



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Thursday, 11 February 2021
Meeting held via video conference***

Present: Mr Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA
Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA
Mr Gerry Carroll MLA
Mr Alan Chambers MLA
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA
Ms Cara Hunter MLA
Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

In Attendance: Mr Keith McBride (Clerk)
Ms Jean Barkley (Assistant Clerk)
Ms Roisin Donnelly (Assistant Clerk)
Ms Deirdre Farry (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Lamont (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Brendan Miskelly (Clerical Officer)

**Committee Members, Committee staff and witnesses attended the meeting by video-conference. Live coverage of the meeting was available through the Assembly website.*

The meeting commenced at 9.33 am in public session.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Chairperson's Business

- i. The Chairperson provided an update on an informal meeting that he had held with representatives from the Royal College of Surgeons.
- ii. The Chairperson advised that a meeting with individuals affected by the independent investigation into mother and baby homes has been arranged to take place on 16 February.

3. Matters Arising

The Chairperson referred to the Committee's consideration, at last week's meeting, of SR2021/8 The Mental Health (1986 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021 and updated the Committee on his meeting with the Chief Commissioner of the NI Human Rights Commission to discuss this statutory rule.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for detail on what treatments are included within the scope of these regulations and to seek assurance from the Department that those patients with more invasive treatments will be prioritised.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that the Department consult organisations such as the NIHRC when drafting legislation that affect those accessing mental health services.

4. COVID-19 Disease Response - Ministerial Update

The Minister of Health, Mr Robin Swann MLA, and the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Michael McBride joined the meeting via video-conference at 9.38 am.

The Minister provided an update on the Department of Health's response and planning in relation to COVID-19.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the Minister and Dr McBride for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The meeting was suspended at 11.11 am and resumed at 11.25 am

5. Departmental Briefing - 2021/2022 Draft Budget Outcome

The following Department of Health officials joined the meeting via video-conference at 11.26 am:

Ms Brigitte Worth, Director of Finance;

Mr David Keenan, Head of Financial Planning;

Mr Andrew Dawson, Director of Infrastructure Investment; and

Ms Ciara Dolan, Director of Transformation.

Ms Worth and Mr Dawson briefed the Committee on the Department of Health 2021 - 2022 Draft Budget.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

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.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise the Committee for Finance of its consideration of the Department of Health's draft Budget 2021-22 and to forward the Department of Health's papers on the budget to the Committee for Finance for its information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health whether it has undertaken any assessment of the use of telephone/video services in facilitating access to GP services and the uniformity of this approach across GP practices.

The meeting was suspended at 12.47 pm and resumed at 12.55 pm.

6. Draft Minutes

A Member referred to the draft minutes of the meeting on 4 February and raised concern regarding the procedural accuracy of how an item of business was conducted at that meeting.

The Chairperson asked the Clerk to review the tape in relation to that item of business.

7. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered a response from the Minister of Health to the Committee's request for information on matters arising from the O'Hara report on hyponatraemia related deaths.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for a further update on its work to respond to the findings of the O'Hara report on hyponatraemia related deaths and on matters arising from the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing in relation to the Department's response to the inquiry on hyponatraemia related deaths.

- ii. The Committee considered a response from the Minister of Health to the Committee's request for information on the HSC workforce appeal campaigns.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further detail from the Department of Health in relation to this matter.

- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the January 2021 Budget monitoring position.
- iv. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the treatment and aftercare for people experiencing the long-term effects of COVID-19.
 - Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request that it is kept updated by the Department of Health in relation to this matter.
- v. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the impact of COVID-19 on living and deceased organ transplant disposal.
 - Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending consideration of further updates on this matter.
- vi. The Committee considered an invitation from the Voice of Young People in Care to attend a virtual roundtable discussion on its recent research report on the experience of young people leaving care during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Agreed:* The Committee agreed that Members would respond directly to the invitation.
- vii. The Committee considered responses from Asthma UK and the British Lung Foundation NI and Cancer Focus NI to the Committee's request for their views on the services provided to those suffering from mesothelioma.
 - Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward both items of correspondence to the Department of Health for a response to the issues raised; express concern at the poor survival rates as outlined in the correspondence; to ask whether the Department plans to introduce a service model similar to the Scottish model; and request information relating to the roll out of best practice services across the UK.
 - Agreed:* The Committee agreed to advise the individual who had originally raised this matter with the Committee of the actions taken.
- viii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Justice to all Executive Ministers regarding the Damages (Return on Investment) Bill.
- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding concerns arising from the discussion at the Committee meeting on 4 February regarding a social media post shared by a member of the Board of the Education Authority.
- x. The Committee noted the Forum for Adult Learning NI 'Learn Well, Live Well Report: adult learning & health and wellbeing' and an invitation to the launch of the report.

- xi. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Finance to the Minister for Health regarding the timescales for when those categorised as clinically extremely vulnerable can expect to be vaccinated and would be safe to resume employment.
- xii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Communities to the Minister for Health to request an update on the consultation on minimum unit alcohol pricing and to consider the Committee's request for increased funding for alcohol advice and addiction services.
- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA regarding her proposal to take forward a Private Members Bill on Suicide Prevention Training.
- xiv. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual highlighting concerns about COVID-19 restrictions on sport and its impact on mental health.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a response from the Department of Health to this issues raised in this correspondence.

- xv. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the vaccinations of 16 - 17 year olds who are clinically extremely vulnerable.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this correspondence pending briefing on the vaccination programme.

- xvi. The Committee considered a response from the Minister of Health to the Committee's request for information on the parking enforcement measures adopted by Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further detail from the Department of Health in relation to this matter.

- xvii. The Committee considered a response from the Minister to the Committee's request for information regarding his decision to hold a statutory public inquiry into the clinical practice of a consultant urologist who worked for the Southern Health and Social Care Trust.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek further information relating to the terms of reference for the inquiry.

- xviii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising that the UK government is to lay a new statutory instrument in Westminster regarding the implementation of the EU Medical Device Regulations in Northern Ireland.

Ms Paula Bradshaw left the meeting at 1.30 pm.

8. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme.

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

10. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next committee meeting was scheduled to take place on Thursday, 18 February 2021, at 9.30 am.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.35 pm.

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Date: _____