

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY
BUSINESS COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 16 JUNE 2020
IN THE SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

MINUTES

The meeting began at 1.00pm. (C) denotes attendance via conference call

Present:

Mr K Buchanan (Acting Chairperson)
The Speaker (C)
Ms K Armstrong
Ms C Bailey (C)
Mr R Butler
Ms S Ennis
Mrs D Kelly
Mr C McGrath
Mr G Middleton
Mr A Muir
Mr J O'Dowd

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| In attendance: | Ms R Kelly | Clerk of Business |
| | Mr P Gill | Clerk Assistant |
| | Ms L Hogg | Clerk/Chief Executive |
| | Dr G McGrath | Director of Parliamentary Services |
| | Mr J McMillen | Head of Legal Services |
| | Mr R Ramsey | Adviser to the Speaker |
| | Ms P Devlin | Assistant Assembly Clerk |
| | Mr M O'Hare | Clerical Supervisor |

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| Observers: | Mrs K Morrison | Executive Office |
| | Mr D Kearney | Junior Minister |

1 Apologies

1.1 There were no apologies.

2 Minutes of previous meetings

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 9 June 2020 were **agreed.**

3 **Matters Arising**

3.1 There were no matters arising.

4 **Finalisation of the Order Paper for Plenary Meeting on 23 June 2020**

Tuesday 23 June

4.1 Members **noted** that they had scheduled one sitting for Tuesday 23 June.

Assembly Business

4.2 Members **noted** that no requests for Assembly Business had been received.

Executive Committee Business

4.3 Members **noted** that, in addition to the items scheduled at last week's meeting, the Executive Office had scheduled one additional item of business, a statement from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on Green Growth.

4.4 Members **noted** that following items of business had previously been scheduled:

- NSMC Institutional Meeting Statement from the First and deputy First Minister which had not been included on the Indicative Timings as it was yet to be confirmed.
- Further Consideration Stage of the Housing (Amendment) Bill (NI) 2020 from the Minister for Communities.
- A Legislative Consent Motion for the Air Traffic Management and Unmanned Aircraft Bill from the Minister of Justice.
- A Legislative Consent Motion for the Domestic Abuse Bill - Extra Territorial Jurisdiction from the Minister of Justice.
- Question Time for the Minister for Communities and the Minister for the Economy.

4.5 TEO Officials advised that no other business was expected.

Private Members Business

- 4.6 Members **noted** that at the last meeting they had agreed to defer a Private Members' motion scheduled for the DUP from 16 June until 23 June, and to schedule a Private Members' motion for SF, but had deferred a decision on which motion to be scheduled.
- 4.7 Members **noted** that with the additional Executive Business and the Private Members' motion, the adjournment time would be 6.00pm and if the two statements were confirmed would be 8.00pm with the majority of items having no time limit applied.
- 4.8 Members **agreed** that the Private Members' motion scheduled for SF would be rescheduled for the week commencing 29 June.
- 4.9 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 23 June.

5 Provisional Arrangements for the Plenary Meetings During Week Commencing 29 June 2020

- 5.1 Members **noted** that they had been provided with the Notice of Forthcoming Business from the Executive Office, and the listed items of Executive Business necessitated scheduling only one sitting for week commencing 29 June.
- 5.2 Members **agreed** to schedule one sitting on Tuesday 30 June.

Tuesday 30 June

Assembly Business

- 5.3 Members **noted** that there may be a motion from the Assembly Commission to nominate a Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman.

Executive Committee Business

- 5.4 Members **noted** that the Minister for Communities had scheduled the Final Stage of the Housing (Amendment) Bill.
- 5.5 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for the bill stage.
- 5.6 Members **noted** that the Minister for Infrastructure had scheduled a debate to affirm a Statutory Rule on The Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2020.

- 5.7 Members **noted** that the Committee for Infrastructure had considered the SR and had no objection.
- 5.8 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for the motion to affirm the SR.
- 5.9 Members **noted** that the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs had scheduled a Legislative Consent Motion for the Environment Bill.
- 5.10 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for the Legislative Consent Motion.
- 5.11 Members **noted** that Question Time would be for the Minister of Education and the Minister of Finance.
- 5.12 TEO Officials advised that no other business was currently expected.

Private Members Business

- 5.13 Members **agreed** that the SF motion which had been deferred from 23 June would be scheduled.
- 5.14 SF Members selected the following Private Members' motion:
- Concern and Anxiety over the Reopening of Schools
- 5.15 Junior Minister Kearney confirmed Ministerial availability to respond to the motion.
- 5.16 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 30 June.

6 Review of Written Questions

- 6.1 Members **noted** that information on questions tabled, and responses from Ministers, had been provided in their packs.
- 6.2 Ms Kelly provided a summary of the information.
- 6.3 Members **noted** that there was continued dissatisfaction over the quality of responses being received from Departments.
- 6.4 Members **noted** that there was still a significant limit on written questions and Question Time would only be resuming that day, so scrutiny mechanisms open to Members were minimal and as such it was not unreasonable to expect meaningful responses to questions asked.

- 6.5 Members **noted** that the Department for Communities continued to have the highest number of unanswered questions of all departments.
- 6.6 Members **noted** that the Speaker is writing to the Minister for Communities seeking an explanation for the high number of unanswered questions as agreed at last week's meeting.
- 6.7 The Speaker gave Members a brief update on progress with appointing a new Commissioner for Standards.
- 6.8 Members **agreed** that the Speaker would follow up on the issues identified by the Committee during his regular communications with the Executive.
- 6.9 Members **agreed** to review the arrangements for questions as planned on 30 June 2020.

7 **Any Other Business**

- 7.1 There was no other business.

8 **Date and time of next meeting**

- 8.1 Members **agreed** that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 23 June in the Senate Chamber.

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

Mr John O'Dowd
Acting Chairperson