



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Thursday, 14 May 2020
Room 29, Parliament Buildings**

Present: Mr Colm Gildernew (Chairperson)
Ms Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA
Mr Gerry Carroll MLA
Mr Alan Chambers MLA
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA*
Mr Alex Easton MLA*
Mr Colin McGrath MLA
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA*

In Attendance: Ms Éilis Haughey (Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Lamont (Clerical Supervisor)

**These Members attended the meeting via telephone conferencing.*

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am in public session.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson informed Members that he had taken part in a number of media interviews relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chairperson also advised that he had held informal meetings with representatives of carers, Community Pharmacy NI, and the College of Paramedics.

3. Draft Minutes

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2020.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee noted that, further to a previous request from the Committee for Education to hold a concurrent meeting on support measures for the childcare sector

during the pandemic, the Education Committee had provided an update on its consideration of this matter which appeared to supersede the request.

The Committee moved to agenda item 7.

5. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered two items of correspondence from the Minister of Health responding to issues raised during the briefing sessions he held with the Committee on 2 and 23 April 2020 respectively. The Committee noted that there would be an opportunity for further discussion relating to the response with the Minister at the meeting on 20 May 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health to request clarity in relation to contract arrangements with Randox.

The Committee moved to agenda item 5.

6. COVID-19 Disease Response – Expert Panel Briefing

A panel of experts in the field of global health joined the meeting via telephone conferencing at 10.20 am.

Professor Sian Griffiths, Emeritus Professor, Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Professor Martin McKee, Professor of European Public Health, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Professor Anthony Costello, Professor of Global Health and Sustainable Development, University College London.

The panel members briefed the Committee on experience gained from the management of previous international pandemics to inform debate on next steps and mitigation of the risk of a second surge.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the panel members for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The meeting was suspended at 11.58 am.

The meeting resumed at 12.12 pm.

7. COVID-19 Disease Response – Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority Briefing

Officials from the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) joined the meeting via telephone conferencing at 12.12 pm.

Mr Dermot Parsons, Interim Chief Executive, RQIA.

Ms Emer Hopkins, Interim Director of Improvement, RQIA.

Ms Elaine Connolly, Assistant Director, Assurance, RQIA.

The officials briefed the Committee on the work of RQIA during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Ms Paula Bradshaw declared an interest as having a relative who works in a care home.

The officials agreed to provide the Committee with further information on issues raised during the question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek clarity on a number of issues discussed with the RQIA officials.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

8. Correspondence (continued)

- ii. The Committee noted, pending further engagement with the Department of Health, correspondence from the Health Minister responding to issues raised during the briefing session with the Chief Social Worker and Director of Mental Health, Disability and Older People on 9 April 2020 relating to the provision of social care as a result of COVID-19.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health providing information on COVID-19 testing in relation to patients and staff at Muckamore Abbey Hospital.
- iv. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists to the Minister of Health requesting the implementation of the speech and language therapy workforce review.
- v. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding COVID-19 support for self-employed health care professionals.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise the individual to contact Ulster Chemists Association NI and Citizen's Advice Bureau for advice.

- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding COVID-19 measures.
- vii. The Committee considered correspondence from the College of Paramedics regarding guidelines for Aerosol Generating Procedures and the use of appropriate PPE.

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

- viii. The Committee considered the wording of a draft letter to the Department of Health requesting information relating to the budget briefing sessions with departmental officials on 23 and 30 April 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the text of the draft letter and for it to be issued to the Department of Health.

- ix. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the occupations contained in the key workers list in use in Northern Ireland.

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

- x. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Justice inviting views on the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an additional session to consider the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill.

- xi. The Committee considered correspondence from Mr Alex Easton MLA apologising for his actions at the previous meeting. The Committee noted the correspondence and that the situation that arose was unsatisfactory.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that a list of experts who could be invited to attend a future COVID-19 expert panel session is circulated to Members.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing session with the Chief Scientific Officer.

10. Any Other Business

A Member advised that a special committee on Covid-19 response had been established in the Dáil.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson should write to the Chairman of that Committee to propose the sharing of information relevant to the work of the Health Committee.

11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next committee meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 20 May 2020, at 11.30 am in the Senate, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.15 pm.

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Date: _____