

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY
BUSINESS COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2022
SENATE CHAMBER

MINUTES

The meeting began at 1.04pm.

Present:

The Speaker (Chairperson)
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
Dr G McGrath	Director of Parliamentary Services
Ms L Hogg	Clerk/Chief Executive
Mr J McMillan	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 Rosemary Barton.

2 Minutes of previous meeting

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 25 January 2022 were **agreed**.

3 **Matters Arising**

- 3.1 Members **noted** that a paper on managing legislative pressures had been issued last week and that Members had agreed to consult with their parties and those they represent, on its contents.
- 3.2 Members discussed the content of the paper including options presented, and the outcome of their consultations.
- 3.3 All parties supported the scheduling of business on Mondays and Tuesday as required, allowing business to roll into Wednesdays if necessary. All parties except the DUP also supported scheduling additional sittings on Wednesdays.
- 3.4 Members **noted** that, since their discussions last week, they had received additional information from the Clerk Assistant on whether it would be helpful for Standing Order 62 to be temporarily suspended until the end of the mandate.
- 3.5 Members **agreed** to schedule a Business Committee motion to suspend Standing Order 62 until the end of the mandate on the Order Paper for 7 February, and that it would be treated as a business motion with no opportunity for amendment or debate.
- 3.6 There were no other matters arising.

4 **Finalisation of the Order Papers for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 7 February**

Monday 7 February

Members' Statements

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

Assembly 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, as they had agreed at the last meeting.
- 4.3 Members **agreed** to schedule the motion.
- 4.4 Members **agreed** that the Business Committee motion to suspend Standing Order 62 would be scheduled.

Executive Committee Business

- 4.5 Members **noted** that Executive Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.
- 4.6 Members **noted** that First Stage of the Motor Vehicles (Compulsory Insurance) Bill would be included on Indicative Timings once legislative competence had been established.

Committee Business

- 4.7 Members **noted** that a timed debate on a motion for the Committee for Infrastructure on Support for the innovative measures to eliminate DVA Backlogs remained scheduled.

Private Members' Business

- 4.8 Members **noted** that Further Consideration Stage of the Integrated Education Bill remained scheduled.
- 4.9 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Monday 7 February.

Tuesday 8 February

Executive Committee Business

- 4.10 Members **noted** that the Minister of Health had scheduled a further three Health Protection SRs in addition to that scheduled the previous week, and was seeking a single debate to consider all four Regulations.
- 4.11 Members **agreed** to schedule a single untimed debate for all items.
- 4.12 Members **noted** that all other Executive business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.
- 4.13 Members **noted** that because the Minister of Education was seeking accelerated passage for the School Age Bill, their prior agreement was that no time limits would apply to individual contributions.
- 4.14 Members **agreed** that, if the motion seeking accelerated passage for the Bill did not pass, time limits on individual contributions would then be applied to second stage.

- 4.15 Members **agreed** to allow up to 20 minutes for the Minister to move and 10 minutes for the wind, up to 15 minutes for the Committee Chair and up to 10 minutes for all other contributors.

Private Members' Business

- 4.16 Members **noted** that the continuation Further Consideration Stage of the Integrated Education Bill remained scheduled, in case it should not be completed on Monday 7 February.
- 4.17 Members **agreed** to schedule Second Stage of the Onshore Fracking (Prohibition) Bill, and to allow the Bill's sponsor up to 20 minutes to move and 10 minutes to wind, 20 minutes for the Minister should he choose to respond, 15 minutes for the Chair of the Committee and up to 10 minutes for all other contributors.
- 4.18 Members **noted** that, in accordance with their agreement at the additional meeting in November 2021, the lunchtime suspension had been reduced to 30 minutes from 1 to 1.30 pm and another 30-minute suspension had been included later in the day.
- 4.19 Members **agreed** to this approach.
- 4.20 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 8 February.

5 Provisional Arrangements for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 14 February

Monday 14 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 Minister for Communities and Minister for the Economy.
- 5.4 Members **noted** that the Executive had listed three items of business:
- First Stage of the General Teaching Council (Directions) Bill
 - Final Stage of the Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill
 - Consideration Stage of the Adoption and Children Bill
- 5.5 On the request of the UUP representative, the Committee **agreed** to schedule the Final Stage of the Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) on Tuesday 8 February, subject to the Minister of Health tabling a motion also for inclusion on 8 February seeking the Assembly's approval to suspend Standing Order 42(1) which requires five working days between bill stages.
- 5.6 Members **agreed** to schedule untimed debates for all other items.
- 5.7 Members **noted** that the Bill introduction would be included on the Indicative Timings when the Speaker was satisfied that the Bill was within the legislative competence of the Assembly.
- 5.8 Junior Minister Kearney confirmed that no additional business was expected at that time.

Committee Business

- 5.9 Members **agreed** to schedule a motion for the Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights on its report on a Bill of Rights.
- 5.10 Members **agreed** to allow two and a half hours for the debate with 15 minutes to move, ten minutes to wind and seven minutes for all other contributors.

Private Members' Business

- 5.11 Members **agreed** that insufficient time was available to schedule Private Members business.
- 5.12 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Monday 14 February.

Tuesday 15 February

Assembly Business

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

Executive Committee Business

- 5.14 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister of Education.
- 5.15 Members **noted** that the Executive had listed four items of business:
- A motion seeking Accelerated Passage for the Motor Vehicles (Compulsory Insurance) Bill
 - Second Stage of the Motor Vehicles (Compulsory Insurance) Bill
 - Consideration Stage of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill
 - Consideration Stage of the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) Bill
- 5.16 Members **agreed** to schedule untimed debates for all items.
- 5.17 Members **agreed** to consider time limits on individual contributions to second stage of the Motor Vehicles (Compulsory Insurance) Bill at the next meeting, to be applied only if the Assembly does not consent to the Bill proceeding via accelerated passage.
- 5.18 Junior Minister Kearney advised that no additional business was expected at that time.

Private Members' Business

- 5.19 Members **agreed** to schedule Consideration Stage of the Autism (Amendment) Bill for Mrs Cameron.
- 5.20 Members **agreed** that the lunchtime suspension would be reduced to 30 minutes from 1 to 1.30 pm and another 30-minute suspension would be included later in the day.
- 5.21 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 15 February.

6 **Any Other Business**

- 6.1 The Speaker advised that in his view, Members' Statements were generally working well in the Chamber and seem popular with Members, but expressed his concern that a small number of statements in recent weeks could be perceived as coming close to contravening Standing Orders.
- 6.2 The Speaker asked Members to remind party colleagues and those they represent of the importance of adhering to the provisions of Standing Order 24A.
- 6.3 Members **noted** receipt of two items of correspondence, a letter from the Audit Committee on its membership and a letter from the Committee for the Executive Office regarding the Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill.
- 6.4 Members **agreed** to consider both pieces of correspondence and revisit them at the next meeting.
- 6.5 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 8 February at 1pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Speaker brought the meeting to a close at 1.55pm

**The Speaker
Chairperson**