

Parliamentary Bureau – Committee request to meet at the same time as the parliament

Introduction

1. The Parliamentary Bureau is invited to consider a request from the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee to meet at the same time as plenary proceedings on Thursday 18 April 2024, most likely between 2.00pm and 5.00pm. The purpose of this meeting is to consider a draft Stage 1 report on the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) (Scotland) Bill.

Background to Request

2. The Committee has been undertaking Stage 1 scrutiny of the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) (Scotland) Bill since the Bill was originally introduced on 5 October 2023. The deadline for completion of Stage 1 has been agreed as Friday, 3 May 2024 and the Stage 1 debate is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 30 April.
3. Three Members of the Committee are due to attend an external meeting from 14-16 April as designated Members of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly. This means they are unable to attend the Committee's scheduled meeting on Tuesday, 16 April, when the Committee had previously planned to consider and agree its draft Stage 1 report on the Abortion Services (Safe Access) Zones (Scotland) Bill. Furthermore, considering and agreeing the report at its scheduled meeting on Tuesday, 23 April would mean it would be unable to meet the deadline for publication of the report - no later than the fifth sitting day before the scheduled Stage 1 debate on Tuesday, 30 April.
4. On this basis, the Committee has concluded that, to meet the agreed timetable for conclusion of Stage 1 in relation to the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill, the only remaining viable option would be to seek permission to meet to consider and agree its draft Stage 1 report at a time when the Chamber is sitting.

Timings proposed for meeting

5. In terms of Chamber business, the timings above would mean that the Committee is seeking approval to meet during Portfolio Questions on Social Justice and the Stage 1 debate on the Scottish Employment Injuries Advisory Council Bill (as well as, if relevant, any Parliamentary Business Motions). The Committee's meeting would finish in time for Decision Time, currently scheduled for 5.00pm.

Decision

6. The Bureau is invited to consider the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee's request and to recommend to the Parliament that the Committee be given permission to meet at the same time as the Chamber between 2.00pm and 5.00pm on Thursday 18 April.

Parliamentary Business Team
11 April 2024