



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday, 11 June 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

Apologies: Mr Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Ms Éilis Haughey (Clerk)
Mr Brendan Miskelly (Clerical Officer)

**Ms Flynn attended the meeting via telephone conferencing.*

The meeting commenced at 10.35 am in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson informed Members that the scheduled departmental briefing on the June monitoring round would be deferred until next week's meeting.

The Chairperson advised Members that it was Carers' week and also Infant Mental Health Awareness week and acknowledged the important work being carried out by the organisations that worked in both these areas.

The Chairperson also advised that that he had met with representatives of a Carers' organisation.

3. Draft Minutes

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meetings held on 3 and 4 June 2020.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee noted that its report on the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill, which had been agreed by email by Members, had been forwarded to the Committee for Justice.

The Committee noted correspondence from the office of the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland which provided further information on an issue raised during the briefing session with the Committee at the meeting on 4 June 2020.

5. COVID-19 Disease Response – Briefing from NIC-ICTU

Trade Union representatives joined the meeting at 10.38 am. The following representatives joined the meeting via telephone conferencing:

Ms Anne Speed, Chair of the NIC-ICTU Health Committee, and member of UNISON
Ms Claire Ronald, Vice Chair of the NIC-ICTU Health Committee, and member of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy NI
Ms Karen Murray, Royal College of Midwives
Ms Tanya Killen, NIPSA

Mr John Patrick Clayton, Policy Officer, UNISON joined the meeting in person.

The union representatives briefed the Committee on health and social care policy and workforce issues arising during the COVID-19 crisis.

Ms Pam Cameron declared an interest as having a family member who is a nurse.

Mr Gerry Carroll declared an interest as a member of the trade union, UNITE.

The Chairperson declared an interest as formerly being employed as a social worker and currently taking a career break, and being a member of the trade union, NIPSA.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the union representatives for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health regarding AHP involvement in the management board for rebuilding HSC services and engagement and responsiveness to union involvement.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted the following correspondence relevant to the briefing session:

- Correspondence from UNITE regarding the concerns of registered childminders in relation to the reopening of childcare services; and
- A copy of correspondence from Allied Health Professions Federation NI to the Minister of Health regarding the role that the AHPs have in relation to

rehabilitation and requesting the appointment of the Chief AHP officer as the lead to coordinate the rehabilitation work-streams in NI.

The meeting was suspended at 11.53 am.

The meeting resumed at 12.01 pm.

6. Briefing from Trade Unions on the Safe at Home Initiative

Trade Union representatives joined the meeting at 12.01 pm. The following representatives joined the meeting via telephone conferencing:

Ms Anne Speed, Chair of the NIC-ICTU Health Committee, and member of UNISON

Mr Alan Perry, GMB

Ms Rita Devlin, Royal College of Nursing

Mr John Patrick Clayton, Policy Officer, UNISON joined the meeting in person.

The union representatives briefed the Committee on the live-in care homes pilot, 'Safe at Home.'

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the union representatives for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted the following correspondence relevant to the briefing session:

- Correspondence from UNISON providing its initial response to the NI care home live-in proposal.
- Correspondence from the Royal College of Nursing outlining its position in relation to the safe at home pilot.

The Committee agreed to move to agenda item 11 after a short break.

The meeting was suspended at 12.43 pm.

The meeting resumed at 12.58 pm.

Present:	Mr Colm Gildernew (Chairperson)
	Ms Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
	Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA
	Mr Gerry Carroll MLA
	Mr Alex Easton MLA
	Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA*
	Mr Colin McGrath MLA

7. Legislative Consent Motion: The Medicines and Medical Devices Bill - Committee Draft Report

The Committee considered a draft report on its consideration of the Legislative Consent Memorandum on the provisions of the Medicines and Medical Devices Bill to be extended to Northern Ireland and the Legislative Consent Motion to be brought forward by the Minister for Health.

Ms Cathy Harrison, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, Department of Health, joined the meeting at 1.00 pm and answered a number of Members' questions on the LCM.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Harrison for her attendance.

Mr Alan Chambers joined the meeting at 1.10 pm.

The Committee discussed its options relating to the content of its draft report and its response to the motion being brought to the Assembly by the Minister of Health:

“That this Assembly endorses the principle of the extension to Northern Ireland of the provisions within the Medicines and Medical Devices Bill as introduced to Parliament on 13 February 2020 dealing with human medicines and veterinary medicines.”

The question was put that that the report concludes that there has been insufficient time and opportunity for scrutiny in order to come to a view.

The Committee divided: Ayes 4; Noes 4

AYES

Mr Gerry Carroll
Ms Órlaithí Flynn
Mr Colm Gildernew
Mr Colin McGrath

NOES

Ms Paula Bradshaw
Ms Pam Cameron
Mr Alan Chambers
Mr Alex Easton

The proposal fell.

The meeting moved into closed session at 1.21 pm.

The meeting moved into public session at 1.29 pm.

The question was put that the Committee was content to support the Minister of Health in seeking the Assembly's endorsement of the Legislative Consent Motion.

The Committee divided: Ayes 4; Noes 4

AYES

Ms Paula Bradshaw
Ms Pam Cameron
Mr Alan Chambers
Mr Alex Easton

NOES

Mr Gerry Carroll
Ms Órlaithí Flynn
Mr Colm Gildernew
Mr Colin McGrath

The proposal fell.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the report should be amended to include any comments provided by the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the amended draft report should be circulated to Members by email for final approval.

Mr Gerry Carroll left the meeting at 1.30 pm.

Mr Colin McGrath left the meeting at 1.30 pm.

The Committee moved to agenda item 8.

8. SR 2020/73 The Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/73 The Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which would facilitate the dispensing of medicines during the pandemic.

The Committee noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had reported a breach of the 21-day rule in respect of this statutory rule but was content that the Department had provided a satisfactory reason for the breach.

Agreed: The Committee has considered SR 2020/73 The Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and has no objection to the Rule.

9. SL1 The Misuse of Drugs (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting at 1.32 pm.

Ms Cathy Harrison, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, Department of Health

Mr Craig Allen, Head of Medicines Policy, Department of Health

Mr Canice Ward, Medicines Regulatory Group, Department of Health

The officials briefed the Committee on the Department's proposal to make a statutory rule to amend the Misuse of Drugs Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 to allow for fewer restrictions on the prescribing and supply of the cannabis-based medicine, Epidyolex.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

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

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

10. SL1 The Addition of Vitamins, Minerals and Other Substances (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered a proposal by the Food Standard Agency to make a Statutory Rule to amend The Addition of Vitamins, Minerals and Other Substances Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007, which would provide for the enforcement of Regulation (EC) No 1925/2006 on the addition of vitamins and minerals and of certain other substances to foods.

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

11. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health responding to issues raised during the Committee's briefing session with the NI Drug and Alcohol Alliance.
- ii. The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Minister of Health providing an update on payments to those affected by the contaminated blood issue.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Association for Infant Mental Health NI regarding the Covid-19 response.
- iv. The Committee considered correspondence from the RQIA providing further information on issues raised during the briefing session on 14 May 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a further briefing with the RQIA.

- v. The Committee noted correspondence from Tinylife and Bliss providing briefing on the impact of COVID-19 on babies receiving neonatal care.
- vi. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding guidelines relating to the administration of vitamin B12 injections.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request information from the Department of Health on the dissemination and implementation of the guidelines.

- vii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for the Economy to the Department of Health seeking clarification on how the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) Regulations (NI) 2020 affect the work of estate agents.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider this matter further when it had received the Department of Health's response to the Economy Committee.

- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department for Communities regarding funding and support for the work of the Hourglass charity.
- ix. The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules' twelfth report of session 2019-2020.
- x. The Committee noted a RaISE article on the use of widespread testing and contact tracing as part of the solution to exiting 'lockdown'.
- xi. The Committee considered correspondence from Families Involved NI (FINI) regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on carers responsible for providing care to family members with disabilities.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to flag the issues raised in the FINI correspondence with the Department of Health.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing session with representatives of carers organisations.

- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising of his decision to temporarily change the current governance and accountability arrangements in the Health and Social Care Framework document and the publication of the 'Strategic Framework for Rebuilding Health and Social Care Services.'
- xiii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee Clerk to a Committee Member regarding the arrangements for the first expert panel session held on 14 May 2020.

12. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme.

The Chairperson advised Members that it had not been possible to make arrangements to meet the Health Minister on 24 June and this had been rescheduled to take place on Monday, 22 June at 3.00 pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request written briefing from the Department of Health on Brexit and the digital aspects of Transformation including the Encompass programme.

13. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

14. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next committee meeting was scheduled to take place on Thursday, 18 June 2020 at 10.30am in Room 30.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.55 pm.

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Date: _____