

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

**TUESDAY 10 MARCH 2020**  
**IN ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

**MINUTES**

*The meeting began at 1.02pm.*

**Present:**

**The Speaker (Chairperson)**

**Ms K Armstrong**

**Mr K Buchanan**

**Mr R Butler**

**Ms S Ennis**

**Ms D Kelly**

**Mr G Middleton**

**Mr A Muir**

**Mr J O'Dowd**

**In attendance:**

**Dr A McGarel**

**Mr P Gill**

**Mr J McMillan**

**Dr G McGrath**

**Mr R Ramsey**

**Ms P Devlin**

**Mr M O'Hare**

**Clerk of Business**

**Clerk Assistant**

**Head of Legal Services**

**Director of Parliamentary  
Services**

**Adviser to the Speaker**

**Assistant Assembly Clerk**

**Clerical Supervisor**

**Observers:**

**Mr G Lyons**

**Ms K Morrison**

**Junior Minister**

**Executive Office**

**1     Apologies**

1.1     Apologies were received from Colin McGrath and John Stewart.

**2     Minutes of previous meetings**

2.1     The minutes of the meeting on 3 March 2020 were agreed.

### 3 **Matters Arising**

- 3.1 There were no matters arising.

### 4 **Finalisation of the Order Papers for plenary meeting on 16 March 2020**

- 4.1 Members **noted** that due to the public holiday on Tuesday 17 March, there would be only one plenary sitting on Monday 16 March.

#### **Assembly Business**

- 4.2 Members **noted** that a Committee Membership motion from Sinn Féin has been added to the draft Order Paper.
- 4.3 Members **noted** that a motion has been scheduled for the Assembly Commission's 2020-2021 budget.
- 4.4 Members **noted** that a motion has been scheduled in the name of the Business Committee to suspend Standing Order 10(2) to 10(4) to allow the sitting to extend beyond 7pm.

#### **Executive Committee Business**

- 4.5 Members **noted** that a motion has been scheduled by the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to affirm regulations on Direct Payments to Farmers.
- 4.6 Members **noted** that a motion has been scheduled by the Minister of Finance on the Publication of the Renewable Heat Incentive Inquiry Report, and has been allocated a three-hour time slot as agreed by the Committee at its last meeting.
- 4.7 Members **agreed** that 10 minutes would be allocated to the Minister to move and 10 to wind, with 5 minutes for all other speakers.
- 4.8 Members **noted** that Question Time is scheduled for the Minister for Infrastructure and the Minister of Health.

### Private Members' Business

- 4.9 Members **noted** that the Second Stage of Mr. Allister's Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (NIA Bill 01/17-22) is scheduled.
- 4.10 Members **agreed** the draft Order Paper for Monday 16 March 2020.

### 5 **Provisional arrangements for plenary meetings on week commencing 23 March**

- 5.1 Members **noted** that they had been provided with provisional Order Papers for Monday 23 March and Tuesday 24 March 2020.

### **Monday 23 March**

#### Assembly Business

- 5.2 Members **noted** that no Assembly Business had yet been requested.

#### Executive Committee Business

- 5.3 Members **noted** that a motion had been scheduled by the Minister for Communities to ask the Assembly to affirm The Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2020.
- 5.4 Members **noted** that this item by convention would be untimed.
- 5.5 Member **noted** that Question Time is scheduled for the Executive Office and the Minister of Justice.
- 5.6 Junior Ministers/TEO Officials advised that they were not aware of any additional business at that time.

#### Committee Business

- 5.7 Members **noted** that the Committee on Procedures requested a Committee motion to be scheduled to formalise the decision to reduce the number of Members on Committees from 11 to 9 and requested an hour for the debate.
- 5.8 Members **agreed** to schedule the motion.

### Private Members' Business

- 5.9 Members **agreed** to schedule only one Private Members' motion for 23 March with the potential to add another motion at the next meeting when the extent of Executive Business is known.
- 5.10 The following motion was selected by Sinn Féin:
- Flooded Farms in the Sperrins
- 5.11 Junior Ministers/TEO Officials advised that Ministers were available to respond to the proposed business.
- 5.12 Members **agreed** the provisional Order Paper for 23 March 2020.

### **Tuesday 24 March**

### Assembly Business

- 5.13 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Assembly Commission, and that as it only responds to listed questions, would add an additional 30 minutes to Question Time.

### Executive Committee Business

- 5.14 Members **noted** that Question Time is scheduled for the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the Minister for Communities.
- 5.15 Junior Ministers/TEO officials advised that there was no further business of which they were currently aware.

### Private Members' Business

- 5.16 Members **agreed** to schedule two items of Private Members Business, as follows:
- Housing Waiting List (SDLP)
  - Northern Ireland Centenary (DUP)

- 5.17 Members **noted** that, in the event that the Committee agrees to schedule additional Private Members Business for 23 March, the pick would be for Sinn Féin, so the motions for that week would not follow the agreed order.
- 5.18 Members **noted** that the adjournment debate previously selected by Sinn Féin for 10 March, but subsequently deferred to allow for a response the Economy Minister, has been rescheduled for 24 March.
- 5.19 Junior Ministers/TEO Officials advised that Ministers were available to respond to the proposed business.
- 5.20 Members **agreed** the provisional Order Paper for 24 March 2020.

## 6 **Correspondence**

- 6.1 Members **noted** two letters from the Minister for the Economy, both of which were received by the Speaker on 4 March, advising of the Minister's absence for Question Time on 9 March and for the adjournment debate originally scheduled for 10 March.
- 6.2 Members **noted** that these items had been received late due to an error on the part of the Department.
- 6.3 Members **noted** correspondence from the Minister of Justice seeking to switch her Question Time slot on 5 May 2020 with that of the Minister of Finance on 4 May 2020, and noted that Finance Minister has consented to the switch.
- 6.4 Members **agreed** to facilitate this request.

## 7 **Other Items of Business**

- 7.1 Members **noted** that Mr Trevor Lunn MLA had changed his party affiliation from Alliance to an independent Member with effect from 5 March, and that an update paper from the Clerk Assistant had been circulated following discussions at the last meeting.
- 7.2 The Clerk Assistant was invited to outline the key points of his paper.
- 7.3 Members **noted** that following Mr Lunn's decision, Alliance's entitlement to places on statutory committees had reduced from six to five. Members were reminded that at the last meeting Alliance had agreed to relinquish its place

on the Executive Office Committee so that Mr. Lunn could retain the place which he currently occupied.

- 7.4 The Alliance Chief Whip confirmed that the party remained content with this approach.
- 7.5 Members **noted** that Mr. Lunn's decision meant that Alliance's entitlement to places on standing committees reduced from four to three places, and that no party or individual Member would be automatically entitled to this seat based on proportional allocation.
- 7.6 Members **noted** that options had been outlined for the Committee to consider. The first (Option A) was that the Alliance Party could give up its seat on the Audit Committee through resignation which could then be reallocated to one of the smaller parties or independent Members. The second (Option B) was that Mr Lunn would remain on the PAC as an independent Member.
- 7.7 Members **noted** the respective positions of the Alliance Party and of Mr. Lunn in relation to the matter.
- 7.8 Following discussion, Members **agreed** to support Option A.
- 7.9 Members **noted** revised versions of the following documents:
- Speaking list template;
  - Seating arrangement in the Chamber;
  - Rota for Private Members' motions; and
  - Rota for adjournment debates.

## 8 **Any Other Business**

### Post-recess Order Papers

- 8.1 Members **noted** that Easter recess is from 4 April until 19 April, and the first plenary sitting afterwards is scheduled for Monday 20 April.
- 8.2 Members **agreed** to consider Order Papers and Provisional Order Papers at an earlier stage.
- 8.3 Junior Ministers/TEO Officials confirmed that notification of business for week commencing 20 April would be made available for consideration on 24 March and business on 27 April would be made available for consideration on 31 March.

9     **Date and time of next meeting**

- 9.1   Members **agreed** that the next meeting would take place at 6pm on Monday 16 March in Room 106.

*The Chairperson brought the meeting to a close at 1.22pm*

**The Speaker**  
**Chairperson**