



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Thursday, 22 October 2020  
Senate Chamber, 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\*  
Mr Alex Easton MLA  
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA\*  
Mr Colin McGrath MLA\*  
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA

**In Attendance:** Ms Éilis Haughey (Clerk)  
Ms Jean Barkley (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Jonathan Lamont (Clerical Supervisor)

*\*These Members attended the meeting via video-conference.*

*The meeting commenced at 9.33 am in public session.*

**1. Apologies**

None.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

- i. The Chairperson advised that Mr Alex Easton would be leaving the Committee and he thanked Mr Easton for his contribution to the work of the Health Committee.
- ii. The Chairperson advised that the Deputy Chairperson was self-isolating after receiving an exposure notification from the StopCOVID NI proximity app and encouraged members of the public to download and use the app.

**3. Draft Minutes**

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meetings held on 13 and 15 October 2020.

#### **4. Matters Arising**

- i. The Chairperson reminded Members that at the previous week's meeting the Committee had agreed to forward correspondence from the Committee for Finance, to the Department of Health, seeking details on bids submitted to the Department of Finance; and requested Members' agreement that relevant documents be shared with the Finance Committee to assist with their work on the Review of Financial Processes.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward financial returns from the Department of Health to the Committee for Finance.

- ii. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education, to the Committee's request for information on arrangements for providing flu vaccinations to children during the extended half-term break.

#### **5. Committee Inquiry: COVID-19 and its impact of Care Homes – Briefing from Independent Health and Care Providers**

Ms Pauline Shepherd, Chief Executive, Independent Health and Care Providers, joined the meeting by video-conference at 9.37 am.

Ms Shepherd briefed the Committee on the Independent Health and Care Providers' submission to the Committee's Inquiry.

*Mr Alan Chambers joined the meeting at 9.42 am.*

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Shepherd for her attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

*The meeting was suspended at 10.35 pm and resumed at 10.41 pm.*

#### **6. Committee Inquiry: COVID-19 and its impact of Care Homes – Briefing from RQIA**

The following officials from the RQIA joined the meeting at 10.42 pm:

Mr Tony Stevens, Interim Chief Executive, RQIA

Ms Emer Hopkins, Interim Director of Improvement, RQIA.

Mr Stevens briefed the Committee on RQIA's submission to the Committee's Inquiry.

*The Deputy Chairperson left the meeting at 11.00 am.*

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Stevens and Ms Hopkins for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

*The meeting was suspended at 11.51 pm and resumed at 11.58 pm.*

## **7. Committee Inquiry: COVID-19 and its impact of Care Homes – Department of Health**

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 11.58 pm:

Professor Charlotte McArdle, Chief Nursing Officer

Mr Sean Holland, Chief Social Worker

Mr Mark Lee, Director, Mental Health, Disability, Older People.

*The Chairperson declared an interest as formerly being employed as a social worker and currently taking a career break and having a relative who is a nurse.*

The Chief Nursing Officer and Chief Social Worker briefed the Committee on the Department's work to address the impact of COVID-19 on care homes.

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.*

*Mr Pat Sheehan left the meeting at 1.02 pm.*

*The Deputy Chairperson re-joined the meeting at 1.02 pm.*

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health to request further information on the rationale for the Department's discharge policy in April 2020.

## **8. UK SI: The Reciprocal and Cross-Border Healthcare (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020**

The Committee considered a UK Statutory Instrument 'The Reciprocal and Cross-Border Healthcare (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020' which will remove redundant 'no deal' provisions designed to apply if no transition period had been agreed.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note UK SI: The Reciprocal and Cross-Border Healthcare (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.

## **9. UK SI: Tobacco Products and Nicotine Inhaling Products (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020**

The Committee considered a UK Statutory Instrument ‘The Tobacco Products and Nicotine Inhaling Products (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020’ which will ensure that Northern Ireland continues to comply with the EU Tobacco Products Directive in compliance with the Ireland /NI Protocol.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note UK SI: The Tobacco Products and Nicotine Inhaling Products (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.

## **10. UK SI: Electronic Commerce Directive (Adoption and Children) (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020**

The Committee considered a UK Statutory Instrument ‘The Electronic Commerce Directive (Adoption and Children) (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020’ which is designed to remove EU-wide arrangements so that companies based in the UK which breach advertising rules in an EEA country, in relation to adoption, will no longer be treated as if they committed the offences in the UK. Persons who are not registered adoption agencies will continue to be prohibited from advertising in relation to adoption.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note UK SI: The Electronic Commerce Directive (Adoption and Children) (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.

## **11. Correspondence**

- i. The Committee considered a Department of Health briefing paper on its approach to equality and rural impact screening, consultation and engagement in relation to rebuilding proposals.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending further engagement with the Minister of Health.

- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health on COVID-19 indemnity arrangements for Winter 2020/Spring 2021.
- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health advising of the publication of the Department’s COVID-19 Urgent and Emergency Care Action Plan.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to confirm the date for the oral briefing in relation to this matter.

- iv. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the negative health impact of gym closures.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to advise the individual that the Executive's recent decision regarding restrictions did not include gym closures.

- v. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding health care workers and infection prevention control measures.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request guidance the wearing uniforms by HSC staff outside work.

- vi. The Committee considered an invitation from Girl Guiding Ulster to attend a virtual round table current issues event on 4 November 2020.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that Members would respond individually to the invitation.

- vii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health regarding its project looking at the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people across the UK.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note pending further scrutiny of the impact of COVID on young people and that individual Members consider sharing information about the project through their social media platforms.

- viii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Finance to the NI Fire and Rescue Service asking for their views on proposed amendments to the Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012.

- ix. The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules Twenty-fifth Report of Session 2019-2020.

- x. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding Assembly scrutiny of coronavirus related regulations.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Examiner of Statutory Rules for her consideration given the technical nature of the issues raised.

- xi. The Committee considered correspondence from Belfast Health and Social Care Trust confirming that the Fetal Medicine Service are supporting partners to attend all fetal medicine scans.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to update the individual who brought this matter to the attention of the Committee.

- xii. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding COVID testing at Queens PEC test site.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Public Health Agency for comment.

- xiii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Association of Anaesthetists providing its views on NHS future service design.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note this correspondence pending further consideration of rebuilding services.

- xiv. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding a forthcoming Legislative Consent Motion on the Medicines and Medical Devices Bill.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to notify the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs about the forthcoming LCM.

- xv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing a link to the recently published report on Exercise Cygnus.
- xvi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health on Gender Identity Services and Mr Gerry Carroll advised that the informal meeting he is arranging relating to this, will take place on 27 October at 1.00 pm.

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence and actions that were agreed by email following last week's meeting:

- xvii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing an update on the progress of the Medicines and Medical Devices Bill in Westminster and plans for a Legislative Consent Motion relating to transferred matters within the Bill.
- xviii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising that his officials will provide the Committee with a copy of the consultation responses in relation to the establishment of a Regional Care and Justice Campus for Children and Young People when the consultation has concluded and responses analysed.
- xix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Public Accounts Committee advising that it would not be pursuing its planned inquiry into addiction services at this time due to the unavailability of a senior Health Department official to provide oral evidence at this time as a result of COVID-19 response pressures.
- xx. The Committee considered correspondence from the Children's Law Centre regarding the application of the special measures provided in the Children's Social Care (Coronavirus) (Temporary Modification of Children's Social Care) Regulations (NI) 2020.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request a response from the Department of Health to the issues raised by the Children’s Law Centre.

- xxi. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the Committee’s plans to engage with the RQIA on its reviews relating to the neurology recall.

*Agreed:* The Committee agree to advise the individual of its ongoing work and consideration in relation to this matter.

- xxii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Finance requesting detail of bids submitted by Departments within the in-year monitoring process and bids relating to COVID-19 outside the in-year monitoring process.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the Committee for Finance’s template to the Department of Health for completion.

- xxiii. The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules’ Twenty-fourth Report of Session 2019-2020.

## **12. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme.

## **13. Any Other Business**

Members discussed recent comments made by the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on coronavirus infection rates and restriction measures.

The question was put, that the Committee would write to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to advise that his remarks may have compromised public health messaging and request that he take great care in his remarks in case they should be misinterpreted.

### **AYES**

Mr Colm Gildernew  
Ms Paula Bradshaw  
Mr Gerry Carroll  
Mr Colin McGrath

### **NOES**

Ms Pam Cameron  
Mr Alan Chambers  
Mr Alex Easton

*Agreed:* That the Committee would write to the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to advise that his remarks may have compromised public health messaging and request that he take great care in his remarks in case they should be misinterpreted.

**14. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next committee meeting was scheduled to take place on Thursday, 5 November 2020 at 9.30 am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.34 pm.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Chairperson*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_