



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 13 January 2022

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

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Keith McBride (Clerk)

Roisin Donnelly (Assistant Clerk)

Deirdre Farry (Assistant Clerk)

Neal Flanagan (Assistant Clerk)

Ellen Wilson (Clerical Officer)



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The meeting commenced at 9.35 am in public session.

1. Apologies

None.

The Clerk informed the Committee that Deborah Erskine needed to leave the meeting early and had delegated authority to Pam Cameron to vote on her behalf at the meeting, under Standing Order 115 (6).

2. Chairperson's Business

- i. The Chairperson referred to the landmark number of deaths relating to COVID-19 and asked members of the public to continue to adhere the public health guidance.
- ii. The Chairperson provided an update on a Policy Forum event he attended on 10 January 2022.
- iii. The Chairperson referred to the informal meetings the Committee held with a number of groups in relation to the Adoption and Children Bill and thanked the organisations that attended.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meetings held on 16 December 2021, 6 January 2022 and 11 January 2022.



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4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Autism (Amendment) Bill – Consideration of Draft Report

The Committee considered its draft report on the Autism (Amendment) Bill.

The Deputy Chairperson declared her interest as being the Bill Sponsor for the Autism 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 16) as drafted.



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

Consideration of the Clauses of the Bill

The Committee considered the Consideration of clauses of the Bill section of the report (paragraphs 17 to 50) 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 51 to 66) 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 Autism (Amendment) Bill to be published and issued to all MLAs.



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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.

6. Hospital Parking Charges Bill - consideration of written submissions

The Committee considered the written submissions it received on the Hospital Parking Charges Bill and noted that these would be published on the Committee's Bill webpage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the organisations who provided written submissions to give oral evidence on the Hospital Parking Charges Bill.

Agreed: The Committee identified a number of other organisations it wished to invite to provide evidence.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for further information on parking charges for hospital staff.

7. Adoption and Children Bill - Department of Health Briefing

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 10.03 am:

Eilis McDaniel, Director of Family and Children's Policy;

Julie Stephenson, Head of Adoption and Children Bill Team; and

Frances Nicholson, Social Services Officer

Gerry Carroll joined the meeting at 10.05 am.



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The officials provided a response to the issues raised in the evidence received by the Committee on the Adoption and Children Bill.

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

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 attending.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The meeting was suspended at 11.46 am and resumed at 12.00 pm.

8. SR 2021/334 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No. 20) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The following departmental officials joined the meeting by video-conference at 12.01 pm:

Elaine Colgan, Head of Health Protection Branch 2, Department of Health;

David Hughes, Grade 5, Health Protection Legislation, Department of Finance;

Niall Donnelly, Deputy Principal in Health Protection, Department of Health; and

Jane Holmes, Head of Covid Strategy & Recovery Branch, Executive Covid Taskforce, The Executive Office.

The officials provided briefing on three statutory rules relating to coronavirus restriction measures (agenda items 8 to 10).



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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 Committee considered SR 2021/334 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No. 19) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which: removes the definition of active period; changes the required timeframe for a negative Rapid Antigen Test; removes the requirement to provide photographic ID if the evidence provided includes a photo; provides greater clarity on “relevant premises”; and makes minor changes to the wording on who is responsible for a relevant premises or event, the system a responsible person must have in place, and the enforcement of this.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2021/334 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No. 20) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

9. SR 2021/348 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) (Amendment) (No.8) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer its consideration of SR 2021/348 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) (Amendment) (No.8) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 until the meeting on 20 January 2022.



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10. SR 2021/349 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No.21) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer its consideration of SR 2021/349 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No.21) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 until the meeting on 20 January 2020.

11. Draft SR The Coronavirus Act 2020 (Extension of Powers to Act for the Protection of Public Health) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer its consideration of Draft SR The Coronavirus Act 2020 (Extension of Powers to Act for the Protection of Public Health) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021 until the meeting on 20 January 2020.

The meeting moved into closed session at 12.43 pm.

Deborah Erskine left the meeting at 12.43 pm.

12. Adoption and Children Bill – Deliberations

Bill Clerk, Kathryn Aiken joined the meeting by video-conference at 12.43 pm.

The Committee considered the written and oral evidence it had received on the Adoption and Children Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Bill Clerk to prepare a number of draft amendments to the Bill.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to its deliberations on the Bill at its meeting on 20 January 2021.

Órlaithí Flynn left the meeting at 1.20 pm.

Gerry Carroll left the meeting at 1.25 pm.

13. Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill – Deliberations

Bill Clerk Denise Morgan joined Dr Kathryn Aiken by video-conference at the meeting at 1.30 pm.

The Committee considered the written and oral evidence it had received on the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Bill Clerk to prepare a number of draft amendments to the Bill.

Colin McGrath left the meeting at 2.11 pm.

Pam Cameron left the meeting at 2.15 pm.

The Chairperson thanked the Bill Clerks for their attendance.

14. 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, 18 January 2022.

The meeting was adjourned at 2.16 pm.

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