

MINUTES OF MEETING

Date: Tuesday 30th January 2001
Time: 9.00am
Venue: Presiding Officer's room (A3.13)

Present: Kirsty Williams, Liberal Democrat Business Manager (Chair)
Andrew Davies, Minister for Assembly Business
Jocelyn Davies, Plaid Cymru Party Business Manager
David Melding, Conservative Party

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 (agenda item 6 & 9)
Nerys Arch, Office of the Counsel General (agenda item 8)

1. Apologies & announcements

1.1 Apologies were received from the Deputy Presiding Officer and William Graham. Kirsty Williams had agreed to Chair the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 13.4 and William Graham was represented by David Melding in accordance with Standing Order 13.3.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting**BC11.01 (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**

BC22-01 (draft)

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

3. Matters arising

3.1 **Paragraph 3.4** - The Minister for Assembly Business said that the publication of subordinate legislation was the joint responsibility of the Presiding Office and the Executive. It was agreed that the Committee would

invite the Counsel General to attend next week's meeting to discuss the issue.

Action: Chamber Secretariat

3.2 **Paragraph 4.1** - Business Managers had been asked to report back on a suggestion that time should be made available in Plenary for debates on international issues. Business Managers said that they would feed back the views of their groups at the next meeting although the initial views had been that current provisions were sufficient. The Minister for Assembly Business suggested that this was something that the Review of Assembly Procedures might like to look at. **Action: Business Managers to report back at next week's meeting; Marie Knox to report back to the Review secretariat**

4. Matters referred from plenary

4.1 The Committee considered paper BC30-01 - an extract from the Record of Proceedings for the Plenary session on 25th January where concern had been expressed about the content of a Cabinet statement and the procedure for asking questions in relation to it. The Presiding Officer had asked the Business Committee to look at the issue. The Committee felt that the statement in question had been quite technical, requiring detailed clarification from the Minister. It was also suggested that the Presiding Officer would not have allowed a Member to question the Minister more than once if there had been other Members waiting to speak. It was agreed that it would be helpful to have greater clarity about the procedures associated with Cabinet statements whilst preserving the Presiding Officer's flexibility during proceedings. Business Managers would consider the issue with their groups and report back at the next meeting. **Action: Business Managers**

4.2 The Minister for Assembly Business said that the Minister for Education was concerned that her contribution to the minority party debate had been curtailed on the 25th January. He said that the Business Committee had considered this issue previously and the Committee's decision had not been observed on this occasion. Members felt that the Minister's response was important and adequate time should be allowed. John Lloyd said he would let the Presiding Officer know the views of the Committee.

5. Advice to Assembly on procedures

5.1 None.

6. Committees

6.1 The Committee considered and agreed paper BC26-01 - a request from the Culture Committee for an additional meeting on 15th February. **Action: Chamber Secretariat to advise Clerk of Culture Committee**

6.2 The Committee considered and agreed paper BC27-01 - a request from the Education Committee for an additional meeting on 17th May. **Action: Chamber Secretariat to advise Clerk of the Education Committee**

6.3 The Committee considered paper BC29-01 about Plenary debates on subject committee reports. Marie Knox said that she had prepared the paper in order to address the concerns raised following recent subject committee debates and detailed the principles outlined in the paper. Jocelyn Davies and David Melding both felt that the paper was very helpful and agreed the general principles. The Minister for Assembly Business said that he would want to consider the paper with the Cabinet given the fundamental principles involved. Marie Knox asked whether this could be considered prior to the debate on the Education Committee's report on 6th March since Members were already beginning to discuss the handling of the debate. **Action: Minister for Assembly Business to consider the paper with Cabinet colleagues**

7. Forthcoming business

This week's business

7.1 The Minister for Assembly Business said that statements would be made that afternoon by Edwina Hart to update the Assembly on the latest position in relation to Asylum Seekers and Mike German on job losses at the Valeo plant in Gorseinon. The Cabinet had expected Corus to make an announcement on its future at Llanwern by now. Business Managers acknowledged that the business timetable for later that afternoon had been kept to a minimum to allow for a debate on the issue. Since an announcement was expected, possibly the following day, the Minister for Assembly Business asked Business Managers for their views on adjourning business on Thursday in order to discuss the issue or for a special Plenary session on Wednesday 31st January. **Action: Business Managers**

7.2 The Minister for Assembly Business said that Jane Hutt would be making a statement in Plenary on Thursday 1st February on the NHS Strategy. Given David Melding's concerns that a statement would be made before the document was available to Members, the Minister for Assembly Business agreed to speak with the Minister for Health and Social Services to clarify the position and report back to Business Managers. Jocelyn Davies said that she would be concerned if the document was issued in the name of the National Assembly when Members might not have considered it or even seen it either in Plenary or in Committee. **Action: Minister for Assembly Business to discuss with Minister for Health and Social Services**

7.3 The Committee considered the draft business statement (BC31-01).

Proposed business for the weeks commencing 5th, 12th and 26th February 2001

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 5th, 12th and 26th February was that it should proceed as outlined in the draft business statement.

7.5 David Melding asked the Minister for Assembly Business to consider scheduling debates on:

- The Mental Health White Paper
- The working of Concordats
- The future of rural schools
- The government response on hospital waiting lists (to be scheduled in April)

The Minister said that a debate on the Mental Health White Paper was already in hand and that he had taken note of the other issues.

8. Subordinate legislation

The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (Electronic Communications)(Wales) Order 2001

8.1 The Business Committee noted paper BC24-01 that provided advice from Edwina Hart, Assembly Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities on the handling of the above Order. Members of the Business Committee advised the Chair that they were content with the proposal not to send the draft Order to subject committee and agreed that it should follow the Standard procedure.

The Presiding Officer subsequently determined that the Order need not be referred to a subject committee.

The Education (Pupil Records)(Wales) Regulations 2001

8.2 The Business Committee noted paper BC25-01 that provided advice from Jane Davidson, Assembly Minister for Education on the handling of the above Order. Members of the Business Committee advised the Chair that they were content with the proposal not to send the draft Order to subject committee and agreed that it should follow the Accelerated procedure.

The Presiding Officer subsequently determined that the Order need not be referred to a subject committee.

9. Revisions to Standing Orders

9.1 The Committee considered paper BC28-01 which detailed proposed revisions to Standing Order 12. Marie Knox outlined four options for the disqualification of Members from the Audit Committee; proposals to bring the arrangements for electing a temporary chair in line with the provisions in the Government of Wales Act; and substitution arrangements for Members of the Committee. The Minister for Assembly Business said that he would want to discuss the proposals with his group. It was agreed that Business Managers should feed back their views at the meeting on 13th February. If agreement was reached, then a motion to amend Standing Orders would need to be considered in Plenary prior to the next meeting of the Committee. Business Managers agreed that if there was all-party agreement to the proposals then a No Named Day Motion could be moved with the Presiding Officer's permission. **Action: Business Managers to report back on 13th February**

10. Presiding Officer rulings

10.1 None.

11. Any other business

11.1 The Minister for Assembly Business asked Business Managers to consider how business should be conducted during the General Election period. While there was general consensus that there should be "*business as usual*", the Minister sought views on whether Plenary on polling day should continue, be suspended or deferred. David Melding felt that in principle, the Assembly should not sit on polling day while Jocelyn Davies felt that her group would prefer to sit. It was agreed that Business Managers would consider with their groups and report back. **Action: Business Managers**

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