



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for Health

## Minutes of Proceedings

**27 June 2024**

**Meeting Location:** Room 29, Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

Liz Kimmins MLA (Chairperson)

Danny Donnelly MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Diane Dodds MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Alan Chambers MLA

Linda Dillon MLA

**Apologies:**

Nuala McAllister MLA

Colin McGrath MLA

Alan Robinson MLA

**In Attendance:**

Keith McBride, Clerk

Roisin Donnelly, Assistant Clerk

Angela McParland, Assistant Clerk

Jonathan Lamont, Clerical Supervisor

Noel Gallagher, Clerical Officer

Antoinette Bowen, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced in closed session at 2.24pm.

**1. Committee Priorities**

The Committee considered a paper on its priorities.

*Linda Dillon joined the meeting at 2.34pm*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed in principle with the approach outlined in the priorities paper for next steps in its Forward Work Programme.

The meeting moved to open session at 2.50pm.

**2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Nuala McAllister MLA, Colin McGrath MLA and Alan Robinson MLA.

### **3. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson thanked the Fire and Rescue Service Learning & Development Centre at Cookstown for providing the Committee with a tour earlier in the day. The Chairperson commended those involved in establishing the excellent facility for the Fire and Rescue Service to train in and noted that the Committee intends to hold a Committee meeting at the Centre in the next session of the Assembly.

The Chairperson noted that the Committee had hosted the Oireachtas Committee on Health earlier in the week in Parliament Buildings and held joint visits with the Oireachtas Committee to the Queen's University Belfast Cancer Research Centre and Daisy Hill Hospital. The Chairperson stated that excellent discussions had been held between the Committees and the Committee intends to carry out a visit to the Oireachtas during the next session of the Assembly.

The Chairperson advised Members that it is standard practice to delegate authority to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, during periods of recess, to submit views on the releasing or withholding of information in any non-routine or contentious Freedom of Information requests received by the Committee. Any such views expressed would be brought to the attention of the Committee at the first meeting after summer recess.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the Committee delegate authority to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to submit views on the releasing or withholding of information in any non-routine or contentious Freedom of Information requests received by the Committee, during the upcoming period of recess.

### **4. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2024.

## **5. Matters Arising**

The Committee considered a written briefing from the Department addressing issues raised by the Committee following a briefing by Haemophilia NI and consideration of a written briefing by Haemophilia UK on 30 May, as part of its evidence gathered for consideration of an anticipated Legislative Consent Memorandum at that time concerning the Victims and Prisoners Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the written briefing to Haemophilia NI to share with Haemophilia UK for information.

The Committee noted further information from the Allied Health Professions Federation as a follow up the previous week's briefing by the Federation.

The Chairperson advised Members that the Examiner of Statutory Rules has advised the Clerk that SR 2024/117 The Health and Social Care Pension Schemes (Amendment No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024, which the Committee agreed, subject to the Examiners' Report, at the previous meeting, will be included in the next issued Report by the Examiner.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note that the Examiner of Statutory Rules will advise the Committee in the next Report that the special attention of the Assembly is drawn to a series of minor errors in the drafting of SR 2024/117 The Health and Social Care Pension Schemes (Amendment No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024. A number of typographical errors arose in the Regulations as a result of technical drafting issues. These errors were satisfactorily addressed in correction slips dated 7 June 2024 and 20 June 2024.

## **6. SR 2024/127 The Optical Charges and Payments (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024**

The Committee considered SR 2024/127 The Optical Charges and Payments (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 which will increase the value of

optical vouchers issued to certain patients to help towards the cost of glasses or contact lenses.

**Agreed:** The Committee for Health has considered SR 2024/127 The Optical Charges and Payments (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 and has no objection to the Rule.

#### **7. SR 2024/130 The Firefighters' Pension Schemes and Compensation Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024**

The Committee considered SR 2024/130 The Firefighters' Pension Schemes and Compensation Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 which will make changes to the Firefighters' Pension Schemes including: remove requirement to complete a nomination form for a co-habiting partner for survivors' pension to be paid; same-sex civil partners or spouses will be entitled to survivors' benefit in the same way as opposite sex spouses; survivors' benefits is retained upon entering into a new marriage or civil partnership; and errors are redressed in the Public Service Pensions Revaluation Orders (Northern Ireland) for 2021 and 2022.

**Agreed:** The Committee for Health has considered SR 2024/130 The Firefighters' Pension Schemes and Compensation Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 and has no objection to the Rule.

#### **8. Draft 2024 'Delivering Together' Progress Report – Oral Briefing by the Department of Health (DoH)**

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.59pm:

Peter Jakobsen, Director of Regional Health Services Transformation, DoH; and Michelle Estler, Head of Transformation Secretariat Unit, DoH.

The officials briefed the Committee on the draft 2024 'Delivering Together' progress Report.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The Committee noted a Ministerial response providing further information following the briefing on June Monitoring.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department:

- Requesting further information on current work and plans by the Department on the introduction of new technology such as robotics and AI, including plans around roll out, building networks to assist advancement, and upskilling and retention of staff;
- regarding elective care hubs to reduce waiting lists, clarity on whether the Department has ring fenced resources and to what extent, and clarity on the estimated additional capacity needed;
- requesting confirmation of the information the Department collects to ensure it has a proper understanding of the reasons why individuals come off waiting lists (and therefore a proper understanding of any successes/concerns of its actions);
- on the transformation fund, which the former Minister had stated to the Committee that he had foreseen applications to the fund as being about broadening training places. Therefore, the Department to confirm whether there has been a change in approach since this statement by the former Minister; and
- on transformation bids, the Committee noted there were no financial savings listed, long term, regarding mega clinics and multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) and is concerned this could impact the success of those bids. Therefore, the Committee to receive updates on any future engagement with the Department of Finance on these bids.

*Diane Dodds left the meeting at 3.27*

## **9. Serious Adverse Incident (SAIs) – Oral Briefing by the Department of Health**

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.38pm:

Professor Lourda Geoghegan, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Co-chair of the redesign project;

Kieran McAteer, Director of Quality, Safety and Improvement, Co-chair of the redesign project; and

Dr Seamus O'Reilly, former Medical Director at the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, Lead in the redesign project.

The officials briefed the Committee on the ongoing redesign of protocol for dealing with SAIs.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

*Linda Dillon left the meeting at 4.19pm*

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The Committee noted the following: a Departmental response on SAIs in cervical screening; correspondence from an individual; and correspondence from the Patient and Client Council.

The meeting was suspended at 4.35pm

The Committee lost quorum and the meeting was unable to resume, according to Standing Orders 46(6) and 49(5).

**Liz Kimmins MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for Health**

**12 September 2024**