



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 20 January 2022

Meeting Location: virtual meeting

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)

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 by Video or Teleconference:

Keith McBride (Clerk)

Roisin Donnelly (Assistant Clerk)

Deirdre Farry (Assistant Clerk)

Brendan Miskelly (Clerical Supervisor)

Chris McAfee (Clerical Officer)



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Ellen Wilson (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 9.36 am in public session.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Chairperson's Business

- i. The Chairperson provided updates on the following engagements he attended:
 - A briefing from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust on pressures on staff and services;
 - An informal meeting with foster carers on the Adoption and Children Bill; and
 - A meeting of the All Party Group on Cancer discussing secondary breast cancer.
- ii. The Chairperson welcomed the appointment of the new Chief Nursing Officer, Maria McIlgorm and wished her well in her post.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for further information on the disparity in pay between the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Nursing Officer posts and if the Department had plans to address this issue.



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3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meetings held on 13 and 18 January 2022.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Alan Chambers joined the meeting at 9.42 am.

The meeting moved into closed session at 9.43 am.

5. Adoption and Children Bill – consideration of amendments

Bill Clerk, Dr Kathryn Aiken joined the meeting by video-conference at 9.43 am.

Carál Ní Chuilín joined the meeting at 9.47 am.

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

The Committee considered a number of draft amendments that it had asked the Bill Clerk to prepare.

The Clerk advised that the Department of Health proposed amendments would be available for consideration at the meeting on 25 January.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission relating to kinship care.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to the Department of Health and the Department of Justice for comment.



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6. Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill – consideration of amendments

Bill Clerk, Denise Morgan joined Dr Kathryn Aiken by video-conference at the meeting at 10.12 pm.

The Committee considered a number of draft amendments that it had asked the Bill Clerks to prepare.

The Chairperson thanked the Bill Clerks for their attendance.

The Bill Clerks left the meeting at 10.33 am.

The Clerk advised that proposed amendments from the Bill Sponsor would be available for consideration at the meeting on 25 January.

The Committee discussed a number of items of correspondence received by the Committee and by Members regarding the oral evidence the Committee considered on the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill.

The meeting was suspended at 10.55 am and resumed at 11.06 am in public session.

7. SR 2021/348 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) (Amendment) (No.8) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The following departmental officials joined the meeting by video-conference at 11.06 am:

David Hughes, Grade 5, Health Protection Team, Department of Finance;

Niall Donnelly, Deputy Principal, Health Protection Branch, Department of Health;

Richard Duffin, Deputy Principal, Department of Health; and

Peter Luney, The Executive's Covid-19 Taskforce – Covid Recovery Strategy, The Executive Office.



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The officials answered questions from Members on three statutory rules relating to coronavirus restriction measures (agenda items 7 to 9).

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee considered SR 2021/348 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) (Amendment) (No.8) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which: amends the list of reasonable excuses to not wear a face covering and removes the requirement to wear a face covering when on a transport service premises where area is outdoors and make a minor amendment to the requirement to wear face coverings on a ferry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would not take a position on this Rule.

8. SR 2021/349 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No.21) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee considered SR 2021/349 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No.21) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which: introduces the requirement to be seated in hospitality premises in certain circumstances; places limitations on the number of persons at a table in hospitality premises; places responsibility on retail premises to ensure all reasonable measures are in place to reduce transmission; requires office premises to put reasonable measures in place to comply with social distancing; prohibits dancing indoors in hospitality venues; and prohibits nightclubs from opening.

The Committee noted two correction slips from the Department of Health in relation to SR 2021/349 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No.21) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021.



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Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2021/349 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No.21) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

9. Draft SR The Coronavirus Act 2020 (Extension of Powers to Act for the Protection of Public Health) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health providing information requested by the Committee in relation to Draft SR The Coronavirus Act 2020 (Extension of Powers to Act for the Protection of Public Health) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer its consideration of Draft SR The Coronavirus Act 2020 (Extension of Powers to Act for the Protection of Public Health) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021 until the meeting on 27 January 2022 in order to consider further the correspondence from the Department of Health on this Rule.

10. SR 2021/322 The Health Protection (Coronavirus International Travel) (2021 Consolidation) (Amendment No. 11) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

Carol Picton-Lynas, International Travel Restrictions Directorate, Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 11.32 am and briefed the Committee on five statutory rules relating to international travel restrictions (agenda items 10 to 14).

A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.



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The Committee considered SR 2021/322 The Health Protection (Coronavirus International Travel) (2021 Consolidation) (Amendment No. 11) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which: adds Nigeria to the red list of countries and to the list that prevents aircraft and ships from the red list countries arriving in Northern Ireland except in limited circumstances.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2021/322 The Health Protection (Coronavirus International Travel) (2021 Consolidation) (Amendment No. 11) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

11. SR 2021/323 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) (Amendment No. 11) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee considered SR 2021/323 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) (Amendment No. 11) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which makes amendments relating to: the completion of passenger locator forms; evidence of test results for non-red list arrivals; self-isolation requirements; and information which operators must provide to passengers arriving in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2021/323 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) (Amendment No. 11) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.



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12. SR 2021/340 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (2021 Consolidation) (Amendment No. 12) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee considered SR 2021/340 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (2021 Consolidation) (Amendment No. 12) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which: removes all countries from the Schedule 1 Red List and Schedule 8 so that these countries are no longer prohibited from landing in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2021/340 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (2021 Consolidation) (Amendment No. 12) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

13. SR 2021/343 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (2021 Consolidation) (Amendment No. 13) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee considered SR 2021/343 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (2021 Consolidation) (Amendment No. 13) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which: permit those red list passengers who were isolating in accordance with Schedule 7 immediately before 4.00 am on 15 December 2021 to complete their period of self-isolation at a place other than the place specified in their managed isolation package.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2021/343 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (2021 Consolidation) (Amendment No. 13) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.



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14. SR 2022/3 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022

The Committee considered 2022/3 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 which updates the rules that apply to eligible non-red list arrivals (those arrivals to Northern Ireland who are fully vaccinated upon arrival).

Agreed: The Committee considered 2022/3 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

15. SR 2021/326 The Tobacco Retailer (Fixed Penalty) (General) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee considered SR 2021/326 The Tobacco Retailer (Fixed Penalty) (General) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which amends the form of a fixed penalty notice which may be issued in respect of particular offences listed under section 12(1) of the Tobacco Retailers Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, to include an offence under section 1 of the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016; and amends the acceptable methods of payment to facilitate the use of alternative types of payment by District Councils in the future.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2021/326 The Tobacco Retailer (Fixed Penalty) (General) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.



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16. SR 2021/332 The Smoke-free (Premises, Vehicle Operators and Penalty Notices) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee considered SR 2021/332 The Smoke-free (Premises, Vehicle Operators and Penalty Notices) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which makes provision that drivers of applicable vehicles are responsible for ensuring that smoking does not take place.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2021/332 The Smoke-free (Premises, Vehicle Operators and Penalty Notices) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

The meeting was suspended at 12.04 pm and resumed at 12.11 pm.

17. Hospital Parking Charges Bill – Evidence from the HSC Trusts

The following officials from the Health and Social Care Trusts joined the meeting by video-conference at 12.11 pm:

Brenda Creaney, Executive Director of Nursing User Experience and Allied Health Professionals, Belfast HSCT; and

Jeff Thompson, Assistant Director, Patient Experience, South Eastern HSCT.

The representatives providing briefing to the Committee in relation to the Hospital Parking Charges Bill.

A question and answer session followed.

Colin McGrath left the meeting at 12.57 pm.

The Trust representatives agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues raised.



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The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee considered a submission from Marie Curie on the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite Marie Curie to provide oral evidence on the Bill.

18. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the challenges faced by those with visual disabilities interacting with the Covid Certification Scheme.
- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding potential primary legislation the Department may progress in the next mandate.
- iii. The Committee considered two items of correspondence from the Minister of Health providing responses to issues raised by Fairness in Fertility regarding the services provided at the Regional Fertility Centre.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an update on fertility service provision.

- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health responding to the Committee's request to be provided with a copy of the report by Verita Consulting in relation to a Maintaining High Professional Standards investigation regarding Dr Michael Watt.
- v. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the publication of the Analysis of Responses document relating to the Department's consultation on the draft Framework for a Future Planning Model.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule briefing on the consultation responses and next steps.

- vi. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to the Minister of Health regarding a petition calling for the dispatch of fire crews as early responders to rural areas.
- vii. The Committee considered correspondence from Abbeyfield and Wesley regarding the Department of Health support package for the social care sector.

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

- viii. The Committee noted an invitation from the Committee for the Executive Office to attend a Victims and Survivors Forum meeting.
- ix. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the UK Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs to the House of Lords Sub-Committee on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland regarding a delegated regulation.
- x. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the UK Department Health and Social Care to the House of Lords Sub-Committee on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland regarding the supply of medicines to Northern Ireland.
- xi. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the interval times for the administration of vaccine doses.

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

- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the development of a paediatric sepsis registry.



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- xiii. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding Long Covid research in Northern Ireland.

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

- xiv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health, Department of Justice and the Executive Office advising of the publication of a call for view to inform the development of a Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy and a Strategy to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls.

- xv. The Committee considered correspondence from the Stroke Association and NI Chest Heart and Stroke requesting the Committee seek the publication of the 2019 consultation responses and workforce analysis relating to Reshaping Stroke Care.

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

- xvi. The Committee noted the RNIB newsletter for November 2021.

- xvii. The Committee considered correspondence from Michelle Gildernew MP requesting the Committee meet with the Human Milk Bank team in the Western HSCT.

The Chairperson declared his interest as being Michelle Gildernew MP's brother.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request written briefing from the Human Milk Bank team and to give further consideration to scheduling a meeting in its forward work programme.

- xviii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising of a UK wide consultation on proposed amendments to the Human Medicines Regulations 2012.



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- xix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing further information relating to the Department of Health Budget and January Monitoring position.
- xx. The Committee noted a request from Brain Injury Matters requesting to brief the Committee on its work.
- xxi. The Committee considered a number of items of correspondence received from individuals relating to the oral evidence considered by the Committee in relation to the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to respond to provide further detail on the Committee's consideration of this Bill.

19. Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson advised Members that a draft forward work programme providing detail of the Committee's schedule until the end of the mandate was currently being prepared for consideration at the meeting on 27 January.

20. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

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, 25 January 2022.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.39 pm.



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