

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

**TUESDAY 21 APRIL 2020**  
**IN THE SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

**MINUTES**

*The meeting began at 1.13pm. (C) denotes attendance via conference call*

<b>Present:</b>	<b>Mr K Buchanan (Acting Chairperson)</b> <b>The Speaker (C)</b> <b>Ms K Armstrong</b> <b>Ms C Bailey</b> <b>Mr R Butler</b> <b>Ms S Ennis</b> <b>Mr C McGrath</b> <b>Mr G Middleton</b> <b>Mr J O'Dowd</b>	
<b>In attendance:</b>	<b>Dr A McGarel</b> <b>Mr P Gill</b> <b>Ms L Hogg</b> <b>Dr G McGrath</b>  <b>Mr J McMillen</b> <b>Mr R Ramsey</b> <b>Ms P Devlin</b> <b>Mr M O'Hare</b>	<b>Clerk of Business</b> <b>Clerk Assistant</b> <b>Clerk/Chief Executive</b> <b>Director of Parliamentary Services</b>  <b>Head of Legal Services (C)</b> <b>Adviser to the Speaker</b> <b>Assistant Assembly Clerk</b> <b>Clerical Supervisor</b>
<b>Observers:</b>	<b>Mr G Lyons</b> <b>Ms K Morrison</b>	<b>Junior Minister</b> <b>Executive Office</b>

**1     Apologies**

1.1   Apologies were received from Dolores Kelly, John Stewart and Andrew Muir.

**2     Minutes of previous meetings**

2.1   The minutes of the meeting on 31 March 2020 were **agreed**.

### 3 **Matters Arising**

3.1 There were no matters arising.

### 4 **Finalisation of the Order Papers for plenary meetings during week commencing 27 April 2020**

- 4.1 Members **noted** that they previously agreed that plenary sittings should be kept to the minimum required to conduct essential business.
- 4.2 Members **noted** that, based on the business requested by the Executive, one sitting had been scheduled for 28 April.
- 4.3 Members **noted** that that no Assembly business had been requested.
- 4.4 Members **noted** that both Consideration Stage and Final Stage of the Private Tenancies (Coronavirus Modifications) Bill had been requested for 28 April, subject to the passage of related items of business being considered on that day.
- 4.5 Members **noted** that in accordance with convention, there would be no time limits on these debates.
- 4.6 Members **noted** that if any amendments were made to the Bill during Consideration Stage, the Bill Office would need 4 hours to make the necessary changes before Final Stage could take place.
- 4.7 Members **agreed** that if this became necessary, the lunchtime suspension should be extended or an additional suspension added to allow the Bill Office the additional time required.
- 4.8 TEO officials advised that no further Executive Business was anticipated.
- 4.9 Members **noted** that no Committee Business had been requested.
- 4.10 Members **agreed** that neither Private Members motions nor an adjournment debate would be added.
- 4.11 Members **agreed** the draft Order Paper for 28 April 2020.

### 5 **Provisional arrangements for plenary meetings during week commencing 4 May**

- 5.1 Members **noted** that there were two requests for Executive Business for 5 May.
- 5.2 Members **noted** a request to schedule a motion on the Census Order (Northern Ireland) 2020 from the Executive Office.
- 5.3 Members **noted** a request to schedule a motion on the Budget 2020-21 Debate and Vote from the Minister of Finance.
- 5.4 Members **agreed** to schedule one sitting on Tuesday 5 May to address both items.
- 5.5 Members **agreed** that the debate on the Census Order motion would, by convention, be untimed with no time limit placed on individual contributions.
- 5.6 Members **agreed** that the Budget debate would be allocated 4½ hours with an hour for the Minister to split between the move and wind and a maximum of 7 minutes for all other speakers.
- 5.7 Junior Ministers/TEO Officials advised that no other Executive Business was currently expected.
- 5.8 Members **agreed** the provisional Order Paper for 5 May 2020.

## 6 **Any Other Business**

### **Suspension of Oral and Written Questions**

- 6.1 Members **noted** that the suspension of Oral and Written questions was due for review in the coming weeks.
- 6.2 Members **noted** that they were receiving criticism from their Members about the quality and timeliness of responses given by Ministers both at the Ad Hoc Committee, and when Members contacted departments directly.
- 6.3 Members **agreed** that an options paper for reviewing the suspension of Assembly written and oral questions should be prepared for discussion at the next meeting.
- 6.4 Members discussed using the Senate Chamber to allow for Members' participation via conference call, and **agreed** to use the same arrangements for future meetings under current circumstances.

7     **Date and time of next meeting**

- 7.1   Members **agreed** that the next meeting would take place at 1pm on Tuesday 28 April.

*The Chairperson brought the meeting to a close at 1.29pm*

**Mr John O'Dowd**  
**Acting Chairperson**