



Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

4 March 2021

Meeting Location: virtual meeting

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)

Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Jonathan Buckley MLA

Gerry Carroll MLA

Alan Chambers MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Cara Hunter MLA

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Keith McBride, Clerk

Roisin Donnelly, Assistant Clerk

Deirdre Farry, Assistant Clerk

Brendan Miskelly, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 9.30 am in open session.



The Committee agreed to move to agenda item 5.

1. COVID-19 Disease Response – Ministerial update

The Minister of Health, Robin Swann MLA, and the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Michael McBride, joined the meeting via video-conference at 9.31 am.

The Minister provided an update on the Department of Health's response and planning in relation to COVID-19.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Health Minister agreed to provide further information on a number of issues raised.

The Chairperson thanked the Minister and Dr McBride for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed, that given the importance of data in monitoring the situation going forward, to request the agreed minutes and associated papers, since August 2020, of the critical care hub meetings, respiratory care hub meetings and oxygen supply meetings.

The meeting was suspended at 10.51 am and resumed at 11.05 am.



The Committee returned to agenda item 1.

2. Apologies

None.

3. Chairperson's Business

- i. The Chairperson provided an update on his attendance at an All Party Group meeting on Learning Disability and called on the public to engage in Census 2021 which includes questions on learning disability.
- ii. The Chairperson provided an update on a meeting he attended with Fairness in Fertility.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 25 February 2021.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.



6. Health and Social Care Bill

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 11.11 am:

Martina Moore, Director of Organisational Change; and

John Millar, Head of Health and Social Care Board Closure Project Branch.

The officials briefed the Committee on the principles of the forthcoming Bill on the closure of the Health and Social Care Board.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The officials agreed to provide further information on a number of issues raised.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted a Memorandum from the Department of Health on the provisions for delegated legislation in the Health and Social Care Bill.

The Chairperson advised Members that as it was difficult to hear the departmental officials due to a poor video-conference connection, questions from Members would be forwarded to the Department for a written response.

7. SR 2021/26 The Healthy Start Scheme and Day Care Food Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee considered SR 2021/26 The Healthy Start Scheme and Day Care Food Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021, which provides for the digitisation of the Health Start Scheme and expands the definition of Healthy Start food.



Department of Health official, John O'Hagan, Health Improvement Policy Branch joined the meeting by video-conference at 12.05 pm and answered Members' questions on the Rule.

The official agreed to provide further information on a number of issues raised.

The Chairperson thanked the official for attending the meeting.

The question and answer session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2021/26 The Healthy Start Scheme and Day Care Food Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021, and had no objection to the rule.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department to review the application of this Rule within 3 months and provide an update to the Committee.

The meeting was suspended at 12.20 pm and resumed at 12.35 pm.

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)

Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Gerry Carroll MLA

Alan Chambers MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Cara Hunter MLA

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA



8. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health further to the Committee's scrutiny of the Food and Feed Safety and Hygiene Common Framework.
- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health further to the Committee's scrutiny of the Nutrition Labelling, Composition and Standards Common Framework.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing further information requested by the Committee on matters relating to the clamping of vehicles on HSC Trust property.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health relating to Coronavirus restriction regulations.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding delayed responses to the Committee.
- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing additional information it had requested relating to budget pressures.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing information on the adjustments between January Monitoring and the Spring Supplementary Estimates.
- viii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health providing a copy of the Interim Autism Strategy for 2021-2022.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that it is updated on progress on the development of the full Strategy and the establishment of the Autism Forum.



- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the Urology Public Inquiry.
- x. The Committee considered a request from representatives of Birth Mothers and their Children for Justice to meet the Committee regarding plans for an inquiry into mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members would hold an informal virtual meeting with this group.

- xi. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the accountability of the Executive in relation to the ongoing work relating to Mother and Baby Homes, Magdalene Laundries and Historical Clerical Child Abuse.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer consideration of this matter until after the briefing from the IDWG on Mother and Baby Homes, Magdalene Laundries and Historical Clerical Child Abuse scheduled for the meeting on 11 March 2021.

- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding Assembly scrutiny of Coronavirus restriction regulations.
- xiii. The Committee noted the British Dental Association's response to the Department of Finance on the consultation draft budget for 2021-2022.
- xiv. The Committee considered correspondence from the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust regarding the banding associated with recently advertised nursing posts and further related correspondence from the Department of Health on this matter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward both items of correspondence to the individuals who had raised this matter with the Committee.



- xv. The Committee considered correspondence from the Departments of Education and Health regarding the publication of the Children & Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending future engagement on mental health.

- xvi. The Committee considered correspondence from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health regarding its Paediatrics 2040 Project and an invitation to attend the launch of the project conclusions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members would respond directly to the invitation to attend the launch.

- xvii. The Committee considered a request from Tinylife to brief the Committee on its work and the services it provides.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members would hold an informal virtual meeting with Tinylife.

- xviii. The Committee noted the Investment Strategy NI February 2021 Activity Report for the Department of Health.

- xix. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise the individual to contact their GP for the information requested.

- xx. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding legislation for the protection of the elderly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise the individual of the role of the Committee and its scrutiny function.



- xxi. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from Committee for the Executive Office to the Minister of Health regarding financial support for the voluntary sector in delivering mental health services to young people.
- xxii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Communities to the Minister of Health regarding the safe return to sport for young people.
- xxiii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health providing an update on the current pressures on mental health services due to the COVID-19 pandemic and application of the provisions of SR 2021/8 The Mental Health (1986 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021.
Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer its consideration of this correspondence until the next meeting.
- xxiv. The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Twenty-eighth Report of Session 2020-2021.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted its forward work programme.

The Chairperson advised Members that an informal virtual meeting with the Royal College of Surgeons had been scheduled to take place on 10 March 2021.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.



11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next committee meeting was scheduled to take place on Thursday, 11 March 2021 at 9.30 am by video-conference.

The meeting moved to closed session at 12.45 pm.

12. Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill

Jonathan McMillen, Head of the Assembly's Legal Services Office joined the meeting at 12.45 pm and provided briefing on the introduction of Bills to the Assembly and the process undertaken in determining legislative competence.

The Chairperson thanked Jonathan McMillen for attending the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Bill sponsor to brief the Committee on the principles of the Bill.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.37 pm.

Colm Gildernew MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Health