

**NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY**  
**BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 7 DECEMBER 2021**  
**SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

**MINUTES**

*The meeting began at 1.06pm.*

**Present:**

**The Speaker (Chairperson)**  
**Ms C Bailey**  
**Mrs R Barton**  
**Ms J Bunting**  
**Mr R Butler**  
**Mr T Clarke**  
**Mrs D Kelly**  
**Mr G Kelly**  
**Mr A Muir**

**In attendance:**

<b>Dr A McGarel</b>	<b>Clerk of Business</b>
<b>Ms L Hogg</b>	<b>Clerk/Chief Executive</b>
<b>Dr G McGrath</b>	<b>Director of Parliamentary Services</b>
<b>Mr J McMillen</b>	<b>Head of Legal Services</b>
<b>Mr R Ramsey</b>	<b>Adviser to the Speaker</b>
<b>Ms F Leneghan</b>	<b>PS to the Speaker</b>
<b>Ms P Devlin</b>	<b>Assistant Assembly Clerk</b>
<b>Mr M O'Hare</b>	<b>Clerical Supervisor</b>

**Observers:**

<b>Mr D Kearney</b>	<b>Junior Minister</b>
<b>Mr D McCreedy</b>	<b>The Executive Office</b>

**1 Apologies**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from John O'Dowd, Sinéad Ennis, Paula Bradshaw and Colin McGrath.
- 1.2 Mr Gerry Kelly attended to represent Sinn Féin.

**2 Minutes of previous meeting**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 30 November were **agreed**.

### 3 **Matters Arising**

- 3.1 The Speaker reminded Members that, following discussions at last week's meeting on extending the 1-metre social distancing arrangement to cover ministerial statements, they had agreed to return to the issue when Sinn Féin's Committee members were present to express their views.
- 3.2 Following discussion, Members **agreed** that given the recent change in circumstances a cautious approach was appropriate and a decision should be deferred until January.
- 3.3 A Member suggested that if there were further changes to the Covid situation over the coming days, the Speaker should have the authority to take decisions about social distancing in the Chamber on behalf of the Business Committee.
- 3.4 Members **noted** that the Committee on Procedures, as part of its review of the temporary provisions which were introduced to allow Assembly and Committee proceedings to continue during the Covid-19 pandemic, was seeking the views of Business Committee on whether some or all of the provisions should be allowed to fall at the end of the mandate, be extended to a date in the new mandate or be retained in Standing Orders on a permanent basis.
- 3.5 The Committee **agreed** with the Speaker's proposal that, due to the rapidly changing circumstances with the pandemic, the temporary provisions should be allowed to roll to the end of the mandate and beyond but that the Business Committee would continue to review the situation and change its position if required.
- 3.6 There were no other matters arising.

### 4 **Finalisation of the Order Papers for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 13 December**

#### **Monday 13 December**

#### **Members' Statements**

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

### Executive Committee Business

- 4.2 Members **noted** that Executive Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.
- 4.3 Members noted that the Ministerial Statement remained unconfirmed but would be added to Indicative Timings once notified to the Speaker's Office.
- 4.4 Members noted that First Stage of the Welfare Supplementary Payments (Loss of Universal Credit or Housing Benefit) Bill would be shown on Indicative Timings when it had been confirmed to be within the competence of the Assembly.

### Private Members' Business

- 4.5 Members **noted** that no Private Members business had been scheduled.
- 4.6 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Monday 13 December.

## Tuesday 14 December

### Executive Committee Business

- 4.7 Members **noted** that Further Consideration Stage of the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill was no longer scheduled for this date, but otherwise Executive Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.
- 4.8 Members **noted** that as the Assembly had agreed to allow the Social Security (Terminal Illness) Bill to proceed by accelerated passage, consideration stage of the bill could proceed on this date.

### Committee Business

- 4.9 Members **noted** that the Committee for Health was seeking to schedule a motion to extend the Committee Stage of the Hospital Parking Charges Bill.
- 4.10 Members **noted** that the Committee for Communities was seeking to schedule a motion to extend the Committee Stage of the Support for Mortgage Interest etc (Security for Loans) Bill.
- 4.11 Members **noted** that the Committee for Education was seeking to schedule motions to extend Committee Stages of the Education (Curriculum) (CPR and AED) Bill and the Period Products (Free Provision) Bill.
- 4.12 Members **agreed** to schedule untimed debates for all four Committee extension motions.

### Private Members' Business

- 4.13 Members **noted** that Consideration Stage of the Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill remained scheduled.
- 4.14 Members **noted** that the DUP had sought the Committee's consent for Mr Stalford's adjournment debate on Belfast Rapid Transit in South Belfast to be rescheduled on this date, as he had been prevented by illness from introducing it on 23 November.
- 4.15 Members **agreed** that the adjournment debate would be rescheduled for Mr Stalford.
- 4.16 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 14 December.

## 5 Provisional Arrangements for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 17 January

### Monday 17 January

#### Members' Statements

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

#### Public Petition

- 5.2 Members **noted** that Mr. Frew was seeking to present a public petition to the Speaker, the title of which had yet to be confirmed.
- 5.3 The DUP whip confirmed that the title would be 'Declaration of Opposition to Vaccine Passports'.
- 5.4 Members **agreed** to schedule the petition for Mr. Frew.

#### Executive Committee Business

- 5.5 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister of Justice and Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.
- 5.6 Members **noted** that the Executive had listed seven items of business:

- The draft Grants to Water and Sewerage Undertakers Order (Northern Ireland) 2021
- Further Consideration Stage of the Financial Reporting (Departments and Public Bodies) Bill
- Further Consideration Stage of the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill
- Further Consideration Stage of the Animal Welfare (Service Animals) Bill
- The Welfare Supplementary Payment (Extension) Regulations
- Consideration Stage of the Charities Bill
- A Legislative Consent Motion for the Pension Schemes (Conversion of Guaranteed Minimum Pensions) Bill

5.7 Members **agreed** to schedule untimed debates for all items.

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

#### Private Members' Business

5.9 Members **agreed** that insufficient time was available to schedule any Private Members' business.

5.10 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Monday 17 January 2022.

#### Tuesday 18 January

##### Executive Committee Business

5.11 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister for Communities.

5.12 Members **noted** that the Executive had listed two items of business:

- The Single Use Carrier Bags Charge (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021
- Further Consideration Stage of the Social Security (Terminal Illness) Bill

5.13 Members **agreed** to schedule untimed debates for both items.

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

### Committee Business

- 5.15 Members **noted** that the Committee for the Executive Office was seeking to schedule a motion relating to the Public Services Ombudsman Act and had requested up to an hour for the debate with 10 minutes for the Chair to move and 10 to wind and five minutes for all other contributions.
- 5.16 Members **agreed** to schedule the motion for the Committee for the Executive Office.

### Private Members' Business

- 5.17 Members **noted** that Kellie Armstrong had requested that Consideration Stage of her Integrated Education Bill was scheduled when sufficient plenary time was available.
- 5.18 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for Consideration Stage of the Integrated Education Bill.
- 5.19 Members **agreed** to defer consideration of an adjournment debate until the next meeting.
- 5.20 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 18 January.

## 6 **Consideration of an additional sitting on 11 January 2022 to address second stages of bills**

- 6.1 The Speaker advised that when the Assembly returns after Christmas recess, there would be a backlog of Bills awaiting their second stage debates, and reminded Members that one possible means of addressing the backlog was to arrange an additional sitting on 11 January specifically to debate those second stages.
- 6.2 Following discussions around the impact of the additional sitting on staff and on Committees, Members **agreed** not to schedule an additional sitting on 11 January.

## 7 **Any Other Business**

- 7.1 There was no other Business

8 **Date and time of next meeting**

- 8.1 Members **agreed** that the next Committee meeting would take place on Tuesday 11 January.

*The Speaker brought the meeting to a close at 1.39pm*

**The Speaker  
Chairperson**