



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 8 July 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)

Jonathan Lamont (Clerical Supervisor)

Brendan Miskelly (Clerical Officer)



Northern Ireland Assembly

The meeting commenced at 9.02 am in public session.

1. Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill - Briefing from Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Louisa Chalal, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women joined the meeting by video-conference at 9.03 am.

An interpreter attended the meeting to provide translation services for the briefing session.

Ms Chalal briefed the Committee on CEDAW's submission on the Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

Jonathan Buckley joined the meeting at 9.18 am.

A question and answer session followed.

Ms Chalal agreed to answer any further questions Members may have via correspondence.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Chalal for attending.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

2. Apologies

There were no apologies.

3. Chairperson's Business

- i. The Chairperson welcomed Pam Cameron back to the Committee as Deputy Chairperson and wished the previous Deputy Chairperson, Gordon Lyons well in his appointment as Minister for the Economy.



Northern Ireland Assembly

- ii. The Chairperson advised Members of proposed arrangements for dealing with Freedom of Information requests during the summer recess period.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to delegate authority to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, during recess, to submit views on the releasing or withholding of information relating to Freedom of Information requests.

- iii. The Chairperson thanked the Clerk and the Committee staff for their work in supporting the Committee during the last session.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2021.

5. Matters Arising

The Committee noted two items of correspondence from the Minister of Health further to its request at its last meeting for a response to reports of a bonfire that had been constructed close to a Fire and Rescue Service building in Newtownards.

The Committee agreed to move to consideration of an item of Correspondence.

6. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health on the Terms of Reference for the Urology Service inquiry.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members should provide their comments on the terms of reference to the Clerk.

7. Ministerial Briefing

The Minister of Health, Robin Swann MLA and Sir Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer joined the meeting by video-conference at 10.03 am.

The Minister provided an update on the Department of Health's priorities and activities.

A question and answer session followed.

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

The Chairperson thanked the Minister and Dr McBride for attending.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The meeting was suspended at 11.05 am and resumed at 11.11 am.

8. Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill - Briefing from the Health and Social Care Trust Chief Executives

The following officials from the Health and Social Care Trusts joined the meeting by video conference at 11:11 am:

Dr Cathy Jack, Chief Executive, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust;

Jennifer Welsh, Chief Executive, Northern Health and Social Care Trust;

Shane Devlin, Chief Executive, Southern Health and Social Care Trust; and

Roisin Coulter, Chief Executive, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.



Northern Ireland Assembly

The Chief Executives briefed the Committee on the Trusts' position on the Severe Fetal Abortion (Amendment) Bill and on protests outside health care premises.

A question and answer session followed.

The officials agreed to provide further information on a number of issues discussed during the briefing session.

The Chairperson thanked the Chief Executives for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted apologies from the Chief Executive of the Western Health and Social Care Trust who was unable to attend the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for an update on the actions it is taking in relation to protests held outside premises providing abortion services and co-operation with the PSNI in relation to this matter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Chief Constable and the Policing Board for Northern Ireland in relation to protests held outside premises providing abortion services.

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

The Committee considered draft SR The Food and Feed Hygiene and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which will ensure that authorities will continue to have the powers to undertake official controls required by this legislation to verify compliance with feed and food hygiene and safety law.

Agreed: The Committee considered Draft SR The Food and Feed Hygiene and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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

The Committee considered SR 2021/172 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No.7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which make a technical change regarding the requirement to produce a risk assessment for a public gathering.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health on the enforcement and penalties associated with the rule.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2021/172 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No.7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

11. SL1 The Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 12.18 pm:

Canice Ward, Head of Medicines Regulatory Group; and

Isobel Riddell, Acting Head, Medicines Policy Branch.

The officials briefed the Committee two proposed statutory rules to make changes to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2002 in response to concerns about the abuse potential of novel benzodiazepines.

A question and answer session followed.

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

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending.



Northern Ireland Assembly

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee considered the Department of Health's proposal to make a statutory rule to add three benzodiazepines (flualprazolam, flunitrazolam and norfludiazepam) to Schedule 1 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2002.

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

12.SL1 The Misuse of Drugs (Designation) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee considered the Department of Health's proposal to make a statutory rule to add the compounds known as flualprazolam, flunitrazolam and norfludiazepam to Schedule 1 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2002.

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

The Committee agreed to consider an additional an agenda item: Introduction of Bills.

13. Introduction of Bills

The Committee noted that the Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill was introduced in the Assembly on 5 July 2021 and would be scheduled for second stage in September.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would proceed with its call for evidence on the Bill in advance of the Bill reaching second stage.



Northern Ireland Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue the call for evidence on the Bill during the week commencing 19 July with a closing date of 24 September.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise the Clerk of additions to the stakeholder list of organisations that would be invited to provide a written submission.

Jonathan Buckley left the meeting at 12.56 pm.

The Committee discussed the introduction of the Autism Bill in the Assembly on 5 July 2021.

The Deputy Chairperson, Pam Cameron declared her interest as the Bill Sponsor for the Autism Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would proceed with its call for evidence on the Bill in advance of the Bill reaching second stage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue the call for evidence on the Bill during the week commencing 19 July with a closing date of 24 September.

The Committee discussed the Minister of Health's written statement to the Assembly advising that it would not be possible to introduce the Adoption and Children Bill to the Assembly until September and correspondence from the Speaker of the Assembly on this matter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would proceed with its call for evidence on the Bill when it has received confirmation that the Bill is within the legislative competence of the Assembly.

14. Correspondence (continued)

- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding vaccination alternatives for individuals with a latex allergy.



Northern Ireland Assembly

- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the financial resourcing of Department strategies.
- iv. The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules Forty-fifth Report of Session 2020-2021.

The Chairperson provided an update on handling arrangements for correspondence received over the summer period.

15. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold an informal planning session on 2 September 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold an informal meeting with families with children affected by scoliosis.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider a request to meet with the Royal College of Emergency Medicine at its planning session.

16. Any Other Business

- i. The subject of the treatment of pancreatic cancer with pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT) was raised.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for information in relation to the availability of PERT for the treatment of pancreatic cancer.

- ii. The subject of the treatment of people suffering with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis was raised.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department for further information in relation to access to treatment for this condition.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

- iii. The Chairperson thanked Members for their positive engagement and contribution to the work of the Committee during the last session.

17. Date, time and place of the next meeting

It was agreed the next meeting of the Committee was to be scheduled at the call of the Chairperson.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.21 pm.

Colm Gildernew MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Health