



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH

DRAFT MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Thursday, 19 March 2020
Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings**

- Present:** Mr Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA
Mr Gerry Carroll MLA
Mr Alan Chambers MLA
- Apologies:** Ms Sinéad Bradley 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 10.34 am in public session with the Deputy Chairperson taking the chair.

The Deputy Chairperson advised Members that the Chairperson was attending the meeting via video conferencing.

** The Deputy Chairperson further advised that Ms Bradley MLA was engaging in the meeting via the live online streaming service and by email. Further to this, options to facilitate future remote participation in meetings were being explored by Assembly staff.*

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Deputy Chairperson advised Members that she and the Chairperson had met with representatives from the Royal College of General Practitioners NI on issues arising from COVID-19.

3. **Draft Minutes**

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2020.

4. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

The Deputy Chairperson advised Members that the College of Podiatry was unable to attend today's meeting as scheduled due to the current public health situation and that another date for this session would be arranged in due course.

5. **COVID-19 Disease Response – Care Sector**

The following representatives from the Independent Health and Social Care Sector joined the meeting at 10.37 am:

Ms Pauline Shepherd, Chief Executive, Independent Health and Care Providers

Ms Agnes Lunny, Chief Executive, Positive Futures

Ms Shepherd and Ms Lunny briefed the Committee on the situation in the care home and domiciliary care sector in relation to COVID-19.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked Ms Shepherd and Ms Lunny for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health to highlight the issues raised and to request that departmental officials brief the Committee on these issues.

The meeting was suspended at 11.32 am.

The meeting resumed at 11.48 am.

6. **COVID-19 Disease Response – Community Pharmacy**

The following representatives from the community pharmacy sector joined the meeting at 11:48 am:

Mr Gerard Greene, Chief Executive, Community Pharmacy NI

Mr Peter Rice, Community Pharmacist

Mr Greene and Mr Rice briefed the Committee on the issues affecting community pharmacy provision as a result of COVID-19.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked Mr Greene and Mr Rice for their attendance. The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health to highlight the issues raised and to request that departmental officials brief the Committee on these issues.

7. COVID-19 Disease Response

The Committee considered correspondence regarding the planned introduction of the emergency Coronavirus Bill in Westminster and preliminary information on the contents of the Bill.

The Committee noted that the related Legislative Consent Motion for consideration by the Northern Ireland Assembly had not yet been laid with the Business Office, however, once received, an extra committee meeting would be arranged to allow the Committee to consider this matter.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Speaker to Committee Chairpersons regarding Assembly business and the current public health situation.

8. SR 2020/24 The Food Information (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered a response from the Food Standards Agency to the Committee's request for further information on its proposal to make a statutory rule 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 that it was content with the proposal for the Statutory Rule.

The Committee considered SR 2020/24 The Food Information (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

Agreed: That the Committee for Health has considered SR 2020/24 The Food Information (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and had no objection to the Rule.

9. SL1 The Food Information (Amendment No.2) Regulations 2020

The Committee considered a proposal by the Department of Health to make a Statutory Rule to improve information to consumers about food allergens and/or ingredients which cause food hypersensitivity or intolerances in pre-packed for direct sale foods.

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

10. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Health, to the Committee's request for information regarding the introduction of the drug, Trikafta for the treatment of cystic fibrosis.
- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing information on the Health Service Medical Supplies (Costs) Act 2017.
- iii. The Committee considered a response from the Minister of Health to the Committee's request for consideration of the recording of waiting times for GP in-house counselling services.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Health to express its concern in relation to the response provided.

- iv. The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Health to the Committee's request for further information on the Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the College of Podiatry pending future briefing from representatives of the College.
- vi. The Committee considered correspondence received from an individual regarding mental health in young people.

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

- vii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Department of Education to the Committee for Education, providing information on the Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework.
- viii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Public Accounts Committee advising that it had requested a briefing from the Department of Health Permanent Secretary in relation to the NIAO's report on 'Major Capital Projects'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that it is kept updated in relation to this matter.

- ix. The Committee considered an invitation from the Alzheimer's Society to attend a Dementia Friendly Communities Workshop event.

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

- x. The Committee noted a reminder from Huntington's Disease Association NI to attend its information session sponsored by Paula Bradshaw MLA scheduled for 26 March 2020.
- xi. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee on Procedures regarding its review on the current procedures for Legislative Consent Motions and the relating Standing Order (42A).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to this item at the Committee meeting scheduled for 26 March 2020.

- xii. The Committee discussed an outstanding response from the Department of Health to the Committee's request for information on plans relating to financial support for people affected by the contaminated blood scandal.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Health to request that he gives this matter his urgent attention.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee discussed its Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reduce its forward work programme commitments to focus its efforts and give priority to consideration of matters relating to COVID-19.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request weekly briefing from Department of Health officials on priority topics identified by the Committee.

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

13. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee meeting will be on Thursday, 26 March 2020, at 9.30 am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.09 pm.

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Date: _____