

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

**TUESDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2022**  
**SENATE CHAMBER**

**MINUTES**

*The meeting began at 1.34pm.*

**Present:**

**The Speaker (Chairperson)**  
**Ms C Bailey**  
**Mrs R Barton**  
**Ms P Bradshaw**  
**Ms J Bunting**  
**Mr R Butler**  
**Ms S Ennis**  
**Ms D Kelly**  
**Mr C McGrath (via Starleaf)**  
**Mr A Muir**  
**Mr J O'Dowd**

**In attendance:**

<b>Dr A McGarel</b>	<b>Clerk of Business</b>
<b>Mr P Gill</b>	<b>Clerk Assistant</b>
<b>Dr G McGrath</b>	<b>Director of Parliamentary Services</b>
<b>Ms L Hogg</b>	<b>Clerk/Chief Executive</b>
<b>Ms A McKelvey</b>	<b>Legal Services</b>
<b>Mr R Ramsey</b>	<b>Adviser to the Speaker</b>
<b>Ms F Leneghan</b>	<b>PS to the Speaker</b>
<b>Ms P Devlin</b>	<b>Assistant Assembly Clerk</b>
<b>Mr M O'Hare</b>	<b>Clerical Supervisor</b>

**Observers:**

**Mr D McCreedy**      **The Executive Office**

**1**      **Apologies**

1.1      Apologies were received from junior Minister Middleton.

**2**      **Minutes of previous meeting**

2.1      The minutes of the meeting on 15 February 2022 were **agreed**.

### 3 **Matters Arising**

3.1 There were no matters arising.

### 4 **Finalisation of the Order Papers for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 28 February**

#### **Monday 28 February**

##### **Members' Statements**

4.1 Members **agreed** that Members' Statements would not be scheduled.

##### **Public Petition**

4.2 Members **noted** that Mr Muir's petition remained scheduled.

##### **Assembly Business**

4.3 Members **noted** that the sitting days for that week had changed since the last meeting but **agreed** that any business unfinished from the sitting on Thursday 24 February would remain scheduled.

4.4 Members **agreed** to schedule a Business Committee motion to suspend Standing Orders 10(2) to 10(4) at the start of the sitting.

##### **Executive Committee Business**

4.5 Members **noted** that since last week, a statement had been scheduled by the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on the development of an action plan to protect and restore blue carbon habitats.

4.6 Members **noted** that the Energy Performance of Buildings (Certificates and Inspections) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2022 SR had been deferred until 8 March.

4.7 Members **noted** that otherwise Executive Business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.

##### **Committee Business**

4.8 Members **noted** that the Public Accounts Committee motion on its Committee Reports and Memoranda of Reply remained scheduled.

### Private Members' Business

- 4.9 Members **noted** that there was insufficient time available for a Private Members' Bill stage.
- 4.10 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Monday 28 February.

### Tuesday 1 March

- 4.11 Members **agreed** that the first item of business would be the completion of any unfinished Executive and Committee business from Monday.

### Executive Committee Business

- 4.12 Members **agreed** to reschedule Questions to the Health Minister originally scheduled for 22 February so that he could be present in the Chamber.
- 4.13 Members **noted** that Further Consideration Stage of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill had been deferred until 7 March.
- 4.14 Members **agreed** to schedule an untimed debate for the Rates (Regional Rates) Order NI 2022.
- 4.15 Members **noted** that all other Executive business remained as scheduled at the last meeting.

### Committee Business

- 4.16 Members **noted** that a motion to extend Committee Stage of the Employment (Zero Hours Workers and Banded Weekly Working Hours) Bill remained scheduled for the Committee for the Economy.
- 4.17 Members **noted** that a motion from the Committee on Procedures to debate a number of amendments to Standing Orders remained scheduled.

### Private Members' Business

- 4.18 Members **noted** that Second Stage of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Amendment) Bill remained scheduled.

- 4.19 Members **agreed** to allow to allow the Bill's sponsor 30 minutes to move and 15 to wind, 20 minutes for the Minister if he chooses to respond, 15 minutes for the Chair of the Committee and 10 minutes for all other contributors
- 4.20 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Tuesday 1 March.

### **Wednesday 2 March**

- 4.21 Members **agreed** that any unfinished Executive business from Tuesday would be the first item of business on Wednesday's Order Paper.

#### **Private Members' Business**

- 4.22 Members **noted** that Consideration Stage of the Defamation Bill remained scheduled.
- 4.23 Members **noted** that Consideration Stage of the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill remained scheduled.
- 4.24 Members **noted** that Second Stage of the Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill remained scheduled.
- 4.25 Members **agreed** that any business unfinished when the sitting adjourned would be taken the following week.
- 4.26 Members **agreed** the Order Paper for Wednesday 2 March.

## **5 Provisional Arrangements for the Plenary Meetings in Week Commencing 7 March**

### **Monday 7 March**

#### **Members' Statements**

- 5.1 Members **agreed** that Members' Statements would not be scheduled.

#### **Assembly Business**

- 5.2 Members **noted** that the first item of business on Monday's Order Paper would be the conclusion of unfinished business from Wednesday 2 March.

- 5.3 Members **agreed** to schedule a Business Committee motion to suspend Standing Orders 10(2) to 10(4) at the start of the sitting to enable it to continue beyond 7pm.

#### Executive Committee Business

- 5.4 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister for Communities only, as questions to the Executive Office had been removed from the rota until the offices had been filled.
- 5.5 Members **noted** that the Executive had listed ten items of business:
- Further Consideration Stage of the Budget Bill
  - The Occupational Pension Schemes (Climate Change Governance and Reporting) Regulations (NI) 2021
  - Further Consideration Stage of the Private Tenancies Bill
  - Final Stage of the Motor Vehicles (Compulsory Insurance) Bill
  - Further Consideration Stage of the General Teaching Council (Directions) Bill
  - The Human Medicines (Coronavirus and Influenza) (Amendment) Regulations 2022
  - The Human Medicines (Amendments Relating to the Early Access to Medicines Scheme) Regulations 2022
  - Further Consideration Stage of the Adoption and Children Bill
  - Further Consideration Stage of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill
  - Legislative Consent Motion for the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill

- 5.6 Members **agreed** to schedule untimed debates for all items.

- 5.7 The Executive Office official confirmed that no additional business was expected at that time.

#### Committee Business

- 5.8 Members **agreed** to schedule a two-hour debate for the Finance Committee on its report relating to the 2022-25 draft budget, with 15 minutes to move and wind, 20 minutes for the Minister to respond should he choose to do so, and 5 minutes for all other speakers.

#### Private Members' Business

- 5.9 Members **agreed** to schedule Final Stage of the Autism (Amendment) Bill for Mrs. Cameron.
- 5.10 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Monday 7 March.

## Tuesday 8 March

### Assembly Business

- 5.11 Members **agreed** that the first item of business for Tuesday would be to complete any unfinished Executive and Committee business from Monday.

### Executive Committee Business

- 5.12 Members **noted** that Question Time was scheduled for the Minister for the Economy.
- 5.13 Members **noted** that the Executive had listed five items of business:
- The Energy Performance of Buildings (Certificates and Inspections) Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2022
  - The Rates (Temporary Rebate) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2022
  - Final Stage of the Budget Bill
  - Final Stage of the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) Bill
  - Final Stage of the Climate Change (No. 2) Bill
- 5.14 Members **agreed** to schedule untimed debates for all items of business.
- 5.15 The Executive Office official advised that no additional business was expected at that time.

### Committee Business

- 5.16 Members **agreed** to schedule a 45-minute debate for the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on its report on the challenges experienced by Women in the Local Agriculture Sector, to correspond with International Women's Day.

### Private Members' Business

- 5.17 Members **agreed** to schedule Consideration Stage of the Climate Change Bill for Ms. Bailey.
- 5.18 Members **noted** that Final Stage of the Climate Change No. 2 Bill would have been debated by the time Consideration Stage of Ms Bailey's Bill was reached, and that Ms Bailey may opt not to move Consideration Stage of her Bill.
- 5.19 Members **agreed** to schedule Consideration Stage of the Period Products (Free Provision) Bill rather than lose plenary time if Ms. Bailey's Bill was not moved.

5.20 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Tuesday 8 March.

### **Wednesday 9 March**

5.21 Members **noted** that they had agreed to consider the need for a Wednesday sitting on a weekly basis.

### **Private Members' Business**

5.22 Members **noted** that if the Consideration Stages of the remaining two Private Members Bills that had completed Committee Stage were to be scheduled on Wednesday 9 March, it would be feasible for them to reach final stage before the end of the mandate. This would mean that there would be potential for all of the Private Members' Bills which had completed their Committee Stages to complete their passage before the end of the mandate. The DUP and UUP representatives reiterated their concerns about scheduling Wednesday sittings as a matter of course given other pressures on Members.

5.23 Members **agreed** to schedule a sitting on Wednesday 9 March, with the first item of business to complete any unfinished Executive and Committee business from Tuesday.

5.24 Members **agreed** to schedule Consideration Stage of the Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Bill for Miss Woods.

5.25 Members **agreed** to schedule Consideration Stage of the Hospital Parking Charges Bill for Miss Reilly.

5.26 Members **agreed** the Provisional Order Paper for Wednesday 9 March.

## **6 Any Other Business**

6.1 Members **noted** correspondence from the Chairperson's Liaison Group seeking views on their report on strengthening committee scrutiny.

6.2 The Speaker reminded Members that the Business Committee does not usually get involved in the work of committees and Members **agreed** to consider the matter within their parties rather than from a Business Committee position.

6.3 On behalf of the DUP, Ms. Bunting thanked whips for their willingness to reschedule business following the sudden passing of the Principal Deputy Speaker Christopher Stalford at the weekend, adding that her party colleagues would have found it very difficult to proceed with normal business

in those tragic circumstances. Ms. Bunting also thanked Members for their kind tributes to Mr. Stalford the day before.

6.4 There was no other Business.

7 **Date and time of next meeting**

7.1 Members **agreed** that the next Committee meeting would take place on Tuesday 1 March at 1.30pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

*The Speaker brought the meeting to a close at 1.55pm*

**The Speaker  
Chairperson**