



Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 16 December 2021

Meeting Location: virtual meeting

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)

Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Gerry Carroll MLA

Alan Chambers MLA

Deborah Erskine MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Colin McGrath MLA

Apologies:

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Keith McBride (Clerk)

Roisin Donnelly (Assistant Clerk)

Deirdre Farry (Assistant Clerk)



Brendan Miskelly (Clerical Supervisor)

Ellen Wilson (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 9.32 am in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

The Chairperson informed the Committee that, under Standing Order 115 (6), Carál Ní Chuilín had delegated authority to him to vote on her behalf at the meeting.

2. Chairperson's Business

- i. The Chairperson referred to reports of an increase in attacks on health and social care staff. The Chairperson and Members reiterated the Committee's condemnation of such attacks, reaffirmed its support for health and social care workers and urged the responsible bodies to do everything possible to address this issue.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule briefing from the Royal College of Nursing.

- ii. The Chairperson advised that as a result of a low level threat that has been made against a Department of Health official whose work includes responsibility for matters relating to abortion service provision, arrangements have been made to protect the identities of departmental officials who will attend the meeting later to provide briefing on the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill.



Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health to condemn the threat that has been made and to express its solidarity with the official concerned.

- iii. The Chairperson referred to his recent contact with the Public Health Agency in relation to access to the booster vaccine for people who are house bound and recorded his appreciation for the work that the Department of Health, the arm's length bodies and the wider health and social care system carry out.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health to update the advice and guidance on the NI Direct website relating to the booster vaccine for people who are house bound.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department for an update on its strategy to communicate and provide clarity to businesses and the wider general public in relation to vaccine certification requirements.

- iv. The Chairperson provided an update on a seminar he attended on Omicron hosted by the British Academy. The Chairperson asked that members of the public redouble their efforts to protect themselves and other over the Christmas period.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2021.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.



5. Departmental briefing - January Monitoring

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 9:45 am:

Brigitte Worth, Finance Director;

Annette Palmer, Head of Financial Management;

David Keenan, Head of Financial Planning;

Preeta Miller, Director of Infrastructure Investment; and

Tomas Adell, Director of Transformation.

Alan Chambers joined the meeting at 9.50 am.

The officials briefed the Committee on the Department of Health 2021/22 January Monitoring position and gave an overview of the 3-year budget process.

A question and answer session followed.

The officials agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues raised.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The meeting was suspended at 10.50 am and resumed at 11.02 am.



6. Departmental Briefing – EU Exit

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 11:02 am:

Cathy Harrison, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer;

Eimear Smyth, Director, Medical Supplies;

Patricia Quinn-Duffy, Head of Healthcare Policy EU Future Relations – Healthcare Access and International Relations Directorate;

David Wilson, Senior Principal, Safety Strategy Unit

Fiona Taylor, Principal Pharmaceutical Officer, Medical Supplies Directorate

Avi McCabe, Solicitor, Medical Supplies Directorate

The officials briefed the Committee on the Department of Health on Brexit related matters.

A question and answer session followed.

The officials agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues raised.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

7. Departmental Briefing - Common Frameworks

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 12.01 pm:



Patricia Quinn-Duffy, Head of Healthcare Policy EU Future Relations – Healthcare Access and International Relations Directorate;

Joan Hardy, Principal Officer, Secondary Care Policy and Legislation; and

Alasdair MacInnes, Principal Officer, Health Protection Branch 1.

The officials briefed the Committee on the Department of Health on the common frameworks.

A question and answer session followed.

The officials agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues raised.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

8. Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill – Consideration of Draft Report

The Committee considered the draft report on the Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill.

Title Page, Committee Powers and Membership and Table of Contents

The Committee considered the Title Page, Table of Contents, Committee Powers and Membership, and List of Abbreviations and Acronyms as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Title Page, Table of Contents, Committee Powers and Membership, and List of Abbreviations and Acronyms.



Executive Summary

The Committee considered the Executive Summary of the report as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Executive Summary.

Introduction

The Committee considered the Introduction and Committee Approach section of the report (paragraphs 1 to 19) as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Introduction section of the report.

Consideration of the Bill

The Committee considered the Consideration of the Bill section of the report (paragraphs 1 to 37) as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Consideration of the Bill section of the report.

Clause by Clause Consideration of the Bill

The Committee considered the Clause by Clause Consideration of the Bill section of the report (paragraphs 38 to 41) as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Clause by Clause Consideration of the Bill Section of the report.

Appendices

The Committee considered the Appendices section of the report.



- Agreed** The Committee agreed that it was content that the Appendices be included in the report.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to approve the Minutes of Proceedings of this meeting for inclusion in the report.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content for the Report on the Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill to be published and issued to all MLAs.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed that an electronic copy of the Bill report should be sent to all organisations who provided evidence to the Committee on the Bill.

The consideration and approval of the Committee report session was reported by Hansard.

The Deputy Chairperson declared her interest in the next item of business as being the Bill Sponsor for the Autism Bill.

The Committee moved into closed session at 12.35 pm.

9. The Autism (Amendment) Bill – consideration of draft amendments

Bill Clerks, Dr Kathryn Aiken and Phil Pateman joined the meeting at 12.36 pm and briefed the Committee on the draft amendments the Committee had asked the Bill team to prepare for consideration.

The Committee discussed the amendments it wished to see made to the Autism (Amendment) Bill and the recommendations to be included in the Committee's Bill Report.



The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health relating to the Autism Bill and the collection of data.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a number of amendments to the Bill and asked the Bill Clerks to draft a further amendment relating to the independence of the Reviewer.

The Chairperson advised that clause by clause consideration of the Bill would take place at the next meeting, followed by consideration of the draft report.

The meeting was suspended at 1:11 pm and resumed at 2:02 pm in public session.

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)

Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Gerry Carroll MLA

Deborah Erskine MLA

Colin McGrath MLA

10. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising of a consultation on draft regulations entitled, The Health and Social Care Pension Schemes (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 which amend the rules for the HSC Pension Scheme.
- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising of a consultation on draft regulations entitled, The Health and Social Care



Pension Scheme (Members Contribution) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 which amend the rules for the HSC Pension Scheme.

- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising that his Department, in partnership with the Department of Justice and the Executive Office, are launching a 'Call for Views' to inform the development of two new strategies: Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy and Violence against Women and Girls Strategy.
- iv. The Committee noted the Minister of Health's statement to the Assembly on the NSMC Health and Food Safety Sectoral meeting held on 14 October 2021.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing a response to issues raised in relation to the Smoke-Free (Private Vehicles) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021.
- vi. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the Draft Northern Ireland Cancer Strategy.
Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule briefing from the Department of Health on the Draft Cancer Strategy for Northern Ireland.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the provision of medicines to Northern Ireland under the protocol and the impact of the protocol.
- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health advising that the consultation on proposed amendments to the UK wide Human Medicines Regulations was published by the Department of Health and Social Care and if accepted, will require amendments to the UK Human Medicines Regulations 2012.



- ix. The Committee considered correspondence from Brain Injury Matters regarding the requirement for cross-departmental investment and support for people living with acquired brain injuries.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request an update from the Department of Health in relation to funding for this matter.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing session with Brain Injury Matters.
- x. The Committee noted a request from the Committee for Education that its call for evidence on the Period Products (Free Provision) Bill is shared with Health Committee stakeholders.
- xi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Finance providing information on access to information for people with sensory impairments.
- xii. The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Seventh Report of Session 2021-2022.
- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service advising that it is consulting on the principle of the use of body worn video cameras for staff for violence prevention and reduction purposes.
- xiv. The Committee noted the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission Annual Statement for 2021.
- xv. The Committee noted a correspondence from an UUP representative regarding the work of the Belfast based charity, Glow NI.
- xvi. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from Ards and North Down Borough Councillor, Ray McKimm to the Health Minister regarding the exclusion of agency workers from the HSC special recognition payment scheme.



- xvii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Minister of Health to the Commissioner for Older People regarding his call for a public inquiry into the handling of COVID-19 in care homes in Northern Ireland.
- xviii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising that the UK Government has brought forward the European Qualification (Health and Social Care Professions) (Amendment etc) (EU Exit) Regulations.
- xix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising that there is to be a consultation on proposed amendments to the Human Medicines Regulations 2021 that relate to the supply of medicines in accordance with Patient Group Directions in light of the closure of the HSC Board.
- xx. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding planned UK-wide consultations on proposed changes to the Human Medicines Regulations 2021.
- xxi. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health responding to issues raised by the Committee relating to access to GP services.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reschedule consideration of this item of correspondence at the next meeting.

- xxii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health providing information requested by Members during the Minister's briefing with the Committee at the meeting on 30 September 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for further information relating to the appointment of the RQIA Interim Chief Executive and the agreement in relation to NHS staff and tax bills in relation to childcare.



The following correspondence was considered and agreed via email by the Committee following the meeting on 9 December:

- xxiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing copies of the minutes of the critical care, oxygen supply and respiratory hub meetings.
- xxiv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health responding to the Committee's request for information on the COVID-status certification requirements.
- xxv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising of his intention to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment in relation to the 2022-2025 budget process when finalised.
- xxvi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Clerking and Member Support Office regarding a Deaf Awareness Course.
- xxvii. The Committee noted the Food Safety Annual Report and Accounts for 2020.
- xxviii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Economic and Social Research Council advising of the establishment of a newly funded research Centre for Care.
- xxix. The Committee noted an invitation from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to the launch of its Annual Human Rights Statement.
- xxx. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the transfer of Valley Nursing Home residents.
- xxxi. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine certification process for people with disabilities.



Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Health for a response to the issues raised.

xxxii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding stem cell donation.

xxxiii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the appropriateness of COVID-19 restriction measures.

xxxiv. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the time period between the administration of the first and second COVID-19 vaccines.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Health for a response to the issues raised.

xxxv. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the availability of care packages.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Health for a response to the issues raised.

xxxvi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health on the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme.

The Clerk provided an update on the Committee's legislative work programme for January and February 2022.



12. Adoption and Children Bill – Evidence from NI Human Rights Commission, Fostering Network NI, and Adoption UK

The following representatives from NI Human Rights Commission, Fostering Network NI, and Adoption UK joined the meeting by video-conference at 2:24 pm:

Alyson Kilpatrick, Chief Commissioner, NI Human Rights Commission;

Emily Mills, Policy and Research Officer, NI Human Rights Commission;

Kathleen Toner, Director, Fostering Network;

EJ Havlin, Director, Adoption UK; and

Wesley Graham, Trustee, Adoption UK.

Alan Chambers re-joined the meeting at 2:33 pm.

Gerry Gerry Carroll left the meeting at 2:36 pm.

The Chairperson declared an interest as formerly being employed as a social worker and currently taking a career break.

The representatives briefed the Committee on the Adoption and Children Bill.

A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Gerry Carroll left the meeting at 3.10 pm.



13. Adoption and Children Bill – Evidence from British Association of Social Workers NI, Action for Children and Home for Good

The following representatives from British Association of Social Workers, Action for Children and Home for Good joined the meeting by video-conference at 3:10 pm:

Carolyn Ewart, National Director, BASW NI;

Avery Bowser, Fostering Services Manager, Action for Children;

Malini Colville, NI Lead, Home for Good; and

Judith Dawson, Project Worker, Home for Good.

The representatives briefed the Committee on the Adoption and Children Bill.

A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Órlaithí Flynn re-joined the meeting at 3.30 pm.

Alan Chambers left the meeting at 3.50 pm.

The meeting was suspended at 3.58 pm and resumed at 4.05 pm.

14. Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill – Evidence from Department of Health

Department of Health officials joined the meeting by video-conference at 4.05 pm and briefed the Committee on the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill.

A question and answer session followed.



The officials agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues raised.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

15. Any Other Business

The Clerk advised that he would circulate an update on the progress of the Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

16. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Health was scheduled to take place at 12.30 pm on Tuesday, 11 January 2022 or earlier at the request of the Chairperson.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.44 pm.

**Colm Gildernew MLA,
Chairperson, Committee for Health**