



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 24 February 2022

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Gerry Carroll MLA

Alan Chambers MLA

Deborah Erskine MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Colin McGrath MLA

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

In Attendance:

Keith McBride (Clerk)

Brendan Miskelly (Clerical Supervisor)

Chris McAfee (Clerical Officer)



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Ellen Wilson (Clerical Officer)

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Roisin Donnelly (Assistant Clerk)

Deirdre Farry (Assistant Clerk)

The meeting commenced at 9.35 am in closed session with the Deputy Chairperson, Pam Cameron in the chair.

The Committee agreed to consider Matters Arising.

1. Matters Arising

Potential Committee Bill

Further to agreement at last week's meeting, the Committee considered options for progressing the recommendations from the report of the Truth Recovery Design Panel relating to the preservation of records which have been ruled out of scope as part of the Adoption and Children Bill.

Bill Clerk, Dr Kathryn Aiken joined the meeting at 9.35 am and outlined the process and timescales involved in bringing forward a Committee Bill relating to this matter.

The Chairperson joined the meeting at 9.52 am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health to undertake a consultation on this issue at the earliest opportunity and to commit to expedite the recommendations from the report of the Truth Recovery Design Panel relating to the preservation of records by bringing forward a related Bill early in the new mandate.



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- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to draw attention to this matter within its legacy report.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the Clerk to draft a motion for debate in the Chamber in relation to this matter.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the Clerk to draft a letter outlining the Committee's actions in relation to this matter for the information of individuals and groups affected.

The meeting was suspended at 10.02 am and resumed at 10.05 in public session with the Chairperson in the chair.

2. Apologies

As above.

3. Chairperson's Business

- i. The Chairperson provided an update on a meeting that he and the Deputy Chairperson held with a number of women who have a terminal cancer diagnosis and advised the Committee would be hosting an event on 7 March in the Senate Chamber to bring attention to the women's experience of secondary breast cancer and to promote a related art exhibition.
- ii. The Chairperson reminded Members that the joint meeting with the Committee for Justice to receive briefing on the actions taken following the RQIA report on the Review of Services for Vulnerable Persons Detained in Northern Ireland Prisons would take place at 1.00 pm today.



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4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2022.

5. Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill – Consideration of Bill Sponsor Amendments

The Committee considered correspondence from the Bill Sponsor of the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill outlining her intention to bring forward a number of further amendments to the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a meeting on Tuesday, 1 March 2022 to consider the amendments in further detail and to hear briefing from the Bill Sponsor on this matter.

6. Adoption and Children Bill – Consideration of Draft Amendments

The Committee considered draft amendments to the Adoption and Children Bill to provide that Clauses 24, 52 and 77 would be subject to the draft affirmative procedure rather than the negative resolution procedure.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the amendments as drafted.

The Committee also considered correspondence from the Minister of Health advising of his intention to bring forward further amendments to the Adoption and Children Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the amendments in further detail at its additional meeting on 1 March 2022.



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7. Cancer Services - Briefing from the Cancer Charities

The following representatives from Cancer Focus NI, Cancer Research NI, Marie Curie and Macmillan Cancer Support joined the meeting by video conference at 10.11 am:

Richard Spratt, Chief Executive, Cancer Focus NI;

Margaret Carr, Public Affairs Manager, Cancer Research NI;

Alasdair O'Hara, Policy and Public Affairs Manager, Macmillan Cancer Support; and

Joan McEwan, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Marie Curie NI.

The representatives briefed the Committee on the pressures on the provision of cancer services.

A question and answer session followed.

Gerry Carroll joined the meeting at 11.09 am.

The Chairperson thanked the Cancer Charities for their attendance.

8. Cancer Services - Briefing from the Department of Health

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

Dr Tomas Adell, Director of Hospital Service Reform, Department of Health;

Gay Ireland, Head of Cancer Service, Department of Health; and

Paul Cavanagh, Interim Director of Planning and Commissioning, Health and Social Care Board.

The officials provided an update on cancer service provision.



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A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek information on a number of issues raised.

The meeting was suspended at 11.58 am and resumed at 12.06 pm.

9. Hospital Parking Charges Bill – Consideration of Final Report

The Committee considered its draft report on the Hospital Parking Charges Bill.

Title Page, Committee Powers and Membership and Table of Contents

The Committee considered the Title Page, Table of Contents, Committee Powers and Membership, and List of Abbreviations and Acronyms as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Title Page, Table of Contents, Committee Powers and Membership, and List of Abbreviations and Acronyms.

Executive Summary

The Committee considered the Executive Summary of the report as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Executive Summary.

Introduction

The Committee considered the Introduction and Committee Approach section of the report (paragraphs 1 to 15) as drafted.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Introduction section of the report.

Consideration of Evidence

The Committee considered the Consideration of evidence section of the report (paragraphs 16 to 59) as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Consideration of the Bill section of the report.

Clause by Clause Consideration of the Bill

The Committee considered the Clause by Clause Consideration of the Bill section of the report (paragraphs 60 to 63) as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Clause by Clause Consideration of the Bill Section of the report.

Appendices

The Committee considered the Appendices section of the report.

Agreed The Committee agreed that it was content that the Appendices be included in the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to approve the Minutes of Proceedings of this meeting for inclusion in the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Report on the Hospital Parking Charges Bill to be published and issued to all MLAs.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed that an electronic copy of the Bill report should be sent to all organisations who provided evidence to the Committee on the Bill.

The consideration and approval of the Committee report was reported by Hansard.

10. SR 2022/31 The Pharmaceutical Services (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022

The Committee considered SR 2022/31 The Pharmaceutical Services (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 which makes: provision relating to those who can prescribe medicines; and provisions relating to the supply of drugs in accordance with a pandemic treatment protocol.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2022/31 The Pharmaceutical Services (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 and had no objection to the Rule.

11. UK SI The Human Medicines Regulations 2012 – Early Access to Medicines Scheme

The Committee considered the UK SI to amend the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 to regulate for the Early Access to Medicines Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Statutory Instrument.



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12. UK SI The Human Medicines (Coronavirus and Influenza) Amendment (Regulations) 2022

The Committee considered UK SI The Human Medicines (Coronavirus and Influenza) Amendment (Regulations) 2022 which will amend The Human Medicines Regulations 2012 which govern the arrangements for the licensing, manufacture, wholesale dealing and sale or supply of human medicines for human use.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Statutory Instrument.

13. SR 2022/43 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer its consideration of SR 2022/43 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022.

14. SR 2022/46 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer its consideration of SR 2022/46 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022.



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15. SR 2022/47 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions, Wearing of Face Coverings) (Revocation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer its consideration of SR 2022/47 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions, Wearing of Face Coverings) (Revocation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022.

16. SL1 The Health and Social Care Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (Consequential and Miscellaneous Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022

The Committee considered a proposal by the Department of Health to make a statutory rule to amend regulations pertaining to Dental and Ophthalmic primary care provision for Northern Ireland consequential to the closure of the Regional Board by the Health and Social Care Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

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

17. SL1 The Health and Personal Social Services Medical Profession (Responsible Officers) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022

The Committee considered a proposal by the Department of Health to make a statutory rule to amend The Health and Personal Social Services Medical Profession (Responsible Officers) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 to facilitate the establishment of a second Responsible Officer role within the Department of Health consequential to the closure of the Regional Board by the Health and Social Care Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

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



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18. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust regarding the recording of incidents at the Trust's Sexual and Reproductive Health Clinic.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Belfast Trust's correspondence to the organisation which had raised this matter with the Committee.

- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the NI Ambulance Service Health and Social Care Trust providing information requested by the Committee on workforce and delayed response SAIs.

- iii. The Committee considered a copy of correspondence from STEP, Stronger Together and Children and Young People Strategic Partnership to the Health and Social Care Board regarding the difficulties of newcomer families accessing GP services.

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

- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health on the Adoption and Children Bill.

- v. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health providing a copy of the Provisional Framework Outline Agreement and Concordat of the provisional Food Compositional Standards and Labelling Common Framework.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule briefing from the Food Standards Agency on the Common Framework.



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- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health on the introduction of a desktop review validation process for Coronavirus Test Devices.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the welfare of a care home resident and the care received at Clifton Nursing Home.
- viii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Minister of Health to the Committee for Justice responding to concerns about the difficulty in recruiting and retaining social workers by the Probation Board.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department to provide the Committee with a copy of its review report on the social worker workforce.
- ix. The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Reports of Session 2021 – 2022.
- x. The Committee considered correspondence from Hastings Hotels in relation to a proposal for the provision of ambulatory care in Belfast.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Health for a response on the issues raised.
- xi. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Department of Health and Social Care to the House of Lords Sub-Committee on the NI/Ireland Protocol on the Health and Social Care Bill.
- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding COVID-19 vaccination programme for 5 to 11 year olds.
- xiii. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding dental practice registration.



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

- xiv. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding carers employed under the direct payment caring scheme.

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

- xv. The Committee considered correspondence from the CEV Engagement Group NI regarding matters of concerns for clinically vulnerable people as COVID restrictions are eased.

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

- xvi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Royal College of Nursing regarding the 3% pay award for 2021-2022.

- xvii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Speaker regarding the management of legislative pressures facing the Assembly before the end of the mandate.

- xviii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Chairpersons' Liaison Group requesting views on its Report on Strengthening Committee Scrutiny.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the recommendations in the CLG report and in particular the resourcing pressures within Committee teams.

- xix. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding senior appointments within statutory mental health services.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the individual who had raised this matter with the Committee.

- xx. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising of his intention to make a written statement to the Assembly on the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review.
- xxi. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Minister of Health to the Committee for Finance regarding the current provisions in the Coronavirus Act around the certification and registration of still-births and deaths.
- xxii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health informing the Committee of the launch of a public consultation on the introduction of Minimum Unit Pricing for Alcohol in Northern Ireland.
- xxiii. The Committee considered a request from Action Mental Health to brief the Committee before the end of the mandate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite Action Mental Health to attend the informal stakeholder event planned for 3 March 2022.

- xxiv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Centre for Independent Living NI expressing its support for the re-opening of the Independent Living Fund.
- xxv. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Department of Health and Social Care to the House of Lords Sub Committee on the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol confirming that parliamentary debate for any future changes to food labelling regulations would occur when a draft affirmative instrument is debated under section 16(1)(e) of the Food Safety Act, as amended by clause 146 of the Health and Social Care Bill.
- xxvi. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding waiting lists.



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- xxvii. The Committee noted a request from the Mental Health Champion to brief the Committee before the end of the mandate.
- xxviii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Health and Social Care Trust providing information requested by the Committee following the attendance of Trust officials at the Committee meeting on 10 February 2022.
- xxix. The Committee noted correspondence from Royal Mail regarding the launch of enhanced menopause support for employees.

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence by email following the meeting on 17 February:

- xxx. Correspondence from the Minister of Health providing information requested by the Committee relating to coronavirus restriction regulations.
- xxxi. Correspondence from the Department of Health providing a copy of the Regulatory Impact Assessment carried out in relation to the Nicotine Inhaling Products (Age of Sale and Proxy Purchasing Regulations (NI) 2021) which banned the sale of nicotine inhaling products to children (and the proxy purchasing of such products).
- xxxii. Copy of correspondence from the Committee for Justice to the Department of Health on the issue of the recruitment and retention of social workers within the Probation Board.
- xxxiii. Correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office regarding the draft investment strategy for Northern Ireland.
- xxxiv. Correspondence from the Department of Health advising of the re-wording of the LCM previously laid on 11 February 2022 in respect of the Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) – Transfer of Functions provisions contained within the Westminster Health and Care Bill.



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- xxxv. Correspondence from the Department of Health advising of the extension of the call for views on the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy.
- xxxvi. Correspondence from an individual regarding the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people.
- xxxvii. Copy of correspondence from an individual to the Minister of Justice regarding medical mandates.
- xxxviii. Correspondence from an individual regarding a request to hold an exhibition relating to terminal cancer diagnosis.
- xxxix. Correspondence from the NI Human Rights Commission regarding the Adoption and Children Bill.

19. Forward Work Programme

The Committee discussed its Forward Work Programme.

A number of Members expressed their disappointment that the Minister of Health was not available to attend a committee meeting until 24 March 2022.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that the Minister meet with the Committee at the earliest opportunity.

20. Any Other Business

There was no other business.



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21. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Health was scheduled to take place at 12.45 pm on Tuesday, 1 March 2022.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.30 pm.

Colm Gildernew MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Health