

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

**TUESDAY 25 JANUARY 2022**  
**SENATE CHAMBER**

**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**  
**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>Dr G McGrath</b>	<b>Director of Parliamentary Services</b>
<b>Mr A Hicks</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:**

**Mr D McCreedy      The Executive Office**

**1      Apologies**

1.1 Apologies were received from Colin McGrath, Paula Bradshaw and junior Minister Middleton.

**2      Minutes of previous meeting**

2.1 The minutes of the first meeting on 18 January 2022 were **agreed**.

2.2 The minutes of the second meeting on 18 January 2022 were **agreed**.

### 3 **Matters Arising**

- 3.1 Members **noted** that a paper on managing legislative pressures had been circulated via email and was also included in Members' packs.
- 3.2 Following discussions on the content of the paper, Members **agreed** to consult with their parties and those whom they represent and return to the issue at the next meeting.
- 3.3 There were no other matters arising.

### 4 **Finalisation of the Order Papers for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 31 January**

#### **Monday 31 January**

#### **Members' Statements**

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

#### **Executive Committee Business**

- 4.2 Members **noted** that a Business Committee motion to suspend Standing Orders 10(2) to 10(4) had been included at the start of the sitting to give the flexibility to allow the sitting to continue beyond 7pm but not have to adjourn at a fixed time, as agreed at the last meeting.
- 4.3 Members **agreed** to schedule the motion as a business motion with no amendment or debate.
- 4.4 Members **noted** that First Stage of the Motor Vehicles (Compulsory Insurance) Bill and the motion to approve the draft Coronavirus Act 2020 (Extension of Powers to Act for the Protection of Public Health) Order (NI) 2022) were no longer listed.
- 4.5 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for the Minister of Finance's Legislative Consent Motion for the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill.
- 4.6 Members **noted** that otherwise Executive Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.
- 4.7 Members **noted** that the statement from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs would be included on Indicative Timings once confirmed with Speaker's Office.

- 4.8 Members **noted** that First Stage of the Deferral of School Starting Age Bill would be included on Indicative Timings once legislative competence had been established.

#### Private Members' Business

- 4.9 Members **noted** that no Private Members' business had been scheduled but with the removal of some items of Executive business, sufficient time had become available.
- 4.10 Following consideration of available options, the Committee **agreed** to schedule Second Stage of the Employment (Zero Hours Workers and Banded Weekly Working Hours) Bill for Ms Dolan.
- 4.11 Members **agreed** that the overall debate would be untimed in line with convention, but that time limits on individual contributions would apply.
- 4.12 Members **agreed** to allow 20 minutes to move and 10 minutes to wind, 20 minutes for the Minister to respond should he choose to do so, 15 minutes for Committee input and 10 minutes for all other speakers.
- 4.13 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Monday 31 January.

### Tuesday 1 February

#### Executive Committee Business

- 4.14 Members **noted** that Welfare Supplementary Payments (Amendment) Regulations were no longer listed.
- 4.15 Members **noted** that the Minister of Finance had scheduled a motion to suspend Standing Order 42(1) in relation to the Non-domestic Rates Valuations (Coronavirus) Bill which, if agreed, would allow the bill to progress to its Final Stage the following week, before the 5 working days between bill stages required by this Standing Order have elapsed.
- 4.16 Members **noted** that all other Executive business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.
- 4.17 Members noted that Consideration Stage of the Climate Change (No. 2) Bill was expected to last several hours and agreed that, if it became apparent that it would not be completed by 10pm, the Speaker would suspend the sitting around 9pm and resume the debate at 10.30am on Wednesday 2 February.

#### Private Members' Business

- 4.18 Members **noted** that insufficient time was available for Private Members' business.

4.19 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 1 February.

## 5 Provisional Arrangements for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 7 February

### Monday 7 February

#### Members' Statements

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

#### Assembly Business

5.2 Members **agreed** to schedule a Business Committee motion to suspend Standing Orders 10(2) to 10(4) to give the flexibility to allow the sitting to continue beyond 7pm.

#### Executive Committee Business

5.3 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Executive Office and Minister of Justice.

5.4 Members **noted** that the Executive had listed six items of business:

- First Stage of the Motor Vehicles (Compulsory Insurance) Bill
- First Stage of the General Teaching Council (Directions) Bill
- Final Stage of the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill
- Final Stage of the Non-domestic Rates Valuations (Coronavirus) Bill
- Further Consideration Stage of the Protection from Stalking Bill
- The draft Single Use Carrier Bags Charge (Amendment and Revocation) Regulations (NI) 2022

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

5.6 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.

5.7 The TEO official confirmed that no additional business was expected at that time.

### Committee Business

- 5.8 Members **agreed** to schedule a motion for the Committee for Infrastructure on Support for innovative measures to eliminate DVA Backlogs, with one and a half hours for the debate and the usual speaking times.

### Private Members' Business

- 5.9 Members **agreed** to schedule Further Consideration Stage of the Integrated Education Bill for Ms. Armstrong, and **agreed** that if it did not finish that day, the remainder of the debate would be rescheduled as soon as plenary time was available thereby maximizing plenary time without impacting on Executive and Committee business.
- 5.10 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Monday 7 February.

### Tuesday 8 February

#### Assembly Business

- 5.11 Members **agreed** that the first item of business for Tuesday would be the completion of any unfinished Executive and Committee business from Monday.

#### Executive Committee Business

- 5.12 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.
- 5.13 Members **noted** that the Executive had listed six items of business:
- The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (NI) 2021 (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2022
  - The Welfare Supplementary Payments (Amendment) Regulations 2022
  - Final Stage of the Charities Bill
  - A motion seeking Accelerated Passage for the Deferral of School Starting Age Bill
  - Second Stage of the Deferral of School Age Bill
  - Consideration Stage of the Welfare Supplementary Payments (Amendment) Bill
- 5.14 Members **agreed** to schedule untimed debates for all items.
- 5.15 Members **agreed** to consider time limits on individual contributions to second stage of the Deferral of School Age Bill at the next meeting, to be applied only

if the Assembly did not consent to the Bill proceeding via accelerated passage.

- 5.16 The TEO official advised that no additional business was expected at that time.

#### Private Members' Business

- 5.17 Members **agreed** to schedule the continuation of Further Consideration Stage of the Integrated Education Bill, if it had not already been completed.
- 5.18 Members **agreed** that if appeared that the debate would not be completed by 10pm, the Speaker would suspend the sitting at approximately 9pm and resume again at 10.30am on Wednesday 9 January in accordance with Standing Order 10(5).
- 5.19 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 8 February.

#### 6 Any Other Business

- 6.1 The Speaker advised that it had become apparent during the sitting on Wednesday 19 January that the requirement in Standing Order 62 for Committees to suspend their proceedings whenever a division takes place in the Chamber was unnecessary and disruptive, as most members voted by proxy and so did not need to come to the Chamber to cast their vote.
- 6.2 Members **agreed** to seek the views of their party colleagues on whether it would be helpful for Standing Order 62 to be temporarily suspended until the end of the mandate, so that when plenary and Committee proceedings overlap, there would be no disruption as a result of plenary divisions.
- 6.3 As the Executive had eased the restrictions on social distancing in workplaces Members **agreed** to return to a reduced social distance of 1 metre for Question Time, Urgent Oral Questions and Ministerial Statements, but retain 2-metre distancing for all other items of business.
- 6.4 A Member sought an update on measures to speed up the voting process and was advised that software had been developed by IS Office which was at an advanced stage and would be taken forward when robust testing had been completed.
- 6.5 A Member asked if proxy voting arrangements would remain in place until the end of the mandate and was advised that this was the position currently, although it remained subject to review at any time.
- 6.6 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 1 February at 1pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

*The Speaker brought the meeting to a close at 1.37pm*

**The Speaker  
Chairperson**