



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Thursday, 30 April 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  
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA\*  
Mr Alex Easton MLA  
Mr Colin McGrath MLA  
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 10.34 am in public session.*

**1. Apologies**

None.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson advised Members that he had attended South Tyrone Hospital on Tuesday to join staff in the one minute's silence in memory of workers who have died from COVID-19 and other workers who have died as a result of their work.

**3. Draft Minutes**

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2020.

**4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

## **5. COVID-19 Disease Response – Business Services Organisation Briefing**

Officials from the Business Services Organisation joined the meeting via telephone conferencing at 10.36 am.

Mr Liam McIvor, Chief Executive, Business Services Organisation

Mr Sam Waide, Director of Operations, Business Services Organisation

Mr Peter Wilson, Assistant Director of Procurement and Logistics, Business Services Organisation

The officials briefed the Committee on procurement issues during the COVID-19 pandemic including the procurement and distribution of PPE and ventilators.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The officials agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of 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 request a response from the Department of Health on the policy issues raised during the briefing.

*The meeting was suspended at 11.33 am.*

*The meeting resumed at 11.39 am.*

## **6. Budget 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 – Department of Health Briefing**

Department of Health officials joined the meeting via telephone conferencing at 11.39 am.

Ms Neelia Lloyd, Director of Finance, Department of Health

Ms Brigitte Worth, Investment Director, Department of Health

Ms Ciara Dolan, Director of Transformation, Department of Health

Ms Lloyd provided additional commentary on the Department of Health budget position further to last week's briefing.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The officials agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues raised during the question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted an updated RaISE briefing paper on Assembly Committee Coordinated Budget Scrutiny.

*The meeting was suspended at 12.17 pm.*

*The meeting resumed at 12.25 pm in Room 29.*

**Present:** Mr Colm Gildernew (Chairperson)  
Ms Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA  
Mr Gerry Carroll MLA  
Mr Alan Chambers MLA  
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA\*  
Mr Colin McGrath MLA  
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA

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

## **7. SR 2020/71 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020**

Department of Health Chief Environmental Health Officer, Mr Nigel McMahon joined the meeting via telephone conferencing at 12.25 pm.

Mr McMahon briefed the Committee on the provisions of The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and answered Members' questions.

The Committee considered SR 2020/71 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which would remove the restrictions on the opening of cemeteries to the public and would clarify the circumstances under which a person may leave home for the purposes of taking exercise.

The Committee noted that the Department of Health had laid the Statutory Rule before the Committee had the opportunity to consider the matter at policy proposal stage.

*Agreed:* The Committee considered SR 2020/71 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Report, recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

## **8. Correspondence**

- i. The Committee noted revised COVID-19 guidance for residential and nursing care homes, published by the Department of Health.

- ii. The Committee noted, pending further scrutiny, a response from the Minister of Health to concerns raised by the Committee regarding the impact of COVID-19 on people with dependency issues.
- iii. The Committee noted, pending further scrutiny, correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding a proposal for a Legislative Consent Motion relating to the Health Medicines and Medical Devices Bill which was introduced in Parliament on 13 February 2020.
- iv. The Committee noted, pending further scrutiny, correspondence from the Department of Health advising that there are no plans in place to develop a new Oral Health Strategy and confirming that the timescale for the work of the Oral Health Options Groups has been affected as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Education advising that it has invited officials from the Department of Health and Department of Education to provide joint briefing on the implementation of the £12 million package of childcare measures as part of the coronavirus response.
- vi. The Committee noted, pending further scrutiny, a briefing paper prepared by RaISe to assist the Committee's scrutiny of abortion policy in light of the Abortion Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.
- vii. The Committee considered a request from Carers NI to brief the Committee on issues facing family carers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to consider this as part of its Forward Work Programme.

- viii. The Committee considered correspondence from Whitemountain and District Community Association regarding the spread of COVID-19.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to respond advising of the Committee's role and to direct the Association to the Public Health Agency for further information.

- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office providing information on the references within the New Decade, New Approach document which fall within the remit of the Executive.
- x. The Committee considered correspondence from an events company providing a proposal on the phased resumption of business.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Health.

- xi. The Committee noted, pending further scrutiny, the speaking notes used by Department of Health officials when briefing the Committee on the SL1 policy proposal for The Draft Children's Social Care (Coronavirus) Regulations (NI) 2020 at the meeting on 23 April 2020.

- xii. The Committee noted copies of correspondence from the British Dental Association and the Department of Health regarding funding issues within general dental practice as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- xiii. The Committee noted the Investment Strategy NI April 2020 Investment Activity Report for the Department of Health.
- xiv. The Committee noted revised guidance for Assembly Committees regarding the management of committee business during the public health crisis.
- xv. The Committee noted correspondence from the General Medical Council NI, providing an update on the action it has taken to support the response of the UK governments to the COVID-19 pandemic, including actions relating to the registration of final year medical students and publication of advice relating to advance care planning.
- xvi. The Committee noted, pending further scrutiny, copies of correspondence from the Department of Health to the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the HSC Trusts outlining the current position on the provision of abortion services.
- xvii. The Committee noted a number of offers of assistance from individuals and organisations in relation to the COVID-19 response and further noted that this correspondence had been forwarded to the Department of Health.
- xviii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Pharmaceutical Society NI responding to the Committee's request for information regarding the registration process for pharmacists in Northern Ireland during the pandemic.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the response to the individual who had written to the Committee on this matter, for information.

- xix. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Minister of Health to the Committee for Education providing information on the administration and access arrangements for childcare settings in relation to the £12m childcare package of measures.
- xx. The Committee noted, pending further scrutiny, legal advice relating to The Abortion Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and the Northern Ireland Assembly's competence to legislate further in this area.

## **9. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek briefing from public health experts on options for dealing with the next phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that participants involved in audio conference briefing sessions should be asked to provide a copy of opening remarks in advance of meetings.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request a copy of the opening remarks made by Mr McIvor during the briefing session with Business Services Organisation.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek an update on the progress of the Independent Neurology Inquiry and ask whether the work of the Inquiry has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **10. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

#### **11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next committee meeting was scheduled to take place on Thursday, 7 May 2020, at 10.00 am in a room within Parliament Buildings to be confirmed.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.48 pm.*

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

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