



# Committee for Health

## Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 1 July 2021

**Meeting Location:** Room 30

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)  
Gordon Lyons MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Paula Bradshaw MLA  
Gerry Carroll MLA  
Alan Chambers MLA  
Órlaithí Flynn MLA  
Cara Hunter MLA  
Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

**Apologies:**

Jonathan Buckley MLA

**In Attendance:**

Keith McBride (Clerk)  
Brendan Miskelly (Clerical Officer)



**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Roisin Donnelly (Assistant Clerk)

Deirdre Farry (Assistant Clerk)

Jonathan Lamont (Clerical Supervisor)

*The meeting commenced at 9.35 am in closed session.*

A Member raised reports of a bonfire that has been constructed close to a Fire and Rescue Service building in Newtownards which may potentially impact on the fire service's ability to carry out its duties in the area.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek urgent clarity from the Department of Health in relation to this matter.

**1. Health and Social Care Bill: informal deliberations**

*The Chairperson declared an interest as formerly being employed as a social worker and currently taking a career break.*

*Cara Hunter joined the meeting at 9.39 am.*

*Alan Chambers joined the meeting at 9.40 am.*

The Committee considered the clauses of the Health and Social Care Bill, the response from the Department of Health on the issues raised in written submissions and the Department's advance copy of the Draft framework for the future planning model.



The Clerk provided an update on the likely programme of work in relation to Bills that are expected to be introduced in the Assembly in the forthcoming weeks.

*The meeting moved to public session at 10.26 am.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek a response from the Department of Health in relation to suggested amendments of the Health and Social Care Bill relating to local engagement on commissioning decisions; transition arrangements; ongoing Committee scrutiny; and governance arrangements. The Committee also agreed to seek further clarity in relation to the appeals process and on the transition of staff to the Business Services Organisation.

## 2. Apologies

As above.

## 3. Chairperson's Business

- i. The Chairperson raised the Committee's ongoing focus and consideration of matters relating to waiting times.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request a briefing from the Department of Health on the Elective Care Framework at its meeting on 9 September 2021.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that waiting times is made a standing agenda item of business and to request quarterly update briefings from the Department of Health on this subject.

- ii. The Chairperson referred to the recent commencement of a Lookback Review into radiology image reporting completed by a Locum Consultant



Radiologist in the Northern Trust and expressed his sympathy to the patients affected.

- iii. The Chairperson welcomed the launch of the Mental Health Strategy for 2021 – 2031 and advised that he looked forward to engaging with the Minister of Health on the funding position relating to this and other Healthcare strategies.
- iv. The Chairperson referred to the Minister of Health's announcement that Tom Kark QC is to chair the Public Inquiry into abuse at Muckamore Abbey Hospital.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health to provide an update in relation to its ongoing Inquiries in advance of the Health Minister's attendance at the meeting on 8 July.

- v. The Chairperson referred to the deadline for the EU Settlement Scheme on 30 June 2021.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health regarding how the deadline may impact on some people accessing health services particularly within the context of the pandemic.

- vi. The Chairperson reminded Members that a joint meeting with the Justice Committee to hear briefing on the development of a joint secure care and justice campus for children on the Woodlands/Lakewood site would take place at 1.00 pm today.

#### 4. Draft Minutes

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2021.



## **5. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

## **6. Departmental Briefing: Brexit**

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting by video conference at 10.34 am:

Cathy Harrison, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer;

Eimear Smyth, Senior Principal Officer EU Exit Transition Unit;

Patricia Quinn-Duffy, EU Exit Lead – Reciprocal Healthcare/Workforce issues; and

David Wilson, DCMO – Safety, Quality and Standards.

The officials briefed the Committee on Brexit related issues.

*Gordon Lyons joined the meeting at 11.01 am.*

A question and answer session followed.

The officials agreed to provide the Committee with further information on issues raised during the briefing.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

*The meeting was suspended at 11.43 am and resumed at 11.48 am.*



## **7. UK SI The Health Security (EU Exit) Regulations 2021: Departmental briefing**

The following officials joined the meeting by video-conference at 11.50 am: Alasdair MacInnes, Head of Health Protection, Department of Health; and Dr Gerry Waldron, Assistant Director of Public Health, Public Health Agency.

The officials briefed the Committee on the UK SI Health Security (EU Exit) Regulations 2021.

A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the official for attending.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward concerns raised by Members to the Department of Health for response and to seek further information on the ECDC Early Warning and Response System of the European Union.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note the UK SI Health Security (EU Exit) Regulations 2021.

## **8. Draft SR The Food and Feed Hygiene and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021**

The Chairperson advised that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had identified a drafting issue with Draft Statutory Rule, The Food and Feed Hygiene and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and that an amended Rule was currently being prepared by the Food Standards Agency.



**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to defer its consideration until the replacement Rule has been laid and considered by the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

**9. SR 2021/172 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No. 7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021**

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 12.20 pm.

Elaine Colgan, Head of Health Protection Branch; and

Marian McKeever, Health Protection Branch.

The officials briefed the Committee on SR 2021/172 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No. 7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021.

A question and answer session followed.

The officials agreed to provide further information on an issue raised.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to defer its consideration of this rule until it has received the information requested during the briefing relating to enforcement measures.

**10.SL1 The Establishment and Agencies (Fitness of Workers) (Revocation) Regulations**

The Committee considered a proposal by the Department of Health to make a statutory rule to revoke the Establishment and Agencies (Fitness of Workers) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020. The regulations were made in April 2020 to



give effect to a temporary Covid-19 pre-employment vetting policy that permitted employers to recruit staff quickly to health and social care posts on the basis of more limited pre-employment checks, in anticipation of Covid-19 staffing pressures.

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

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for clarity on the position of staff who had been recruited on the basis of reduced pre-employment checks.

*The Committee agreed to move to Any Other Business.*

## **11. Any Other Business**

The Clerk provided an update on the query raised earlier in the meeting on reports of a bonfire that has been constructed close to a Fire and Rescue Service building in Newtownards.

The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer had provided a written response on this query to confirm that plans are in place to ensure emergency cover is maintained within the Newtownards area and across the Service. The response advised that NIFRS will continue to monitor the situation, however the management of bonfire sites did not sit with NIFRS.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Health and to the Executive Office to ask that urgent consideration is given to this matter.

*The Committee returned to its consideration of correspondence.*





## 12. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health responding to the Committee's request for further information relating to the Independent Neurology Inquiry terms of reference, the Cohort 3 Recall and the Neurology Services Review.
- ii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the publication of the cancer recovery plan, *Building Back; Rebuilding Better*.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request further information from the Department of Health on the funding in relation to this, and other strategies within the Department's responsibilities.

- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the enforcement of coronavirus restriction regulations and providing a response to issues raised in correspondence from ROSA regarding the police response to the protest against gender violence which took place in March 2021.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the capture of data relating to private autism referrals.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the publication of the analysis of the consultation responses to the cross-departmental COVID-19 Vulnerable Children and Young People's Plan.
- vi. The Committee noted a Northern Ireland Audit Office report outlining its work specific to the Department of Health.
- vii. The Committee considered separate items of correspondence from the Department of Justice, Northern HSCT, Western HSCT and Belfast HSCT regarding protests at abortion services premises.



**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider this matter further at its next meeting.

- viii. The Committee noted the Professional Standards Authority Business Plan for 2021-2022.
- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service providing a response to concerns raised by the Committee in relation to the safety of staff when carrying out their duties.
- x. The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust providing a response to concerns raised by the Committee in relation to the safety of staff when carrying out their duties.
- xi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance inviting the Assembly Statutory Committees to provide a written submission on the Financial Reporting (Departments and Public Bodies) Bill.
- xii. The Committee considered correspondence from Mesh Ireland regarding the Transvaginal Mesh Removal (Cost Reimbursement) (Scotland) Bill.

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

- xiii. The Committee considered correspondence from The Pink Ladies Cancer Support Group regarding pesticide use and cancer prevention.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to enquire whether the Education Authority had responded to the issues raised in this correspondence.

- xiv. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Communities to the Department of Health regarding the prevalence of Changing Places in buildings for which it has responsibility, particularly hospitals.



- xv. The Committee considered correspondence from the Public Health Agency regarding the provision of speech and language therapy services delivered by the Belfast HSCT to Harberton School and the support offered by the PHA in relation to therapy provision, the role of the Joint Health Education Oversight group and how the views of children and their families are sought.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the PHA letter to the individuals who had raised this matter with the Committee.

- xvi. The Committee noted the correspondence from an individual regarding the closure of Clogher Valley Nursing Home.

*The Committee agreed to consider tabled papers and its forward work programme by correspondence.*

### **13. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee for Health was scheduled to take place on 8 July 2021 at 9.00 am.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.41 pm.

**Colm Gildernew MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Health**