



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Thursday, 18 June 2020
Room 30, 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*
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA*

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

**These Members attended the meeting via telephone conferencing.*

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am in public session.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised Members that this week was awareness-raising week for: Men's Health; Alcohol Awareness; Learning Disability; and Loneliness Awareness.

The Chairperson advised that he had taken part in the recent All-Party Group meeting on Loneliness and had met with the Chair of the GP Committee of BMA NI to discuss issues impacting the delivery of GP services and COVID-19 centres.

3. Draft Minutes

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2020.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee noted its report on the LCM on the Medicines and Medical Devices Bill which was agreed by email following the previous meeting and further noted that a response from the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on the LCM had been included in the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for its report on the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill to be published on the Committee's website.

5. COVID-19 Disease Response – Royal College of Nursing

Representatives from the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) joined the meeting via telephone conferencing at 10.34 am.

Ms Fiona Devlin, Chair, RCN NI Board

Ms Pat Cullen, Director, RCN

Ms Rita Devlin, Head of Professional Development, RCN

The RCN representatives briefed the Committee on issues arising from the COVID-19 crisis and provided its views on rebuilding services.

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

Mr Alex Easton declared an interest as having a relative who is a nurse.

The Chairperson declared an interest as having a relative who is a nurse.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the RCN representatives for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health to request a response on issues raised during the briefing session.

The meeting was suspended at 11.56 am.

The meeting resumed at 12.04 pm.

6. Department of Health briefing on June Monitoring

Department of Health officials joined the meeting via telephone conferencing at 12.04 pm.

Ms Deborah McNeilly, Deputy Secretary, Resource and Corporate Management Group, Department of Health

Ms Preeta Miller, Head of Financial Planning and Monitoring, Department of Health

Ms Brigitte Worth, Investment Director, Department of Health

Ms Ciara Dolan, Director of Transformation, Department of Health

The officials briefed the Committee on the June monitoring round.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson declared an interest as having a relative who is a nurse and was involved in the recent pay parity strike action.

The officials agreed to provide the Committee with further information on 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 a copy of correspondence relevant to the briefing session, from the Department of Finance to the Committee for Finance, explaining the difference between the figures presented by the Department in a Budget paper and the figures provided to the Assembly by the Finance Minister in his statement on the COVID-19 response on 19 May 2020.

The meeting was suspended at 1.03 pm.

The meeting resumed at 1.23 pm.

7. SR 2020/96 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Mr Nigel McMahon, Chief Environmental Health Officer, Department of Health joined the meeting by telephone conference at 1.23 pm.

Mr McMahon briefed the Committee on SR 2020/96 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which provide for further easements of restrictions.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Ms Paula Bradshaw left the meeting at 1.52 pm.

The Chairperson thanked Mr McMahon for his attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted a briefing paper from CAJ and Amnesty International relevant to the briefing session.

The meeting was suspended at 2.22 pm.

The meeting resumed at 2.40 pm.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2020/96 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for Justice on issues raised in evidence in relation to the enforcement of the Regulations.

The meeting was suspended at 2.42 pm.

Mr Alex Easton left the meeting at 2.42 pm

The meeting resumed at 2.44 pm.

8. SR 2020/78 The Children's Social Care (Coronavirus) (Temporary Modification of Children's Social Care) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Department of Health officials joined the meeting via telephone conferencing at 2.44 pm.

Ms Eilís McDaniel, Director of Family and Children Policy, Department of Health
Ms Julie Stephenson, Head of Adoption and Children Bill Team, Department of Health

Ms McDaniel briefed the Committee on the changes to SR 2020/78 The Children's Social Care (Coronavirus) (Temporary Modification of Children's Social Care) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 since the SL1 was considered by the Committee on 23 April 2020.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The officials agreed to provide the Committee with monitoring information relating to the application of the temporary modifications and extended timescales under the Regulations.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted a briefing paper from Include Youth on the SR.

The Chairman thanked all of the stakeholders that had provided submissions to inform the Committee's consideration of the statutory rule.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2020/78 The Children's Social Care (Coronavirus) (Temporary Modification of Children's Social Care) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

9. SR 2020/80 The Food Information (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/80 The Food Information (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which will amend labelling requirements to improve information to consumers about allergens in foods which are pre-packed for direct sale.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2020/80 The Food Information (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

10. Correspondence

i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing information the Committee had requested on the frequency of the use of the provisions of SR2020/57 Mental Capacity (Deprivation of Liberty) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and advising that as result of the infrequent usage, the Regulations would be revoked.

ii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists expressing concern that the Chief Allied Health Professions Officer would not be a member of the new Health and Social Care Management Board.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise RCSLT that it has written to the Department of Health on this matter.

iii. The Committee noted, pending further consideration at the scheduled briefing session with the Chief Social Worker, correspondence from an individual regarding the opening of care homes for family visits.

iv. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding complaints and serious adverse incident investigations within the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health for a response to the issues raised regarding complaint handling procedures and the conduct of related investigations.

v. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding closures of emergency departments in hospitals in South Down.

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

vi. The Committee considered correspondence from the British Dental Association (BDA) and a copy of correspondence from BDA to the Minister for the Economy regarding the financial position of dental practices as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite BDA to brief the Committee on the issues affecting the provision of dental services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the British Association of Private Dentistry on the issues impacting the provision of dental services as a result of COVID-19.
- viii. The Committee considered correspondence from the British Dietetic Association expressing concern that the Chief Allied Health Professions Officer would not be a member of the new Health and Social Care Management Board.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise the British Dietetic Association that it has written to the Department of Health on this matter.

- ix. The Committee considered correspondence from the Chartered Society for Physiotherapy NI expressing concern that the Chief Allied Health Professions Officer would not be a member of the new Health and Social Care Management Board.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise the Chartered Society for Physiotherapy that it has written to the Department of Health on this matter.

- x. The Committee noted, pending scrutiny of the SR, a briefing paper from the Committee on the Administration of Justice regarding SR 2020/90 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.
- xi. The Committee noted a response from RQIA to the Committee's request for information on the testing of residents in care homes.
- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from RQIA advising that information on COVID-19 related deaths of care home residents that occurred in hospital could be sourced from NISRA.
- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Finance advising of the action it had taken to provide advice to an individual, referred by the Health Committee, in relation to support for self-employed health care workers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- xiv. The Committee noted correspondence from the office of the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland providing additional information on the COVID-19 related enquiries it had received.
- xv. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the re-opening of childcare facilities.

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

- xvi. The Committee considered correspondence from the Royal College of Occupational Therapists expressing concern that the Chief Allied Health Professions Officer would not be a member of the new Health and Social Care Management Board.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise RCOT that it has written to the Department of Health on this matter.

- xvii. The Committee noted correspondence from Carers NI providing a copy of a statement from the Coalition of Carers Organisations NI to the Ministers of the Departments of Health, Economy and Communities on the impact of COVID-19 on carers.

- xviii. The Committee considered correspondence from Extern, and separate correspondence from Derry and Strabane Policing and Community Safety Partnership regarding the potential closure of the Community Crisis Intervention Service and noted that, since receipt of this correspondence, the Minister of Health had agreed to an extension of funding until the end of September.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health if it had given consideration to the longer-term funding of the Community Crisis Intervention Service and to request further detail on the Department's planned evaluation of crisis services.

- xix. The Committee noted a Public Health England Report, 'Beyond the data: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health if it planned to undertake a similar analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups in Northern Ireland.

- xx. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual requesting information on the reopening of the Regional Fertility Centre.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department of Health for a response.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

The Committee noted that the next briefing from the Minister of Health had been rescheduled to take place on Tuesday, 30 June 2020.

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

13. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next committee meeting was scheduled to take place on Thursday, 25 June 2020 at 10.30 am in the Senate Chamber.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 3.22 pm.

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Date: _____