

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY
BUSINESS COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 15 MARCH 2022
SENATE CHAMBER

MINUTES

The meeting began at 1.33pm. (C) denotes attendance via conference call

Present:

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

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
Mr A Scholes	The Executive Office

1 Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Colin McGrath, Joanne Bunting and Paula Bradshaw.

2 Minutes of previous meeting

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 8 March 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 21 March**

Monday 21 March

Assembly Business

- 4.1 Members **noted** receipt of correspondence from the Secretary of State, Brandon Lewis MP in relation to amending the Flags Regulations (NI) 2000.
- 4.2 Members **noted** that the Assembly is required to consider the proposed amendments and provide a report to the Secretary of State which he has a duty to consider before laying the amended regulations, and that he had asked for this report by 22 March.
- 4.3 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate with up to 5 minutes for the move and wind and up to 3 minutes for all other contributions.
- 4.4 Members **noted** that otherwise Assembly Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting

Executive Committee Business

- 4.5 Members **noted** that the draft Rehabilitation of Offenders (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) from the Minister of Justice had been deferred until Tuesday 22 March.
- 4.6 Members **noted** that the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs had scheduled a statement on a bTB Eradication Strategy which would be added to the Indicative Timings once confirmed with the Speaker's Office.
- 4.7 Members **noted** that otherwise Executive Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.

Private Members' Business

- 4.8 Members **noted** that Private Members' Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting and subsequently by correspondence.
- 4.9 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Monday 21 March.

- 4.10 The Acting Chairperson advised Members of the earlier amendment deadline of 9.30am on Wednesday 16 March for motions, due to the public holiday on 17 March.

Tuesday 22 March

Public Petition

- 4.11 Members **noted** that a Public Petition remained scheduled for Mr Gildernew.

Assembly Business

- 4.12 Members **noted** that Assembly Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting, and that the title of the Assembly Commission's motion had been confirmed as 'Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland'.
- 4.13 Members **agreed** that the time set aside to mark the End of Mandate should be brought forward from Thursday 24 March so that it would take place on a recognised sitting day.

Executive Committee Business

- 4.14 Members **noted** that the Minister of Justice had rescheduled the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Amendment) Order for which an untimed debate had previously been agreed.
- 4.15 Members **noted** that otherwise Executive business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.

Committee Business

- 4.16 Members **noted** that Committee business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.

Private Members' Business

- 4.17 Members **noted** that Private Members' Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting with two additional motions from Mike Nesbitt and Clare Bailey seeking to suspend Standing Order 42(1) to allow Final Stages of their bills to be scheduled within 5 working days of their Further Consideration Stages.

- 4.18 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 22 March.

Thursday 24 March

Assembly Business

- 4.19 As agreed earlier (paragraph 4.13) Members **agreed** that the time set aside to mark the End of Mandate should be moved to Tuesday 22 March.
- 4.20 Members noted that otherwise Assembly business remained as previously scheduled.

Executive Committee Business

- 4.21 Members **noted** that no Executive Business had been scheduled.

Private Members' Business

- 4.22 Members **agreed** to schedule motions to suspend Standing Order 42(1) from Rachel Woods and Aisling Reilly, so that Final Stages of their Bills could take place within 5 working days of their Further Consideration stages.
- 4.23 Members **noted** that otherwise, Private Members business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.
- 4.24 The Speaker advised that a further Private Members Bill proposal had been received in his office and had been referred to the Legal Services team. The Speaker advised that the proposal was complex and he had explained to the Bill's sponsor that sufficient time must be afforded to the Legal team to consider it so it would not be appropriate to schedule it at present but the Business Committee could meet again if it should become necessary.
- 4.25 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Thursday 24 March.

5 Any Other Business

- 5.1 Members noted that an advice paper had been provided, which outlined proposed recess dates post-election.
- 5.2 Members **agreed** the suggested recess dates with the understanding that they would be subject to review by the new Business Committee when it is in place.

- 5.3 A Member suggested that the next Business Committee may wish to consider shortening the Christmas recess period and adding a mid-term recess, which would align more closely with school breaks and assist those Members and staff with families.
- 5.4 The Speaker offered his thanks to Members for their help and co-operation over the course of what had been a unique and at times very demanding mandate, and in particular over the last few months. The Speaker wished Members well in the forthcoming election.
- 5.5 The Speaker also acknowledged the efforts of staff and thanked them for their commitment, professionalism and willingness to work long hours to support the Assembly.
- 5.6 Members paid tribute to the Speaker for his leadership and fairness, noting that he had often invested personal time in responding to Members' questions and wished him well for his retirement. Members also expressed their thanks to staff for their support and dedication.
- 5.7 The Speaker thanked Members for their kind remarks.
- 5.8 There was no other Business.

6 **Date and time of next meeting**

- 6.1 Members **agreed** that, unless other matters arose which made it necessary for them to meet again, the next meeting would take place when a new Business Committee was in place.
- 6.2 Members agreed that the draft minutes of the meeting would be circulated electronically for their consideration and approval.

The Acting Chairperson brought the meeting to a close at 1.53pm

The Speaker
Chairperson