



Northern Ireland Office

Press Notice

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MOWLAM APPOINTS LORD ALDERDICE AS INITIAL PRESIDING OFFICER OF NEW ASSEMBLY

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Dr Marjorie Mowlam, has appointed Lord Alderdice to be the initial Presiding Officer of the New Assembly.

Commenting on the appointment, Dr Mowlam said: "I am pleased to be able to appoint John Alderdice. His political and Parliamentary experience mean that he is well suited to carry out this role.

"The Assembly will, as its first substantive business, have the opportunity to elect a Presiding Officer and deputy. Lord Alderdice will have the task of presiding over the formal launch of the New Assembly. I am grateful to him for agreeing to take on this role."

Dr Mowlam has also formally notified Lord Alderdice as Presiding Officer, that the first meeting of the Assembly will take place at 2 pm on Wednesday 1 July, at Castle Buildings, Stormont and notified him of the Standing Orders which will regulate the conduct of the Assembly.

Those Standing Orders set out the Assembly's initial agenda, a copy of which is attached.

To complete the formalities, Dr Mowlam has formally referred a number of matters to the Assembly in pursuance of its statutory duty to "participate in preparations to give effect to the agreement reached in the multi party talks on Northern Ireland". Those matters, which the Assembly will need to address during the 'shadow' period before any powers are devolved, include:

- (1) The steps necessary to establish the internal organisation of the Assembly, including
 - the election of a First Minister and Deputy First Minister;
 - agreement on the number of Ministerial posts and the distribution of responsibilities between those posts;
 - the nomination of persons to fill those posts on the basis of the D'Hondt procedure;
 - the establishment of related Committees, with Chairs and Deputy Chairs again nominated on the basis of the D'Hondt procedure and members appointed on a broadly proportional basis.

- (2) The steps necessary to enable relevant members of the Assembly to participate in inaugural and subsequent meetings of the Shadow British Irish Council and of the Shadow North/South Ministerial Council, including:
 - participation with Irish Ministers in the Shadow North/South Ministerial Council, in consultation with HMG, with a view to completing by 31 October the work programme mentioned in the Strand 2 part of the Agreement.

- (3) Agreement on Standing Orders and working practices.

- (4) Preliminary consultations on the arrangements for establishing a consultative Civic Forum.

INITIAL AGENDA FOR 1 JULY

1. Presiding Officer to bring to the attention of the Assembly:
 - (a) the Presiding Officer's letter of appointment;
 - (b) the notice sent to the Presiding Officer regarding the time and place of the first meeting of the Assembly;
 - (c) the statutory remit of the new Assembly;
 - (d) any matters referred to the Assembly under Section 1(2) of the Northern Ireland (Elections) Act 1998.

2. Members shall then be invited by the Presiding Officer to take their seats in accordance with paragraph 3 of these Orders and the business of the Assembly shall be as follows:
 - (a) consideration of any proposals regarding the election of the Presiding Officer;

 - (b) consideration of any proposals regarding the election of the Deputy Presiding Officer;

 - (c) consideration of any proposals regarding the election of a First Minister (designate) and Deputy First Minister (designate);

 - (d) consideration of any motion to establish a Committee, in accordance with paragraph 15 of [the Standing] Orders, to assist the Assembly in the consideration of Standing Orders;

 - (e) consideration of any motion to invite the First Minister (designate) and Deputy First Minister (designate) to consider and, after consultation, make proposals regarding matters referred to the Assembly, under Section 1(2) of the Northern Ireland (Elections) Act 1998 and any other matter connected with the future business of the Assembly, and to report to the Assembly by a specified date;

 - (f) consideration of any motion in the name of the Presiding Officer to establish a Committee in accordance with paragraph of 16 [the Standing] Orders