



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Thursday, 10 December 2020
Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings**

Present: Mr Colm Gildernew (Chairperson)
Ms Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA*
Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA
Mr Gerry Carroll MLA
Mr Alan Chambers 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 video-conference.*

The meeting commenced at 09.31 am in public session.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Chairperson's Business

- i. The Chairperson referred to correspondence received from the Allied Health Professions Federation NI, which advised that the Health Minister has asked that the Department's Chief AHP Officer sit on the Department's Management Board. The Chairperson welcomed this move to ensure direct AHP representation at the highest level of decision-making in the Department.
- ii. The Chair advised that he had spoken at a NIPSA branch AGM on 9 December 2020.
- iii. The Chairperson advised that Mr Colin McGrath would be leaving the Committee and he thanked Mr McGrath for his contribution to the work of the Health Committee.

3. Draft Minutes

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2020.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee agreed to write to the Oireachtas Health Committee seeking engagement on matters of mutual interest in relation to management of the pandemic.

5. Briefing from Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust

The following officials from the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust joined the meeting via video-conference at 9.36 am:

Mr Michael Bloomfield, Chief Executive;
Dr Nigel Ruddell, Medical Director; and
Ms Rosie Byrne, Director of Operations.

Mr Bloomfield briefed the Committee on the work of the NI Ambulance Service Trust.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the NI Ambulance Service Trust to request a copy of a letter referenced during the briefing, that the Trust had received from the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health, in regard to achieving compliance with RQIA improvement notices.

The meeting was suspended at 11.00 am and resumed at 11.10 am.

6. Departmental Briefing - Urgent and Emergency Care Review

The following officials joined the meeting via video-conference at 11.10 am:

Mr Alastair Campbell, Director of Hospital Service Reform, Department of Health;
Mr Chris Matthews, Director of Primary Care, Department of Health;
Dr John Maxwell, Clinical Lead, Urgent & Emergency Care Review, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust; and

Dr Margaret O'Brien, Head of General Medical Services, Health and Social Care Board.

The officials briefed the Committee on the review of urgent and emergency care.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The officials agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues raised during the question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a further session once the consultation on the Urgent & Emergency Care Review is completed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that as part of its next briefing on Transformation, it would request information on international comparative approaches.

The meeting was suspended at 12.41 pm and resumed at 12.50 pm.

Colin McGrath left the meeting at 12.52 pm.

7. SR 2020/287 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 17) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Mr David Hughes, Director, Department of Health, joined the meeting via video-conference at 12.52pm.

Mr Hughes briefed on two statutory rules relating to Coronavirus restrictions (Agenda items 7 and 8).

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Hughes for his attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the enforcement role of district councils in respect of the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

Mr Pat Sheehan left the meeting at 1.10 pm.

The Committee considered SR 2020/287 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 17) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, which gave effect to the decisions of the Executive in respect of a two-week ‘circuit-breaker’ that covered the period between midnight on 26 November until midnight on 10 December.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/287 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment

No. 17) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, and recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

8. SR 2020/290 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 18) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/290 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 18) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, which provides for increases in the number of persons who can attend a place of worship for the purpose of recording or live-streaming an act of worship, to no more than 8 persons; and removes sports massage therapy from the list of close contact services.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/290 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 18) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, and recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

9. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Health providing information it had requested on the Blood Safety and Quality (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020, The Quality and Safety of Organs Intended for Transplantation (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020, and The Human Tissue (Quality and Safety for Human Application) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence, pending the departmental briefing on Brexit scheduled for 17 December.

- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising that work had commenced on the development of a health-related Advance Care Planning policy for adults.
- iii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Minister of Health to the Committee for Communities, providing information on COVID-19 support payments for those who are self-isolating and the Discretionary Support Grant available to those in a crisis situation.
- iv. The Committee noted the November issue of Investment Strategy NI's Investment Activity Report for the Department of Health.
- v. The Committee considered correspondence from the Institute of Public Health advising of its availability to provide evidence and briefing to the Committee to inform its work.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from the Institute of Public Health on health inequalities.

- vi. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the UK Meat Industry to the Joint Committee for Vaccinations and Immunisation, requesting the prioritisation of meat sector workers to receive the COVID-19 vaccination.
- vii. The Committee considered a copy of correspondence from the Education Committee to the Department of Education, regarding the Looked After Children and Care-Experienced Children and Young People's Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing on the Strategy in the New Year.

- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health advising that The Electronic Commerce Directive (Adoption and Children) (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020, will be laid in the UK Parliament on 18 January 2021.
- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) thanking the Committee for its support in securing direct representation of the Allied Health Professions on the Management Board of the Department of Health.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a meeting on Tuesday, 15 December, to continue its deliberations on its inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 on care homes.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a meeting on Tuesday 22 December, to avail of a briefing by the Minister.

11. Any Other Business

- i. The Committee welcomed the announcement by the Minister that pay deductions for industrial action by health service workers in late 2019 and early 2020, will be reimbursed.
- ii. Ms Paula Bradshaw referred to correspondence she had received regarding the Dying with Dignity Bill, currently at Committee Stage in the Oireachtas, and advised that she would forward it to the Committee.

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next committee meeting was scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 15 December 2020, at 1.00 pm, in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.26 pm.

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Date: _____