



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Thursday, 10 September 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
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA
Mr Colin McGrath MLA*

Apologies: Mr Pat Sheehan MLA

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

**Mr McGrath attended the meeting via video-conference.*

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am in closed session.

1. Committee Inquiry: COVID-19 and its impact on Care Homes

An Assembly Research Officer briefed the Committee on COVID-19 and care homes.

The Committee discussed a number of the issues it had considered over recent months relating to COVID-19 and care homes and the potential focus of a committee inquiry in relation to this matter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that terms of reference for a Committee inquiry relating to COVID-19 and care homes would be prepared for consideration at the next meeting.

The meeting moved into public session at 11.01 am.

2. Apologies

As above.

3. Chairperson's Business

- i. The Chairperson extended condolences to the families of those who have died as a result of the coronavirus outbreak at Craigavon Area Hospital and offered best wishes, on behalf of the Committee, to those currently suffering with the illness. The Chairperson also welcomed the serious adverse incident inquiry that has been initiated in relation to this matter.
- ii. The Chairperson expressed concern in relation to issues with testing for COVID-19 and welcomed the Minister of Health's commitment to addressing those issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to clarify what action is being taken in relation to this matter and ask whether testing can be carried out by GPs.

- iii. The Chairperson expressed concern in relation to access to GP services.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that arrangements would be made for the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to meet informally with the Royal College of General Practitioners NI and the British Medical Association NI GP Committee in relation to this matter and that other Committee Members could attend this meeting if they wished to do so.

- iv. The Chairperson advised that he, the Deputy Chairperson and Ms Paula Bradshaw had attended a meeting with Action for Children and acknowledged the positive contribution of the young carers who attended that meeting.
- v. The Chairperson advised Members that awareness events were taking place this week relating to Duchenne disease, suicide prevention and organ donation.
- vi. The Chairperson welcomed the decision by the Minister of Health to hold a statutory public inquiry into the abuse at Muckamore Abbey Hospital.

4. Draft Minutes

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2020, subject to the inclusion of an agreed action being recorded in relation to correspondence item 7 xiii.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

The meeting was suspended at 11.11 am and resumed at 11.18 am.

6. SR 2020/138 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Ms Elaine Colgan, Chief of Staff to the Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health joined the meeting via telephone-conference at 11.18 am.

Ms Colgan briefed the Committee on nine statutory rules relating to international travel measures that have been introduced as a result of the coronavirus pandemic (agenda items 6 to 14).

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session and Ms Colgan agreed to provide the Committee with further information on issues raised during the session.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Colgan for her attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health responding to queries raised by the Committee at the briefing session with officials on 23 July 2020 on travel regulations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information from the Department on a number of issues raised by Members and to request that when future coronavirus-related regulations are laid, that the relevant supporting data is provided to the Committee to assist and inform its consideration of the regulations.

The Committee considered SR 2020/138 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which exempts persons travelling from a list of exempted countries from self-isolation requirements; adds to the categories of persons exempt from self-isolation requirements; and amends the current exemption for health care workers to those coming to Northern Ireland to provide healthcare.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/138 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and had no objection to the Rule.

7. SR 2020/140 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/140 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which omits Serbia from the list of exempt countries in respect of the post-travel self-isolation requirements.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/140 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and had no objection to the Rule.

8. SR 2020/154 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/154 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which

omits Spain from the list of exempt countries in respect of the post-travel self-isolation requirements.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/154 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

9. SR 2020/155 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/155 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which adds Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, to the list of exempt countries in respect of the post-travel self-isolation requirements; amends some definitions in the legislation; and substitutes the list of 'specified competitions' for the purposes of elite sports.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/155 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

10. SR 2020/163 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/163 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which omits Luxembourg from the list of exempt countries in respect of the post-travel self-isolation requirements; removes the exemption from the requirement to self-isolate for certain health or care professionals; amends the self-isolation requirements to ensure persons self-isolating can receive care as required; and makes other minor amendments.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/163 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

11. SR 2020/168 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/168 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which removes Andorra, The Bahamas and Belgium from the list of exempt countries in respect of the post-travel self-isolation requirements and adds Brunei and Malaysia to the list.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR2020/168 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment

No. 6) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

12. SR 2020/179 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel and Public Health Advice for Persons Travelling to Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/179 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel and Public Health Advice for Persons Travelling to Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which provides that passengers will not be treated as arriving in, departing from, or transiting through, a country or territory if, at all times the passenger remains on board the vehicle in which they are travelling and is kept separate from anyone arriving on board during a stop. It also amends the review period to 28 days instead of 21; and it further amends the list 'specified competitions' for the purposes of elite sports.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR2020/179 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel and Public Health Advice for Persons Travelling to Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

13. SR 2020/185 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/185 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which omits Austria, Croatia, and Trinidad and Tobago from the list of exempt countries in respect of the post-travel self-isolation requirements and adds Portugal to the list of exempted countries.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/185 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

14. SR 2020/189 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 8) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/189 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 8) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which omits the Czech Republic, Jamaica and Switzerland from the list of exempt countries in respect of the post-travel self-isolation requirements and adds Cuba to the list of exempted countries.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/189 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 8) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and, subject to

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

The meeting was suspended at 11.57 am and resumed at 11.59 am.

15. SR 2020/141 The Coronavirus Act 2020 (Suspension) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020

Mr Tomas Adell, Head of Mental Health and Capacity Unit, Department of Health joined the meeting at 11.59 am.

Mr Adell briefed the Committee on three statutory rules relating to mental health care (agenda items 15, 16 and 17).

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Adell for his attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee considered 2020/141 The Coronavirus Act 2020 (Suspension) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020 which suspends the amendments relating to the Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 found in the Coronavirus Act 2020, section 10 and Schedule 10.

Agreed: The Committee had considered 2020/141 The Coronavirus Act 2020 (Suspension) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Report, had no objection to the Rule.

16. SR 2020/142 The Mental Health (1986 Order) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/142 The Mental Health (1986 Order) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020 which reverses previous coronavirus-related provisions relating to the length of time triggering a requirement for a second opinion for the continued administration of medicine to detained patients.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/142 The Mental Health (1986 Order) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Report, had no objection to the Rule.

17. SR 2020/146 The Mental Health (Nurses, Guardianship, Consent to Treatment and Prescribed Forms) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/146 The Mental Health (Nurses, Guardianship, Consent to Treatment and Prescribed Forms) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which substitutes two statutory forms (forms 10 and 23) for the purposes of decisions made under the Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/146 The Mental Health (Nurses, Guardianship, Consent to Treatment and Prescribed Forms) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Report, had no objection to the Rule.

The meeting was suspended at 12.13 pm and resumed at 12.16 pm.

18. SR 2020/150 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Department of Health officials, Mr Nigel McMahon, Chief Environmental Health Officer and Ms Liz Redmond, Director of Population Health joined the meeting via video-conference at 12.16 pm.

Mr McMahon briefed the Committee on six statutory rules relating to coronavirus restrictions (agenda items 18 to 23).

Paula Bradshaw left the meeting at 12.48 pm.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session and Mr McMahon agreed to provide the Committee with further information on issues raised during the session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr McMahon and Ms Redmond for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information from the Department on a number of issues raised by Members.

The Committee considered SR 2020/150 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which revokes and replaces the original restriction regulations and amendments. It requires the closure of certain businesses, services and premises and sets out restrictions on indoor and outdoor gatherings.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/150 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and recommended that it be confirmed by the Assembly.

19. SR 2020/139 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 11) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Chairperson advised that SR 2020/139 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 11) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 had been revoked and replaced by the provisions contained in SR 2020/150 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/139 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 11) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and was content that it be revoked by

SR 2020/150 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions)
(No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

20. SR 2020/151 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/151 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which makes provision for the compulsory use of face coverings.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/151 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and recommended that it be confirmed by the Assembly.

21. SR 2020/164 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/164 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which makes further provision for the compulsory use of face coverings.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/164 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, recommended that it be confirmed by the Assembly.

22. SR 2020/170 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/170 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which makes provision for sports to take place in arenas seating fewer than 5000 spectators and allows the use of theatres for rehearsals or live recordings without an audience.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/170 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, recommended that it be confirmed by the Assembly.

23. SR 2020/187 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/187 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which reduces the numbers permitted to gather indoors or outdoors in various settings, and makes provision for funerals, wakes and weddings where one person is terminally ill.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/187 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment

No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and recommended that it be confirmed by the Assembly.

The meeting was suspended at 1.13 pm and resumed at 1.49 pm.

Present: Mr Colm Gildernew (Chairperson)
Ms Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Gerry Carroll MLA
Mr Alan Chambers MLA
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA

24. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health providing advance notice of the Department's draft surge planning strategic framework.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending further scrutiny.

- ii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Chief Nursing Officer providing information requested at the briefing session with the Committee on 23 July 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek clarity from the Department of Health on the development of a COVID-19 Life Assurance scheme and to request a briefing session on the Rapid Learning Initiative.

- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Health regarding its proposed engagement with the Committee in relation to EU Exit Statutory Instruments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed it was content with the Department's proposed engagement arrangements.

- iv. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health providing further information requested during the Committee's briefing session with the Chief Social Worker and Director of Mental Health, Disability and Older People on 25 June 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending further scrutiny of care home issues.

- vii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Society of Occupational Medicine regarding access to occupational health services.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a written briefing from the Society of Occupational Medicine on the issues raised and that Members would engage on an individual basis with the Society.

- xi. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual providing an article on GPs feeling bullied into working in COVID-19 test centres.

Agreed: The Committee agreed, that as discussed during Chairperson's Business, arrangements would be made for the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to engage informally with the GP representative bodies to discuss this and other issues, including access to GP services.

- xi. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual who is waiting for hernia surgery in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending its next consideration of Rebuilding Services and to advise the individual of the Committee's consideration of this matter.

- xi. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual who is waiting for urgent surgery for endometriosis.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending its next consideration of Rebuilding Services and to advise the individual of the Committee's consideration of this matter.

- xi. The Committee considered correspondence from Queens University, Belfast, regarding additional funding needed for medical school places to accommodate 70 applicants who, due to the re-issue of A-level grades, now met the terms of their offer; and additional, related correspondence from a number of individual students affected by this issue.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Departments of Health, Finance and the Economy to request that every effort be made to accommodate these students as soon as possible and to advise the individual students of the Committee position and action in relation to this matter.

- xi. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding funding and access to cannabis-based medical products (CBMP) and requesting a meeting with Committee Members.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Minister of Health and request resolution of the issue of access to CBMP for all those affected.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members would make separate arrangements to engage with the individual.

Ms Flynn left the meeting at 2.03 pm.

The meeting was suspended at 2.03 pm and resumed at 2.09 pm.

25. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

26. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next committee meeting was scheduled to take place on Thursday, 17 September 2020 at 10.00 am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 2.10 pm.

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Date: _____