

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

**TUESDAY 18 JANUARY 2022**  
**SENATE CHAMBER**

**MINUTES**

*The meeting began at 1.02pm.*

**Present:**

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

**In attendance:**

<b>Dr A McGarel</b>	<b>Clerk of Business</b>
<b>Mr P Gill</b>	<b>Clerk Assistant</b>
<b>Ms L Hogg</b>	<b>Clerk/Chief Executive</b>
<b>Dr G McGrath</b>	<b>Director of Parliamentary Services</b>
<b>Mr S Kelly</b>	<b>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 Colin McGrath.

## 2 **Minutes of previous meeting**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 11 January 2022 were **agreed**.

## 3 **Matters Arising**

3.1 The Speaker advised that at the next meeting he intended to provide Members with an up-to-date list of the current stages of all bills currently passing through the Assembly. The Speaker advised that this would give Members an indication of the pressures on plenary time in the weeks ahead, and would enable Members to consider if there is a need to schedule additional sittings from w/c 7 February.

3.2 Members **noted** the Speaker's proposal.

3.3 A Member asked if there had been any indication given by the Secretary of State on when he will dissolve the Assembly and call a date for election, and was advised that legislation made provision for the election on 5 May 2022 and dissolution was expected to take place at one minute past midnight on Monday 28 March.

3.4 The Speaker advised that based on current progress, the ongoing item of plenary business would probably run beyond 10pm tonight and may not finish tomorrow, and suggested that if the Committee was content, the Business Office would liaise with the Executive to explore the possibility of rescheduling remaining business for an additional sitting and if Ministers were in agreement, he would adjourn the current sitting no later than 11pm.

3.5 A Member expressed concerns because of the impact this would have on Committees that were scheduled to meet on Wednesday and suggested it would be better to carry on and finish that day.

3.6 Several Members advised that for the welfare of staff and Members, they would not be content with that day's sitting running later than 11pm.

3.7 Following discussion, Members **agreed** that Business Office staff would liaise with the Executive to explore whether business scheduled for that day could be rescheduled for Wednesday 19 January.

3.8 A Member noted that during long legislative debates such as that which was ongoing, breaks were not long enough to allow for comfort breaks and to eat, and there were too few catering staff available.

- 3.9 A Member noted that even with speedy voting, divisions were taking a long time and that the Bill currently before the Assembly would require up to 30 votes, and asked if there was any way to speed up the casting of proxy votes.
- 3.10 The Clerk Assistant advised that the IS Office had been considering the issue and has developed prototype software which was currently being tested.
- 3.11 There were no other matters arising.

#### 4 **Finalisation of the Order Papers for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 24 January**

##### **Monday 24 January**

##### Members' Statements

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

##### Executive Committee Business

- 4.2 Members **noted** that since the last meeting the Minister of Finance had added motion to suspend Standing Order 10(2) to 10(4) which would be treated as a business motion with no amendments or debate and if agreed, would allow the sitting extend beyond 7pm. The Speaker advised that as all the business listed is for the Executive, it is in order that an Executive Minister tables and moves this motion rather than the Business Committee.
- 4.3 Members **noted** that the Welfare Supplementary Payment (Extension) Regulations had been deferred until 31 January, but otherwise Executive Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.
- 4.4 Members **noted** that the statement from the Minister of Finance on January Monitoring would be included on Indicative Timings once confirmed with Speaker's Office.

##### Private Members' Business

- 4.5 Members **noted** that no Private Members' business had been scheduled and **agreed** that insufficient time was available to schedule additional business.
- 4.6 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Monday 24 January.

##### **Tuesday 25 January**

### Public Petition

- 4.7 Members **noted** that Ms. Dolan's public petition entitled 'Addressing flooding in Boho' remained scheduled.

### Assembly Business

- 4.8 As the indicative adjournment time for Monday's sitting was 8.30pm with most items untimed, Members **agreed** to schedule consideration of business not concluded on Monday 24 January as the first item of business on Tuesday, to give the Speaker flexibility to adjourn Monday's sitting at a suitable time.

### Executive Committee Business

- 4.9 Members **noted** that the draft Coronavirus Act 2020 (Extension of Powers to Act for the Protection of Public Health) Order (NI) 2022 motion had been deferred until 31 January.
- 4.10 Members **noted** that all other Executive business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.

### Private Members' Business

- 4.11 Members **noted** that at the last meeting they had agreed to schedule an adjournment debate for the DUP but **agreed** to defer a decision on the inclusion of an adjournment debate until the arrangements for today's remaining business had been resolved.
- 4.12 Subject to a decision to be taken later on the inclusion of an adjournment debate, Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 25 January.

## 5 Provisional Arrangements for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 31 January

### Monday 31 January

#### Members' Statements

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

### Executive Committee Business

- 5.2 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister of Finance and Minister of Health.
- 5.3 Members **noted** that the Executive had listed six items of business:
- A statement from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on a Rural Policy Framework.
  - First Stage of the Deferral of School Starting Age Bill
  - First Stage of the Motor Vehicles (Compulsory Insurance) Bill
  - Further Consideration Stage of the Charities Bill
  - The draft Welfare Supplementary Payments (Extension) Regulations 2022
  - The draft Coronavirus Act 2020 (Extension of Powers to Act for the Protection of Public Health) Order (NI) 2022
- 5.4 Members **noted** that the statement from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs would be included on Indicative Timings after a formal request had been made to the Speaker's Office.
- 5.5 Members noted that the two Bill introductions would be included on the Indicative Timings when the Speaker was satisfied that the Bills were within the legislative competence of the Assembly.
- 5.6 Members **agreed** to schedule untimed debates for all other items.
- 5.7 The junior Minister confirmed that no additional business was expected at that time.

### Private Members' Business

- 5.8 Members **agreed** that insufficient time was available to schedule Private Members' business.
- 5.9 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Monday 31 January 2022.

### Tuesday 1 February

#### Executive Committee Business

- 5.10 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister for Infrastructure.
- 5.11 Members **noted** that the Executive had listed four items of business:

- The Welfare Supplementary Payments (Amendment) Regulations 2022
- Further Consideration Stage of the Non-domestic Rates Valuations (Coronavirus) Bill
- Further Consideration Stage of the Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill
- Consideration Stage of the Climate Change (No. 2) Bill

5.12 Members **noted** that Welfare Supplementary Payments (Amendment) Regulations were being notified to the Committee for planning purposes, but remained subject to Executive approval and would not appear on the published papers.

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

5.14 The junior Minister advised that no additional business was expected at that time.

#### Private Members' Business

5.15 Members **agreed** to defer consideration of an adjournment debate until the next meeting.

5.16 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 1 February.

#### 6 Any Other Business

6.1 Members **agreed** to the suggestion that a motion to suspend Standing Orders 10 (2) to 10 (4) should be in place as standard on a Monday for the coming weeks to remove the need to adhere to a rigid adjournment time.

6.2 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 25 January at 1pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

*The Speaker brought the meeting to a close at 1.19pm*

**The Speaker**  
**Chairperson**