

MINUTES OF MEETING

Date: Tuesday 28th November 2000
Time: 9.00am
Venue: Presiding Officer's room (A3.13)

Present: John Marek, Deputy Presiding Officer (Chair)
Andrew Davies, Minister for Assembly Business
Jocelyn Davies, Plaid Cymru Party Business Manager
William Graham, Conservative Party Business Manager
Kirsty Williams, Liberal Democrat Party Business Manager

John Lloyd, Clerk to the Assembly
David Lambert, OPO Legal Adviser
Andrew George, Clerk to the Business Committee
Marion Stapleton, PS/Minister for Assembly Business
Craig Stephenson, Chamber Secretariat
Alun Gruffudd, PS/Deputy Presiding Officer
Marie Knox, Head of Committee Secretariat

1. Apologies & announcements

1.1 None.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting**BC315-00 (final)**

2.1 The minutes were presented to the Committee in their final format. Since there were no further comments they would be translated in readiness for publication. **Action: Chamber Secretariat**

BC324-00 (draft)

2.2 The minutes were presented to the Committee in draft. Some minor amendments were suggested. They would be incorporated into the final version which would be presented to the Committee at its next meeting.
Action: Chamber Secretariat

3. Matters arising (BC324-00)

3.1 **Paragraph 3.2** – Marie Knox said that she had consulted the Clerk to the Legislation Committee and understood that the Committee was content with meeting at 9.30am on Tuesdays.

3.2 **Paragraph 3.3** – Marion Stapleton had spoken to the officials supporting the Executive who provided the secretariat for the Voluntary Sector

Partnership. They had agreed to work more closely with Members where it was necessary to change the arrangements for meetings.

3.3 Paragraph 7.4 – The Deputy Presiding Officer said that the Welsh Grand Committee would be debating the Queen’s speech in the House of Commons on Monday 11th December. This would take place prior to the debate in the National Assembly.

4. Matters referred from plenary

4.1 The Committee had requested sight of the Cabinet’s Protocol for Statements (BC89-99 Revised). This was supplemented by extracts from the Committee’s previous consideration of the Protocol (BC326-00). Jocelyn Davies felt that last week’s Cabinet statement on the programme for Government had not been embargoed and the media had seen copies of it prior to Business Managers. She did not feel this was within the spirit of the Protocol. The Minister for Assembly Business said that last week’s arrangements had worked very well and Business Managers had been notified well in advance of the 30 minutes outlined in the Protocol. Although there was disagreement about what had been released to the media, it was noted that William Graham and Jocelyn Davies had abided by the terms of the Protocol and not spoken publicly about the statement until it had been made in Plenary. Kirsty Williams agreed with Jocelyn Davies that the arrangements worked well in the majority of cases.

4.2 Jocelyn Davies was concerned that the motions tabled to approve the National Health Service (General Dental Services) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2000 in Plenary on Thursday 23 November were consistent with the Standard procedure. However, the Business Committee had agreed that the draft Regulations should follow the Accelerated procedure. As a result, Party groups had not had time to prepare contributions for the debate. Marion Stapleton apologised that the incorrect motion had been tabled. It was noted that the Presiding Officer had allowed the item to be moved since it allowed for greater democratic scrutiny of the draft order. It was agreed that an Email notifying Business Managers would be helpful if a similar situation arose in future. **Action: Marion Stapleton to note**

5. Advice to Assembly on procedures

5.1 The Committee considered paper BC327-00 which provided two options for recess dates in 2001. Given Business Managers’ comments at last week’s meeting, Marion Stapleton and Marie Knox had prepared the paper on the basis that there would be a break for the national party conferences. Jocelyn Davies noted that both options provided for around 32 sitting weeks. She thought that the Committee had previously agreed that the Assembly should sit for around 36 weeks. She felt that sitting weeks should be determined by the amount of business to be taken rather than the holidays particularly since the Business Committee was consistently receiving requests for additional meetings of subject committees. The Minister for Assembly Business said that his previous paper BC272-00 (revised) had provided a range of options of

between 32 and 36 weeks. His group's view was that the summer recess should also cover the conference season and his preference was, therefore, for Option 2. William Graham and Kirsty Williams agreed that option 2 was preferable. It was agreed to accept Option 2 but to reconsider the proposal for a four-week Christmas recess in 2001 in the light of the recess arrangements for Christmas this year. **Action: Business Managers to consider the four-week Christmas recess option and report back in January 2001**

6. Committees

6.1 Marie Knox asked Business Managers if they were content with the revised timetable which was reissued last week. The Minister for Assembly Business said that he was concerned about the Audit Committee meeting scheduled for 1st March 2001 since it clashed with the Labour Party Welsh conference. **Action: Marie Knox to consider whether Audit Committee meeting could be rescheduled**

7. Forthcoming business

This week's business

7.1 The Minister for Assembly Business said that no Cabinet statements were planned at present. However, the position might change if the Presiding Officer granted requests for urgent questions. The consequence of any resulting questions or statements would be that there would be less time available for scheduled business. The Chair noted that it would be helpful if Assembly Secretaries making Statements could acknowledge whether they were doing so in response to an urgent question.

7.2 The Minister for Assembly Business had withdrawn the motion on revising the Interpretation section of Standing Orders to recognise the term "Minister". Marion Stapleton said that a paper detailing further revisions would be submitted for consideration by Business Managers at the next meeting. **Action: Marion Stapleton**

7.3 The Committee considered the draft business statement (BC328-00).

Proposed business for the weeks commencing 4th, 11th and 18th December 2000

7.4 The Committee's advice to the Minister for Assembly Business on his proposed statement about the organisation of the Assembly's business for the weeks commencing 4th, 11th and 18th December was that it should proceed as outlined in the draft business statement.

7.5 The Minister for Assembly Business said that the Secretary of State for Wales would be making a statement in Plenary on the Queen's Speech on Tuesday 12th December. The full debate would take place on 19th December. Jocelyn Davies was concerned that three and a half hours had been allocated

in total for the UK Government's legislative programme with only one and a half hours allocated for the National Assembly's. Kirsty Williams noted that two Cabinet statements had been made in Plenary which had covered the proposed work of the Partnership.

7.6 Jocelyn Davies also sought clarification as to whether the debate on the programme for Government on 14th December was separate from the proposed debate on the Partnership Agreement. The Minister for Assembly Business said that the Partnership Agreement was being carried forward by the programme for Government and would therefore be within the scope of the debate. However, the motion would refer to the programme for Government.

7.7 In response to a question from William Graham, the Minister for Assembly Business confirmed that no business was proposed in relation to the forthcoming census.

7.8 Jocelyn Davies said that she was not generally content with draft business statements that only scheduled about two hours of business for the following week's plenary sessions. She acknowledged the need for greater flexibility in weeks two and three of the statement.

8. Subordinate legislation

8.1 None.

9. Revisions to Standing Orders

9.1 The Committee noted paper BC329-00 – the report of the Business Committee on revising Standing Order 6.20 to provide the opportunity for a show of hands vote if the electronic voting system failed. Business Managers were content with the report which would be laid in the Table Office later in the day. **Action: Chamber Secretariat**

10. Presiding Officer rulings

10.1 None.

11. Any other business

11.1 The Deputy Presiding Officer distributed a paper indicating the House Committee's agreement to increase Members' Office Costs Allowances by £2,000 for the purposes of improving security in their constituencies. He also informed Business Managers that the Fees Office had redesigned its form for additional costs allowances.

11.2 Kirsty Williams said that Lord Alderdice, the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, had extended an invitation to the Business Committee to visit Stormont in order to compare working practices. A similar, and

productive, visit had taken place to the Scottish Parliament. **Action:**
Business Managers to consider further in the new year

CHAMBER SECRETARIAT