

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY
BUSINESS COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 19 JANUARY 2021
IN THE SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

MINUTES

The meeting began at 1.03pm.

Present:

The Speaker (Chairperson)
Ms K Armstrong
Ms C Bailey
Mr K Buchanan
Mr R Butler
Ms S Ennis
Mr C McGrath
Mr G Middleton
Mr J O'Dowd

In attendance:

Dr A McGarel	Clerk of Business
Mr P Gill	Clerk Assistant
Ms A McKelvey	Legal Advisor
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 McCreedy The Executive Office

1 Apologies

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

2 Minutes of previous meetings

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 29 December were **agreed**.

2.2 The minutes of the meeting on 30 December were **agreed**.

2.3 The minutes of the meeting on 12 January were **agreed**.

3 **Matters Arising**

- 3.1 Members **noted** receipt of a letter to the Speaker from the First and deputy First Ministers regarding the management of Executive and Assembly business during the recent period of restrictions, and the Speaker's response to the letter.
- 3.2 The Speaker noted that the letters had been circulated to all Members prior to the meeting via email, and asked if the Committee wished to comment on any of the contents.
- 3.3 A Member suggested that the Committee should take account of FMdFM's request to pause Priority Written Questions.
- 3.4 Following discussion, Members **agreed** that whips would ask their parties to voluntarily observe a reduction in Priority Written Questions to a maximum of two per week, and would encourage their party members to only request a priority answer to a written question when it was absolutely necessary.
- 3.5 It was **agreed** that this would be part of a graduated response that would be reviewed regularly.
- 3.6 There were no other matters arising.

4 **Finalisation of the Order Papers for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 25 January 2021**

Monday 25 January

Executive Committee Business

- 4.1 Members **noted** that Executive business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.
- 4.2 Members **noted** that the Executive Office would be taking forward the seven Health Protection Amendment Regulations which had been scheduled the week before.

Private Members' Business

- 4.3 Members **agreed** that in line with the decision taken at the last meeting, no Private Members' motions would be scheduled.

- 4.4 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Monday 25 January.

Tuesday 26 January

Executive Committee Business

- 4.5 Members **noted** that no Executive Business had been scheduled for this date.

Committee Business

- 4.6 Members **noted** that there was no change to the Committee business scheduled at the last meeting.

Private Members' Business

- 4.7 Members **noted** that in line with their previous decision, no Private Members' motions or adjournment debates would be scheduled.

- 4.8 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 26 January.

5 Provisional Arrangements for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 1 February 2021

Monday 1 February

Executive Committee Business

- 5.1 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the for the Minister of Finance and Minister of Health.

- 5.2 Members **noted** that no Executive Business had been scheduled to date.

- 5.3 The TEO Official advised that no further business was expected at that time.

Committee Business

- 5.4 Members **noted** that the Committee for Health had requested a debate on its Inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 on care homes.

- 5.5 Members **agreed** to allow two hours for the debate, which, by convention would give 20 minutes for the Minister to respond.

- 5.6 Members **agreed**, in accordance with Speaker's Ruling 4.5b, to allow 15 minutes to move and wind on the debate, with 5 minutes for all other speakers.
- 5.7 Members **noted** that the Committee on Procedures may be seeking to schedule a motion relating to hybrid plenary proceedings for this date, and that this would be confirmed at the next meeting.

Private Members' Business

- 5.8 Members **agreed** that in line with their earlier discussions, no Private Members' motions would be scheduled.
- 5.9 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Monday 1 February.

Tuesday 2 February

Executive Committee Business

- 5.10 Members **noted** that Question Time would be scheduled for the Minister for Infrastructure.
- 5.11 Members **noted** that the following item of Executive business had been scheduled:
- The Road Traffic Offenders (NI) (Amendment) Order 2020 for the Minister for Infrastructure.
- 5.12 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate to consider the legislation.
- 5.3 The TEO Official advised that no further business was expected at that time.

Private Members' Business

- 5.13 Members **noted** a request to schedule Final Stage of the Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill for Mr. Allister.
- 5.14 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for Final Stage of the Bill.
- 5.15 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 2 February.

6 **Any Other Business**

6.1 A Member sought an update on the Speaker's consideration of debate timings for legislation in other legislatures and was advised that the piece of work was still ongoing.

6.2 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 26 January in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Speaker brought the meeting to a close at 1.17pm

The Speaker
Chairperson