for the Non-domestic Rates Valuations (Coronavirus) Bill had not passed, consideration stage of the Bill could no longer be scheduled on this date, and **agreed** that it be removed from the Provisional Order Paper.
- 5.6 Members **agreed** to schedule untimed debates for all other items, including a single untimed debate for the three draft Statutory Rules as requested by the Minister of Health.
- 5.7 The junior Minister indicated that following the Executive meetings that had taken place that week to discuss emergency steps to contain Covid transmission, the Executive expected that further Regulations would be brought to the Assembly, but would first be subject to Health Committee scrutiny. These were expected to be scheduled for week commencing 6 December, and the junior Minister asked the Committee to take this into account when taking decisions on provisional business for that week.

Private Members' Business

- 5.8 Members **noted** that Mr. Blair had requested plenary time to debate the second stage of his Hunting of Wild Mammals Bill, and that the All-Party Group on Homelessness was seeking to schedule a motion to coincide with Homelessness Awareness Week 2021.
- 5.9 Members **noted** that they had previously agreed to give bills priority when scheduling Private Members' Business.
- 5.10 A Member sought clarity on the status of All-Party Group motions and was advised that the agreed approach was to treat them as Private Members' business and consider them to be all-party motions once signed by representatives of the five main parties.

- 5.11 Following discussions, Members **agreed** not to schedule the all-party motion on homelessness but to schedule an untimed debate for John Blair to move the second stage of his Hunting of Wild Mammals Bill, on the understanding that Mr. Blair was informed that the scheduling was conditional and would be deferred if the additional Executive Business indicated in paragraph 5.7 was forthcoming.
- 5.12 Members **agreed** to consider time limits for the debate at the next meeting.
- 5.13 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Monday 6 December.

Tuesday 7 December

Executive Committee Business

- 5.14 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister for the Economy and the Assembly Commission.
- 5.15 Members **noted** that the Executive had listed seven items of business:
- The draft Direct Payments to Farmers (Simplifications) Regulations
 - Final Stage of the Horse Racing (Amendment) Bill
 - Consideration Stage of the Financial Reporting (Departments and Public Bodies) Bill
 - A motion seeking Accelerated Passage for the Social Security (Terminal Illness) Bill
 - Second Stage of the Social Security (Terminal Illness) Bill
 - Final Stage of the Damages (Return on Investment) Bill
 - Final Stage of the Health and Social Care Bill
- 5.16 Members **agreed** to schedule untimed debates for all of these items.
- 5.17 Members **noted** that they had agreed that no time limits on individual contributions would apply to second stage debates if the Bill was to proceed by accelerated passage.
- 5.18 Members **agreed** that time limits would be applied to contributions to second stage debates of Bills if the accelerated passage motion was not passed, and that these would be considered for the Social Security (Terminal Illness) Bill at the next meeting.
- 5.19 A Member noted that they were now seeing a number of Executive bills for which accelerated passage was being sought and queried why this was, when

for a long time there was no plenary time being requested for legislation by the Executive.

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

Private Members' Business

- 5.21 Members **noted** that the business already scheduled brought the estimated adjournment time to 7.15pm with several items of business untimed, and on that basis **agreed** not to schedule Private Members' business.
- 5.22 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 7 December.

6 Any Other Business

- 6.1 There was no other business.

7 Date and time of next meeting

- 7.1 Members **agreed** that the next Committee meeting would take place on Tuesday 30 November in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Speaker brought the meeting to a close at 1.21pm

The Speaker
Chairperson