



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Thursday, 12 March 2020
Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings**

Present: Mr Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA
Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA
Mr Gerry Carroll MLA
Mr Alan Chambers MLA
Ms Jemma Dolan MLA
Mr Alex Easton MLA
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA

In Attendance: Ms Éilís Haughey (Clerk)
Ms Deirdre Farry (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Roisin Donnelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Lamont (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Brendan Miskelly (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am in public session.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Chairperson's Business

- i. The Chairperson advised Members that he had held meetings with the Niamh Louise Foundation, Diabetes UK and Robin Emmerson, a medicinal cannabis campaigner, and that he had attended an Endometriosis event in Parliament Buildings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider Endometriosis as part of its Forward Work Programme.

- ii. The Chairperson advised Members that he has agreed to speak at the launch of the Leonard Cheshire Alcohol-Related Brain Injury Unit on 22 April 2020.

The Committee agreed to move to Agenda Item 5.

3. Ministerial Briefing – Department of Health Priorities

The Minister of Health, the Permanent Secretary and the Chief Medical Officer joined the meeting at 10.02 am.

Mr Robin Swan MLA, Minister of Health

Mr Richard Pengelly, Permanent Secretary, Department of Health

Dr Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health

The Minister outlined key issues and priorities for the Department of Health.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session, which focused on the Department's actions and plans relating to COVID-19.

The Minister agreed to attend a further Committee meeting in the forthcoming weeks to answer questions from Members on the Department of Health's wider issues and priorities.

The Chairperson thanked the Minister, the Permanent Secretary and the Chief Medical Officer for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The meeting was suspended at 11.45 am.

The meeting resumed at 11.55 pm.

4. Draft Minutes

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2020.

5. Matters Arising

Further to the Committee's consideration of the second progress report on the Autism Strategy at last week's meeting, the Committee considered the content of a draft letter to the Department of Health requesting further information on the Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue the letter to the Department of Health.

6. Briefing from the British Dental Association

Representatives from the British Dental Association (BDA) joined the meeting at 11.58 am.

Ms Caroline Lappin, Chair of BDA NI Council

Mr Richard Graham, Chair of NI Dental Practice Committee

Mr Tristen Kelso, Director, BDA NI

The BDA representatives briefed the Committee on oral health provision in Northern Ireland and the key challenges affecting dentistry.

Mr Gerry Carroll declared an interest as having a relative who is employed as a dentist.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek clarification from the Department of Health on whether it planned to update the Oral Health Strategy for Northern Ireland and request further information on the work of the two Oral Health Options Groups established to take forward policy options for children, and the elderly.

7. SL1 The Food Information (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SL1 The Food Information (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, which will provide for the enforcement of specific labelling requirements where the country of origin, or place of provenance, of a primary ingredient is not the same as the given origin of the food itself.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information on the Rule.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that in future, the Department should include in the information it provides to the Committee on all proposed statutory rules, the position in the Republic of Ireland in relation to equivalent legislation, if appropriate.

8. SL1 The Recovery of Health Service Charges (Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SL1 The Recovery of Health Service Charges (Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which would apply an inflationary uplift to the current tariff levels used for the collection of costs incurred by hospitals when treating casualties of road traffic accidents.

The Committee noted a part-response from the Department of Health to its request for further information on the proposed Rule and that the additional information requested by the Committee, in relation to the system in GB, would be provided by the Department as soon as this has been collated.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposal for the Statutory Rule.

9. SR 2020/25 The Provision of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

The Committee considered SR 2020/25 The Provision of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, which would ensure that hospital treatment for Coronavirus disease is provided to any visitor to Northern Ireland without charge.

Agreed: That the Committee for Health has considered considered SR 2020/25 The Provision of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and had no objection to the Rule.

10. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Health to the Committee's request for information on the mental health support available to those affected by the neurology patient recall.
- ii. The Committee considered a response from the Minister of Health to the Committee's request for information on the introduction of a soft opt-out system for organ donation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Minister's response to the Donate4Dáithí campaign for information and to consider this matter further as part of its Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek further information from the Department on its actions relating to its statutory duty to increase awareness about transplantation and donation.

- iii. The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Health to the Committee's request for further information in relation to SL1 The Public Health Notifiable Diseases Order (Northern Ireland) 2020.
- iv. The Committee considered a request from Parent Action CIC to brief the Committee in relation to engagement issues with health bodies.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending further scrutiny of accountability and governance and in relation to Hyponatremia; and to add the group to the Committee's stakeholder list.

- v. The Committee considered correspondence from Derry and Strabane District Council regarding the Owen Mor Care Centre.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise Derry and Strabane District Council of the proposed Committee sessions on the issue of care homes.

- vi. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from Inspire to the Minister of Health regarding the closure of its community crisis de-escalation service due to lack of continued funding.

- vii. The Committee considered a request from Action for Children to meet the Committee to discuss challenges for children, young people and adults.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the request as part of its Forward Work Programme.

- viii. The Committee considered a request from an individual to brief the Committee on his experience of engaging with RQIA on the neurology patient recall.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise the individual of the planned RQIA briefing session and to provide information about the Committee's role.

- ix. The Committee considered an invitation to the Health and Social Awards launch event.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members should respond to the invitation directly.

- x. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding Care in the Community.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Health.

- xi. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding abortion law reform in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request briefing from the Northern Ireland Office in relation to the introduction of a legal framework for access to abortion services in Northern Ireland.

- xii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Minister of Health to the Chairperson regarding COVID-19 preparations.

- xiii. The Committee noted the Nursing and Midwifery Taskforce Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the report in further detail when conducting further scrutiny of workforce issues.

- xiv. The Committee considered the fourth report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules, which included the Examiner's technical scrutiny of SR 2020/23 The Public Health Notifiable Diseases Order (Northern Ireland) 2020. The Committee noted that the Examiner highlighted the Rule was laid in breach of the 21 day rule but was content that there was a satisfactory reason for doing so.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme.

The Committee discussed options regarding its consideration of issues arising from the emergence of COVID-19.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add COVID-19 as a standing item to its weekly meeting agenda; to commence its weekly meeting at the earlier time of 9:30 am; and to keep handling arrangements under review.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to postpone its strategic planning meeting scheduled for 19 March 2020.

12. Any Other Business

The Chairperson advised Members that this would be Jemma Dolan's last meeting with the Committee for Health and thanked Jemma for her contribution to the work of the Committee.

13. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee meeting will be on Thursday, 19 March 2020, at 9.30 am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.12 pm.

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Date: _____