



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Tuesday, 30 June 2020
Room 29, 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
Mr Colin McGrath MLA*

In Attendance: Ms Éilis Haughey (Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Lamont (Clerical Supervisor)

**Mr McGrath attended the meeting via telephone conferencing.*

The meeting commenced at 1.06 pm in public session.

1. Apologies

None.

The Committee agreed to move to agenda item 5.

2. COVID-19 Disease Response – Briefing from the Minister of Health and Chief Medical Officer

The Minister of Health, Mr Robin Swann MLA and the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Michael McBride, joined the meeting at 1.06 pm.

The Minister provided an update on his Department's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Colin McGrath left the meeting at 1.48 pm.

Mr Alan Chambers left the meeting at 2.13 pm.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted correspondence relevant to the briefing session from Families and Friends of Haemophilia NI regarding the contaminated blood scandal.

The Committee moved to agenda item 2.

3. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's business.

4. Draft Minutes

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2020.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

The Committee moved to agenda items 6.

6. SR 2020/109 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Mr Nigel McMahon, Chief Environmental Health Officer, Department of Health, joined the meeting via telephone conferencing at 2.23 pm.

Mr McMahon briefed the Committee on SR 2020/109 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and SR 2020/118 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 8) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which provide for easements of the restrictions introduced in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr McMahon for his attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2020/109 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

7. SR 2020/118 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 8) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2020/118 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 8) 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 considered correspondence from BirthWise seeking support for the establishment of an All-Ireland Midwifery Unit Network.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Health in Northern Ireland and the Minister of Health in the Republic of Ireland to express the Committee's support for the establishment of an All-Ireland Midwifery Unit Network.

- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding a media article on care home finances.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the communication of localised outbreaks of COVID-19 to members of the public within the affected communities.
- iv. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the difficulties faced by healthcare staff who are unable to work due to lack of childcare or other provision for dependents, as a result of the pandemic.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise the individual that it had raised this issue with the Department of Health and was awaiting a response.

- v. The Committee considered correspondence from Edgcumbe Parents and Friends Group providing information on its work and its report 'Crying out for Justice'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the group to be represented on a forthcoming panel briefing on disability.

- vi. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding a request from the Neurology Patients Support Group to meet with Department of Health officials.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for an update on this matter and in particular to enquire whether any meetings between department officials and patient representatives had taken place.

- vii. The Committee considered a request from the Children's Law Centre for a meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson should meet with representatives of the Children's Law Centre.

- viii. The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules' fourteenth report of session 2019-2020 and further noted that the Examiner had no issues to raise in relation to SR 2020/96 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, which was considered by the Committee at its meeting on 18 June; or SR 2020/103 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, which was considered by the Committee at its meeting on 25 June.

- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding issues raised by a committee Member during the plenary debate on Mental Health and Wellbeing after COVID-19 on 23 June, relating to the publication of figures on the prevalence of coronavirus cases.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme.

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, 9 July 2020 at 10.30 am, room details to be confirmed.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 2.36 pm.

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Date: _____