



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Committee for Health

### Minutes of Proceedings

**15 February 2024**

**Meeting Location:** Room 29, Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

Liz Kimmins MLA (Chairperson)

Danny Donnelly MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Alan Chambers MLA

Linda Dillon MLA

Diane Dodds MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Nuala McAllister MLA

Colin McGrath MLA

Alan Robinson MLA

**In Attendance:**

Keith McBride, Committee Clerk

Roisin Donnelly, Assistant Committee Clerk

Deirdre Farry, Assistant Committee Clerk

Jonathan Lamont, Clerical Supervisor

The meeting commenced at 2:04 pm in closed session.

The Chairperson welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Committee for Health.

### **1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

### **2. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson advised Members that she and the Deputy Chairperson had an informal introductory meeting with the Minister of Health and the Permanent Secretary on 12 February 2024.

### **3. Committee Procedures and Practices**

The Chairperson advised Members about the weekly meeting arrangements, provision of committee papers and staff contact details.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that meetings should, as a rule, be held in public session unless there is an overriding reason for proceedings to be closed.

The Chairperson advised that an induction plan for the Committee is being prepared and will include a strategic planning meeting to agree the Committee's key strategic priorities.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider the induction plan and forward work programme in further detail at the next meeting.

The Committee discussed the working arrangements and protocols it wished to adopt during this mandate.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed its approach to managing correspondence and meeting requests.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed it was content with the protocol on conduct and courtesy at Committee meetings.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed its use of social media for committee business.

#### **4. Briefing from the Examiner of Statutory Rules**

The Examiner of Statutory Rules, Angela Kelly joined the meeting at 2:34 pm.

The Examiner briefed the Committee on her role to carry out the technical scrutiny of statutory rules referred to the Committee and answered questions from Members.

The Chairperson thanked the Examiner for her attendance.

The meeting moved into public session at 2.52 pm.

#### **5. Committee Procedures and Practices**

##### **i. Committee Membership**

The Committee noted the membership of the Committee for Health.

##### **ii. Declaration of Interests**

The Chairperson reminded Members of their requirement to register their interests under Standing Order 69(5).

The Deputy Chairperson declared an interest as being employed as a Band 5/6 Bank Nurse with South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

The Chairperson declared an interest as currently taking a career break from her role as a Social Worker with the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

iii. Guidance documents

Members noted guidance papers on:

- Powers and Operations of Statutory Committees;
- Role of Committee Chairpersons;
- Role and functions of the Committee Office;
- Language and simultaneous interpretation arrangements; and
- Timescales for interaction between Committees and Departments.

iv. Subordinate Legislation – delegation of technical scrutiny to the Examiner of Statutory Rules

The Committee considered Guidance on Handling Subordinate Legislation.

**Agreed:** That the Committee for Health, under Standing Order 43, resolves to delegate to the Examiner of Statutory Rules the technical scrutiny of statutory rules referred to the Committee under the above-mentioned Standing Order.

The Committee further resolves that, in carrying out this function, the Examiner shall be authorised to report her technical findings on each statutory rule to the Assembly, and to the relevant Department, as well as to the Committee itself, and to publish her report.

v. Committee for Health Legacy Report 2017 - 2022

The Committee noted the previous Health Committee's Legacy Report covering the period 2017 to 2022.

**6. Department of Health First Day Brief**

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting at 3:01 pm:

Peter May, Permanent Secretary;

Chris Matthews, Deputy Secretary, Resources & Corporate Management Group;

Jim Wilkinson, Deputy Secretary, Healthcare Policy Group; and

Peter Toogood, Deputy Secretary, Social Services Policy Group.

The Permanent Secretary briefed the Committee on the Department's priorities and challenges.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer question.

The officials agreed to provide further information on a number of issues.

The Chairperson thanked the Permanent Secretary and Deputy Secretaries for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

*Linda Dillon left the meeting at 4:47 pm.*

#### **7. SR 2022/196 The Health and Social Care Pension Schemes, Additional Voluntary Contributions and Injury Benefits (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered SR 2022/196 The Health and Social Care Pension Schemes, Additional Voluntary Contributions and Injury Benefits (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 which rectifies discrimination in current regulations that have been identified by a number of court judgements / tribunal rulings.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2022/196 The Health and Social Care Pension Schemes, Additional Voluntary Contributions and Injury Benefits (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

**8. SR 2022/244 The Health and Social Care Pension Scheme (Member Contributions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered SR 2022/244 The Health and Social Care Pension Scheme (Member Contributions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 which makes changes relating to members' contribution rates.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2022/244 The Health and Social Care Pension Scheme (Member Contributions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

**9. SR 2022/245 The Health and Social Care Pensions (Abatement) (No 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered SR 2022/245 The Health and Social Care Pensions (Abatement) (No 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 which continues, for a limited period, the suspension of rules in the HSC pension scheme that allowed retired and partially retired staff to return to work or increase their working commitments to help with the Coronavirus outbreak without having their pension benefits suspended.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2022/245 The Health and Social Care Pensions (Abatement) (No 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

*Linda Dillon re-joined the meeting at 4:51 pm.*

**10. SR 2023/33 The Health and Social Care Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023**

The Committee considered SR 2023/33 The Health and Social Care Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 which: makes technical amendments in relation to the inflation rates used for revaluing pension benefits and the annual allowance tax calculations; updates pension contribution tiers in line with

the Agenda for Change pay award; and introduces technical updates to member contribution provisions.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2023/33 The Health and Social Care Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

**11. SR 2023/132 The Health and Social Care Pension Schemes (Remediable Service) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023**

The Committee considered SR 2023/132 The Health and Social Care Pension Schemes (Remediable Service) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 which introduces the retrospective part of the McCloud Remedy to address the discrimination that arose due to certain transitional arrangements put in place when public service pension schemes were reformed between 2014 and 2016.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2023/132 The Health and Social Care Pension Schemes (Remediable Service) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

*Colin McGrath left the meeting at 4:53 pm.*

**12. SR 2023/133 The Firefighters' Pensions (Remediable Service) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023**

The Committee considered SR 2023/133 The Firefighters' Pensions (Remediable Service) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 which introduces the retrospective part of the McCloud Remedy to address the discrimination that arose due to certain transitional arrangements put in place when public service pension schemes were reformed between 2014 and 2016.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2023/133 The Firefighters' Pensions (Remediable Service) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 and, subject

to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

**13. SR 2023/178 The Firefighters' Pension Schemes (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023**

The Committee considered SR 2023/178 The Firefighters' Pension Schemes (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 which extends the period during which persons who were employed in the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service as retained firefighters have access to the modified section in the New Firefighters Pension Scheme.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2023/178 The Firefighters' Pension Schemes (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

**14. SR 2022/153 The Health and Social Care Pensions (Abatement) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note SR 2022/153 The Health and Social Care Pensions (Abatement) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 as the end of statutory period had expired.

**15. SR 2022/155 The Firefighters' Pension Schemes (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note SR 2022/155 The Firefighters' Pension Schemes (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 as the end of statutory period had expired.



**16. SR 2022/156 The Health and Social Care Pension Schemes (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note SR 2022/156 The Health and Social Care Pension Schemes (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 as the end of statutory period had expired.

**17. SR 2022/181 The Public Health (Notifiable Diseases) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered SR 2022/181 The Public Health (Notifiable Diseases) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022 which adds monkeypox to the list of notifiable diseases (within The Public Health Notifiable Diseases Order (Northern Ireland) 2021) so that medical practitioners will be required to share patient information with the Public Health Agency if they become aware, or have reasonable grounds, for suspecting that a person they are attending has monkeypox.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2022/181 The Public Health (Notifiable Diseases) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

**18. SR 2022/195 The Provision of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident (Amendment No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered SR 2022/195 The Provision of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 which ensures that hospital treatment for Monkeypox is provided to any visitor to Northern Ireland without charge.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2022/195 The Provision of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

*Colin McGrath re-joined the meeting at 4:56 pm.*

**19. SR 2023/213 The Provision of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023**

The Committee considered 2023/213 The Provision of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 which adds the Bailiwick of Guernsey, Iceland and Liechtenstein to the list of countries with which the UK Government has entered into reciprocal agreements for the provision of health care.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered 2023/213 The Provision of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

**20. SR 2022/174 The Provision of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note SR 2022/174 The Provision of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 as the end of statutory period had expired.

**21. Correspondence**

The Chairperson advised Members that correspondence received prior to the establishment of the current Committee would be forwarded to Members after the meeting for consideration at the next meeting.

**22. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered a draft Forward Work Programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to discuss its longer-term priorities at a strategic planning meeting.

**23. Any Other Business**

The Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and Committee Members congratulated the Assistant Clerk, Deirdre Farry on her imminent retirement, thanked her for her service in supporting the work of the Committee and wished her well for the future.

**24. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee for Health was scheduled to take place at 2:00pm on Thursday, 22 February 2024.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 pm.

**Liz Kimmins MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for Health**

**22 February 2024**