

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY
BUSINESS COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 1 MARCH 2022
SENATE CHAMBER

MINUTES

The meeting began at 1.35pm.

Present:

The Speaker (Chairperson)
Mrs R Barton
Ms P Bradshaw
Mr R Butler
Mr T Clarke
Ms S Ennis
Mr C McGrath
Mr A Muir
Mr J O'Dowd
Miss R Woods

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 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 Clare Bailey, Joanne Bunting and Dolores Kelly.

1.2 The Speaker welcomed Miss Woods who was attending in place of Ms Bailey.

2 **Minutes of previous meeting**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 22 February 2022 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 7 March**

Monday 7 March

Members' Statements

4.1 Members **noted** that Members' Statements were not scheduled.

Assembly Business

4.2 Members **noted** that Assembly Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.

Executive Committee Business

4.3 Members **noted** that Further Consideration Stage of the General Teaching Council (Directions) Bill had been moved to Tuesday 8 March.

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

Committee Business

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

Private Members' Business

4.6 Members **noted** that Private Members' Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.

4.7 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Monday 7 March.

Tuesday 8 March

Assembly Business

- 4.8 Members **noted** that Assembly Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.

Executive Committee Business

- 4.9 Members **noted** that Further Consideration Stage of the General Teaching Council (Directions) Bill had been added.
- 4.10 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for Further Consideration Stage of the General Teaching Council (Directions) Bill.
- 4.11 Members noted that the Rates (Temporary Rebate) (Amendment) Order has been deferred until Monday 14 March
- 4.12 Members **noted** that all other Executive business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.
- 4.13 Members **noted** that because Further Consideration Stage of the Climate Change No. 2 Bill had continued on Tuesday 1 March, the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs would need to table a motion to suspend Standing Order 42(1) for the Final Stage of the Bill to be taken, and **agreed** to add such a motion to the Order Paper before issue.

Committee Business

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

Private Members' Business

- 4.15 Members **noted** that Private Members' Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.
- 4.16 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 1 March.

Wednesday 9 March

Assembly Business

- 4.17 Members **noted** that Assembly Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.

Private Members' Business

- 4.18 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for Final Stage of the Integrated Education Bill.
- 4.19 Members **noted** that other Private Members' Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.
- 4.20 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Wednesday 9 March.

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

Monday 14 March

Members' Statements

- 5.1 Members **agreed** that Members' Statements would not be scheduled.

Assembly Business

- 5.2 Members **noted** that the first item of business on Monday's Order Paper would be the conclusion of unfinished business from Wednesday 9 March.
- 5.3 Members **agreed** to schedule a Business Committee motion to suspend Standing Orders 10(2) to 10(4) at the start of the sitting to enable it to continue beyond 7pm.

Executive Committee Business

- 5.4 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister of Education and Minister of Finance.
- 5.5 Members **noted** that the Executive had listed five items of business:
- The Pensions Regulator (Employer Resources Test) Regulations (NI) 2021
 - Further Consideration Stage: Support for Mortgage Interest etc. (Security for Loans) Bill

- The Rates (Exemption for Automatic Telling Machines in Rural Areas) Order (NI) 2022
- The Rates (Temporary Rebate) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2022
- The Coronavirus Act 2020 (Registration of deaths and still-births) (Extension) Order (NI) 2022

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

5.7 The junior Minister confirmed that no additional business was expected at that time.

Committee Business

5.8 Members **agreed** to schedule a 30-minute debate for the Committee on Procedures for a motion to amend the provisions of Standing Orders 3 and 4 which relate to political designation, with 5 minutes for all speakers.

5.9 Members **agreed** to schedule a 45-minute debate for the Committee on Procedures for a motion to extend Standing Order 110, which would have the effect of extending the temporary provisions such as hybrid proceedings and proxy voting until July 2022, with 5 minutes for all speakers.

Private Members' Business

5.10 Members **agreed** to schedule Further Consideration Stages of the Defamation Bill and Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill.

5.11 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Monday 14 March.

Tuesday 15 March

Assembly Business

5.12 Members **agreed** that the first item of business for Tuesday would be to complete any unfinished business from Monday.

Executive Committee Business

5.13 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister of Health and the Assembly Commission.

5.14 Members **noted** that the Executive had listed four items of business:

- Final Stage of the Adoption and Children Bill
- Final Stage of the Private Tenancies Bill

- Final Stage of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill
- Final Stage of the General Teaching Council (Directions) Bill

5.15 Members **agreed** to schedule untimed debates for all items of business.

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

Committee Business

5.17 Members **agreed** to schedule a one-hour debate for the Committee on Procedures for a motion to agree the recommendations of its report on Legislative Consent Motions.

5.18 Members **agreed** to schedule a one-hour debate for the Committee on Procedures for a motion to agree the recommendations of its report on Private Members' Bills.

Private Members' Business

5.19 Members **noted** that a motion seeking to annul the Marriage, Civil Partnership and Civil Registration (Amendment) Regulations Notification had been laid by Mr Jim Allister and Mr Jim Wells, and because such requests are infrequent an advice paper on handling requests for prayers of annulment had been provided.

5.20 Members **noted** that Mr Allister was willing to use TUV's place on the rota for Private Members' business to schedule the motion.

5.21 Members **agreed** to schedule a one-hour debate for the prayer of annulment with 5 minutes for the move and wind, 10 minutes for the Minister to respond and all other contributions up to 5 minutes each.

5.22 Members **agreed** that in order to avoid having to schedule a sitting for Wednesday 16, the sponsors of the Climate Change Bill and Period Products (Free Provision) Bill would be invited to table motions to suspend Standing Order 42(1) to allow Further Consideration Stage of both bills to be scheduled on 15 March.

5.23 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 15 March.

Wednesday 16 March

5.24 Members **noted** that unfinished business from Tuesday may be continued on Wednesday 16 March.

6 Any Other Business

- 6.1 Members **noted** that the Speaker had taken the decision to open the public gallery with every other seat being available.
- 6.2 Members **agreed** to amend the seating arrangements in the Chamber to 1-metre social distancing for all items of business.
- 6.3 The Speaker reminded Members that the Assembly Commission has agreed that all building users are encouraged to continue to wear face coverings in areas of the building that can become congested and that any building user can continue to wear a face covering on any other occasion, including in the Chamber.
- 6.4 The Speaker advised Members that Mr Alan Chambers had submitted a Private Members Bill to him on the Preservation of Documents (Historical Institutions) Bill, the purpose of which would be to take forward the work of the report on the abuse at the Mother and Baby Institutions and Magdalene Laundries, in particular the recommendation related to the legal preservation of records. The Speaker informed Members that he had also received correspondence from the Minister of Health in support of the Bill.
- 6.5 The Speaker advised that the bill would have to go through the legal scrutiny required by his office, and that it would be extremely difficult at this stage for a Bill to complete its passage through the Assembly, but he wished to give Members notification of the Bill's potential introduction in the coming weeks.
- 6.6 A number of Members highlighted the importance of the aims of the Bill, in particular to victims and survivors of such institutions, and while acknowledging the difficulties and time constraints, expressed their support for advancing the Bill as much as possible in the time remaining of the mandate.
- 6.7 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 March at 1.30pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Speaker brought the meeting to a close at 1.55pm

**The Speaker
Chairperson**