

Business Committee

Minutes BC(3)21-08

Date: Tuesday 8 July 2008

Time: 8.30 a.m.

Venue: Meeting Room 4th Floor, Corporate Unit

Assembly Members in Attendance

Rosemary Butler, Deputy Presiding Officer (Chair)

Carwyn Jones, Leader of the House

Jocelyn Davies, Plaid Cymru Business Manager

Nick Bourne, Welsh Conservatives

Kirsty Williams, Welsh Liberal Democrats Business Manager

Officials in Attendance

Adrian Crompton, Director of Assembly Business

Siwan Davies, Head of Legislation and Chamber Services

Marion Stapleton, Office of the Leader of the House

Marc Wyn Jones, Clerk of the Business Committee

1. Apologies & announcements

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from the Presiding Officer. The Deputy Presiding Officer chaired the meeting. Apologies were also received from William Graham for whom Nick Bourne substituted.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

(i) BC(3)20-08 (Draft minutes) - Tuesday 1 July 2008

2.1 The minutes were presented to the Committee in their draft format. As there were no comments, they would be translated in readiness for publication.

Action: Business Committee Secretariat

3. Forthcoming Business

This Week's Business - BC(3)21-08(p1)

3.1 The Leader of the House said that the Legislative statement on the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure, which was scheduled for Tuesday, would also incorporate the Skills that Work for Wales Strategy, which had been scheduled for Tuesday 8th July. He said that the statement would be allocated 45 minutes.

3.2 The Committee agreed that Voting Time would take place no earlier than 4.30pm for Government business on Tuesday and for Assembly and non-government business on Wednesday.

3.3 The Committee noted the organisation of business for 8 and 9 July 2008.

3 Week Timetable of Government Business - BC(3)21-08(p2)

3.4 The Leader of the House said that a debate under Standing Order 22.34 on the National Assembly for Wales (Legislative Competence) (Social Welfare and Other Fields) Order 2008 (Vulnerable Children) would take place on Tuesday 15th July.

3.5 The Committee noted the 3 Week Timetable of Government Business.

3 Week Timetable of Assembly and Non-Government Business - BC(3)21-08(p3)

3.6 The Business Committee agreed to schedule the following item of non-government business:

A debate on Janet Ryder's proposal for an LCO in relation to displaying national flags and motifs on Vehicle Registration Plates on 1 October.

3.7 The Committee determined the organisation of Assembly Business.

3.8 The Committee determined the organisation of non-government Business.

Paper on the Organisation of Assembly Business - BC(3)19-08(p4)

3.9 The Chair asked Business Managers to report back on their consultation with Members in relation to the organisation of business. During discussions, the Business Committee agreed the following points:

There was a general consensus to change the times of Plenary meetings to 1.30pm - 6pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Business Managers accepted that the current arrangements for the organisation of committee business were unsustainable. They therefore asked for a further paper on the organisation of Committee business by the end of July, giving more detail on possible options and on the implications of having permanent committees to deal with legislation. The Business Committee would return to this as a priority immediately after the summer recess.

Formal Assembly Business should not generally take place on Fridays.

3.10 Though no consensus view was reached, the following other points were also made:

There was a view among some Business Managers that Thursday morning Plenary meetings could be scheduled in exceptional circumstances.

Some Business Managers said that their groups were content for Committees to meet on Monday afternoons, or in the evenings following Plenary meetings.

Less frequent but longer committee meetings should be introduced to reduce timetabling pressures.

Committees and Chairs should not be constrained in how they wish to operate where their members are in agreement.

4. Assembly Committees

Request from the Sustainability Committee to hold an additional meeting on Wednesday 16 July 2008 - BC(3)21-08(p4)

4.1 The Business Committee agreed a request from the Sustainability Committee to hold an additional meeting on Wednesday 16th July, subject to the availability of the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government.

Request from the Broadcasting Committee to meet during Plenary - BC(3)21-08(p5)

4.2 The Business Committee agreed a request from the Broadcasting Committee to meet during Plenary on Tuesday 8 July, to finalise its report.

5. Standing Order 25: Special Assembly Procedure

Guidance to Assembly Members on the proper conduct of proceedings under Standing Order 25.19 to 25.24 - BC(3)21-08(p6)

5.1 The Committee returned to discussions on proposals to establish a Special Assembly Procedure Committee to consider petitions against the first Special Assembly Procedure Order to be tabled by the Assembly Government - "The London to Fishguard Trunk Road (A40) (Penblewin to Slebech Park Improvement) Order 200-".

5.2 The Committee noted that it had been suggested that the Special Assembly Procedure Committee did not need to be party balanced. Adrian Crompton said that, according to the Government of Wales Act 2006 and Standing Orders, the Committee should be party balanced, unless it was not "reasonably practicable". He said that it was also preferable for the Committee to be made up of 5 Members as having 4 Members could require the Chair to use a Casting Vote during deliberations on the Order.

5.3 The Business Committee agreed that a motion to suspend Standing Orders should be tabled to bring forward the following:

A motion to amend Standing Order 25.19 and 25.20;

A motion to adopt Guidance to Members on the proper conduct of proceedings in relation to Special Assembly Procedure Committees, issued under Standing Order 2.17; and

A motion to establish and elect the Special Assembly Procedure Committee. The Committee would have five Members: two Labour Members and one from each of the other parties.

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