

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY
BUSINESS COMMITTEE

MONDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2020
IN ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

MINUTES

The meeting began at 5.06pm.

Present:

The Speaker (Chairperson)

Ms K Armstrong

Ms C Bailey

Mr K Buchanan

Mr R Butler

Ms S Ennis

Ms D Kelly

Mr C McGrath

Mr G Middleton

Mr A Muir

Mr J O'Dowd

Mr J Stewart

In attendance:

Dr A McGarel

Mr P Gill

Ms L Hogg

Mr S Kelly

Dr G McGrath

Clerk of Business

Clerk Assistant

Clerk/Chief Executive

Legal Advisor

**Director of Parliamentary
Services**

Mr R Ramsey

Mr P Stitt

Ms P Devlin

Mr M O'Hare

Adviser to the Speaker

PS to the Speaker

Assistant Assembly Clerk

Clerical Supervisor

Observers:

Mr G Lyons

Ms M Jordan

Junior Minister

Executive Office

1 Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Junior Minister Declan Kearney.

2 **Minutes of previous meetings**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 10 February 2020 were agreed.

3 **Matters Arising**

- 3.1 There were no matters arising.

4 **Finalisation of the Order Papers for plenary meeting on 24 & 25 February 2020**

Monday 24 February

Executive Committee Business

- 4.1 Members **noted** that a single motion on the 2019-2020 Spring Supplementary Estimates and 2020-2021 Vote on Account was listed for debate with an allocated time slot of four and a half hours, one hour for the Minister to allocate between the move and wind at his discretion and 10 minutes for all other speakers.
- 4.2 Members **noted** that the motions as presented on the Order Paper refer to the relevant documents being laid on Wednesday 19 February, but that electronic copies had been provided to the Business Office in advance of that date and would be circulated to all Members.
- 4.3 Members **noted** that the Minister of Finance has scheduled a motion to suspend Standing Order 10(2) to 10(4) to enable the sitting to extend beyond 7pm should it become necessary.
- 4.4 Members **noted** that the Finance Minister will introduce the Budget Bill on 24 February and that there would be no debate.
- 4.5 Members **noted** that under Standing Order 42(2), the Committee for Finance must be satisfied that there has been appropriate consultation with it before the Bill can proceed via accelerated passage. Members **noted** that the Finance Committee are scheduled to hear oral evidence from the Public Expenditure on 19 February and would reach a decision on accelerated passage following that briefing.
- 4.6 Members **noted** that Question Time will return to two ministerial slots between 2pm and 3.30pm and questions will be for the Minister for the Economy and the Minister of Education.
- 4.7 The Executive Office officials indicated that all Ministers were currently available for the proposed business.

Committee Business

- 4.8 Members **noted** that a Business Committee motion to establish an Ad-hoc Committee to consider the creation of a Bill of Rights had not been scheduled, and that if it were not, the deadline which had been set in the New Decade, New Approach agreement would not be met.
- 4.9 Members **noted** that a draft motion had been circulated for consideration and that the DUP had sought additional time to consider this. It was suggested that to miss the first deadline within New Decade, New Approach would reflect negatively on the Assembly.
- 4.10 It was **proposed** that the Business Committee move ahead with scheduling the motion as circulated to establish an Ad-hoc Committee to consider the creation of a Bill of Rights.
- 4.11 Members **voted** on the proposal as follows:
For – 51 votes
Against – 38 votes
- 4.12 The proposal was, therefore, **agreed**.

Private Members' Business

- 4.13 Members **agreed** that no Private Members Business would be scheduled for 24 February.
- 4.14 Members **agreed** the draft Order Papers for 24 February, subject to the inclusion of a motion on the establishment of an Ad-hoc Committee to consider the creation of a Bill of Rights.

Tuesday 25 February

Executive Committee Business

- 4.15 Members **noted** that the second stage of the Budget Bill had been scheduled and that in line with convention, no time limit would be allocated to the debate.
- 4.16 Members **noted** that Question Time was listed for the Ministers of Finance and Health.
- 4.17 Junior Minister Lyons advised that no further business was expected.

Committee Business

- 4.18 Members **noted** that a prayer of annulment against the Provision of Healthcare Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident (Amendment) Regulations was requested by the Committee for Health and had been included on the draft Order Paper. Members **further noted** that the Minister had since laid a Statutory Rule to revoke these regulations and the Committee no longer needed to table the prayer of annulment.
- 4.19 Members **agreed** that the prayer of annulment would not be scheduled.

Private Members' Business

- 4.20 Members **agreed** that no Private Members' Business would be scheduled for 25 February.
- 4.21 Members **agreed** the draft Order Paper for Tuesday 25 February.

5 Provisional arrangements for plenary meetings in the week commencing 2 March.

- 5.1 Members **noted** that they had been provided with two order papers, for 2 and 3 March.

Monday 2 March

Executive Committee Business

- 5.2 Members **noted** that Consideration Stage of the Budget Bill had been provisionally scheduled. Members **noted** that, in line with convention, this would be an untimed debate but actual timings would depend on the number of amendments tabled.
- 5.3 Members **agreed** that Question Time would be scheduled for the Executive Office and Minister for Infrastructure.

Committee Business

- 5.4 Members **noted** that that there had been no formal requests for Committee business to date.

Private Members' Business

5.5 Members **agreed** that the Private Members' motions proposed by the SDLP and UUP which were deferred from 17 February, would be scheduled:

- Violent Crime (SDLP)
- Ongoing Paramilitarism in Northern Ireland (UUP)

5.6 Executive Office officials confirmed that Ministers were all currently available to respond to the proposed business and that no further business was expected.

5.7 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Monday 2 March 2020.

Tuesday 3 March

Executive Committee Business

5.8 Members **noted** that Further Consideration Stage of the Budget Bill had been scheduled. Members **noted** that this was an untimed debate but the actual timings would depend on the number of amendments proposed.

5.9 Members **agreed** that Question Time would be scheduled for the Ministers of Justice and Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Committee Business

5.10 Members **noted** that there had been no formal requests for Committee Business to date.

Private Members' Business

5.11 Members **agreed** to schedule Private Members' motions, and **noted** that the selections were for the DUP and Sinn Féin.

5.12 The following Private Members' motions were selected:

- Crime and Older People (DUP)
- Areas of Natural Constraint (SF)

5.13 Members **agreed** to schedule an adjournment debate and **noted** that the selection was for the DUP.

5.14 The following adjournment debate topic was selected:

- Investment in the Comber Greenway (DUP)

5.15 Executive Office officials confirmed that Ministers were all currently available to respond to the proposed business and that no further business was expected.

5.16 Members **agreed** the provisional Order Paper for 3 March 2020.

6 **Any other business**

6.1 Members **noted** correspondence from the Speaker to the Executive Ministers reminding them of their responsibilities when engaging with the Assembly.

6.2 Members **noted** that the Assembly would resume its normal plenary schedule next week, and therefore it would be necessary for the Business Office to apply its deadlines more rigorously:

- Tuesday 12 noon for motions and adjournment topics for inclusion on Provisional Order Papers being considered at Business Committee.
- Withdrawal of questions by 12 noon on the day the Minister is due to respond.

6.3 Members **agreed** to commission research into the time allowed for debates on legislation in other legislatures.

7 **Date and time of next meeting**

7.1 Members **agreed** that the next meeting would take place at 1pm on Tuesday 25 February in Room 106.

The Chairperson brought the meeting to a close at 5.26 pm

The Speaker
Chairperson