



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

26 September 2024

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Liz Kimmins MLA (Chairperson)

Danny Donnelly MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Diane Dodds MLA

Nuala McAllister MLA

Colin McGrath MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Alan Chambers MLA

Linda Dillon MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Alan Robinson MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance:

Keith McBride, Clerk

Roisin Donnelly, Assistant Clerk

Angela McParland, Assistant Clerk

Jonathan Lamont, Clerical Supervisor

Stephen McGlennon, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 2.04pm in public session.

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson acknowledged the BBC NI Spotlight programme 'I Am Not Okay', aired on 24 September 2024. The Chairperson reminded Members that the Department is to provide a written briefing on respite services on 24 October 2024 and an update on the Department's Autism Strategy is scheduled for February 2024. The Chairperson advised Members that the Committee will also be briefed by the Independent Autism Reviewer in February.

The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson updated Members on a meeting held the All Party Group on Learning Disability and the Department.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that respite services be discussed with the Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs) at the briefing on 21 November 2024.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2024.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Regional Maternity Hospital – Oral Briefing from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.14pm:

Maureen Edwards, Interim Chief Executive, BHSCT;

Alan Metcalfe, Co-Director, Estate Services, BHSCT;

Alison Walker, Consultant Neonatologist, BHSCT; and

David Porter, Interim Director, Health Estates, Department of Health (DoH).

The officials briefed the Committee on the new Maternity Hospital on the Royals Hospital site.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to BHSCT for further information on costs and liability for the regional hospital project and the HSCTs on testing regimes for project handovers.

6. Maternity Services – Oral Briefing from the Department of Health

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.18pm:

Preeta Millar, DoH;

Katherine Hanratty, Programme Director, DoH;

David Porter, Interim Director, Health Estates, DoH;

Ryan Wilson, Director of Secondary Care, DoH; and

Paula Tweedie, Co-Director of Hospital Care, Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG), DoH/HSCT.

The officials briefed the Committee on maternity services.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Deputy Chairperson declared an interest as a registered nurse with the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust Nursing Bank

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department that it be kept informed on cost outcomes, lessons learned, and the impact on funding of other projects and services.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to liaise with the Public Accounts Committee in regards to the NIAO's Major Capital Projects: Follow-up Report.

7. In-year Budget Allocation – Written Briefing from the Department of Health

The Committee considered a written briefing providing an update on October Monitoring.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider further when officials brief the Committee.

8. Children's Social Care Services – Written Briefing from the Department of Health

The Committee considered a written briefing providing a quarterly update on the progress of recommendations and wider work by the Department in regards to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care Services.

The Committee noted that this is a priority of the Committee and forthcoming in its Forward Work Programme is: an oral briefing on 3 October 2024 by stakeholders on Children's Social Care Services; a debate on 8 October 2024 on the Committee's motion on Children's Social Care Services, at which the Minister will be present; and an oral briefing with officials on 12 December 2024 on progress on the implementation of the recommendations of the Review Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to, in the first instance, await the Minister's response to issues raised at the debate on the Committee's motion on 8 October 2024.

9. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from Allied Health Professions Federation Northern Ireland (AHPFNI) on examples of the solutions that Allied Health Professions can offer to the transformation and modernisation of Health and Social Care, to address many of the severe pressures faced, as a follow up to the AHPFNI briefing on 20 June 2024.
- ii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) requesting to meet with the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that an informal meeting is arranged for the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to meet with the Commissioner.

- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance on the Department of Finance Outturn and Forecast Outturn Data for June and July 2024 which the Finance Committee had agreed to share on a regular basis.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding work on the interim Public Sector Transformation Board (PSTB).
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Speaker's Office on a public petition titled '24/7 Thrombectomy Service' which was laid on 16 September 2024 by Paula Bradshaw MLA.
- vi. The Committee considered correspondence from a family member of Michael and Marjorie Cawdry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an informal meeting to meet with the family member on the matter.

- vii. The Committee considered a Departmental response to the Committee's request that the Minister meet with DPR Phase One and Phase Two families, following the Committee's informal meeting, on 10 September 2024, with family members of five deceased patients of the former neurologist Michael Watt.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write again to the Department in order to receive clarity that Minister will meet with the family members.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the families, by way of an update.

10. Any Other Business

The Committee considered the issue of Trusts commissioning services.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to receive a written brief on how the Department and the Trusts commission services, to be received ahead of the oral briefing by the HSCTs scheduled for 21 November 2024.

The Committee considered the Department's approach to commissioning research.

Agreed: The Committee to write to the Department to ascertain the process for the Department commissioning research.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme.

12. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Health is scheduled to take place at 2.00pm on 3 October 2024.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.25pm.

Liz Kimmins MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Health

3 October 2024