

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY
BUSINESS COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2020
IN THE SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

MINUTES

The meeting began at 1.03pm. (C) denotes attendance via conference call

Present:

The Speaker (Chairperson)

Ms C Bailey
Mr K Buchanan
Mr R Butler
Ms S Ennis
Mrs D Kelly
Mr C McGrath
Mr G Middleton
Mr A Muir
Mr J O'Dowd

In attendance:

Dr A McGarel	Clerk of Business
Mr P Gill	Clerk Assistant
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
Ms C Kerr	Executive Office

1 Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Kellie Armstrong and John Stewart.

2 Minutes of previous meetings

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 17 November were **agreed**.

3 **Matters Arising**

- 3.1 Members **noted** that they had agreed to review the dates for Christmas recess once the Executive had provided information on its legislative programme.
- 3.2 Members **noted** that the requested information had not yet been received from the Executive but that it was necessary to confirm dates at this meeting.
- 3.3 Members **noted** a paper with three different options for Christmas recess provided in their packs.
- 3.4 The Clerk of Business summarised the content of the paper, outlining the advantages and disadvantages of three potential options and how they related to previous practice, for Members' consideration.
- 3.5 Members **agreed** to select option 1, that recess would remain as originally agreed with the understanding that recall arrangements could be utilised at any time during the recess period if needed, and if issues arose in relation to coronavirus, the Ad Hoc Committee could be convened.
- 3.6 Members **noted** that an APN would issue later that day to communicate this decision.
- 3.7 There were no other matters arising.

4 **Finalisation of the Order Papers for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 30 November 2020**

Monday 30 November

- 4.1 Members **noted** that a statutory rule from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, which the Executive had previously scheduled for this date, had now been removed.
- 4.2 Members **noted** that otherwise business remained as agreed at last week's meeting with the addition of the following items of Executive business:

Executive Business

- i. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 11) Regulations (NI) 2020.
- ii. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 12) Regulations (NI) 2020.

- iii. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (NI) 2020.

- 4.3 Members **agreed** to schedule a single untimed debate for all three motions.
- 4.4 A Member raised concerns that the previous week, a debate on legislation had continued until 2.15am and suggested that although the debate was long, this did not necessarily increase participation as some Members were excluded from late sittings due to caring responsibilities. He requested that the Committee considers introducing time limits on individual contributions.
- 4.5 The Speaker noted that a related piece of work had commenced previously which he would revisit. The Speaker **agreed** to consider the proposal and to return to it at a future meeting.

Private Members' Business

- 4.6 Members **agreed** not to schedule Private Members' motions.
- 4.7 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Monday 30 November.
- 4.8 A Member suggested that the Committee reintroduces a restriction on Private Members' business in response to the recently announced coronavirus restrictions.
- 4.9 The Speaker noted that by scheduling Private Members' business the week before a sitting, the Committee is making the best use of plenary time.

Tuesday 1 December

Executive Committee Business

- 4.10 Members **noted** that there had been no changes to the Executive Business agreed at the last meeting.

Private Members' Business

- 4.11 Members **agreed** to schedule a Private Members' motion.
- 4.12 The following Private Members' motion was selected with the usual timings:
- Preparations for a COVID-19 Vaccine (DUP)
- 4.13 The junior Minister indicated that a Minister would be available to respond.

- 4.14 Members **agreed** not to schedule an adjournment debate.
- 4.15 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 1 December.

5 **Provisional Arrangements for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 7 December 2020**

Monday 7 December

Executive Committee Business

- 5.1 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and Minister for Communities.
- 5.2 Members **noted** that the Executive had scheduled three items of Executive Business, as follows:
- A statement from the Minister of Justice on Inter-Governmental Agreement on Criminal Justice Co-operation, which had yet to be confirmed.
 - Further Consideration Stage of The Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill
 - The Administration of Estates (Small Payments) (Increase of Limit) (NI) Order for the Minister of Finance, which was also yet to be confirmed.
- 5.3 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for further consideration stage of the Bill, and to add the other items once confirmed.

Private Members' Business

- 5.4 Members **agreed** to defer taking a decision on Private Members' motions until the next meeting.
- 5.5 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Monday 7 December.

Tuesday 8 December

Executive Committee Business

- 5.6 Members **noted** that Question Time would be for the Economy and Education Ministers and for the Assembly Commission.

5.7 Members **noted** that the Executive had scheduled two statutory rules for this date:

- The Marketing of Plant and Propagating Material (Legislative Functions) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (NI) 2020
- The Plant Health and Diseases of Animals (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (NI) 2020

5.8 Members **agreed** to schedule untimed debates for both SRs.

5.9 Members **agreed** to schedule a motion for the Committee for the Economy on its Macro Economic Micro Inquiry, with 1.5 hours for the debate to include 10 minutes for moving and winding, 15 minutes for a Ministerial response and 5 minutes for all other speakers.

Private Members' Business

5.10 Members **agreed** to defer taking a decision on Private Members' motions until the next meeting.

5.11 Members **agreed** to defer taking a decision on an adjournment debate until the next meeting.

5.12 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 8 December.

6 Any Other Business

6.1 There was no other business.

7 Date and time of next meeting

7.1 Members **agreed** that the next meeting would take place at 1pm on Tuesday 1 December in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Speaker brought the meeting to a close at 1.25pm

The Speaker
Chairperson