



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

23 January 2025

Meeting Location: Southern Health and Social Care Trust Boardroom,
Monaghan Row, Newry

Present: Liz Kimmins MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Donnelly MLA (Deputy Chairperson),
Alan Chambers MLA
Linda Dillon MLA
Diane Dodds MLA
Órlaithí Flynn MLA
Nuala McAllister MLA
Colin McGrath MLA

Apologies: Alan Robinson MLA

In Attendance:

Keith McBride, Clerk

Roisin Donnelly, Assistant Clerk

Angela McParland, Assistant Clerk

Stephen McGlennon, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 2.03pm in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Alan Robinson MLA.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson thanked the Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT) and Daisy Hill Hospital staff for hosting the Committee and providing a tour the Theatres, including the Paediatric Theatre, the Medical Ambulatory Unit and the Acute Care at Home Service. The Committee received insight into the positive work that is ongoing and the improvement it is bringing to patient care across the health service.

3. Draft Minutes

The Committee agreed the draft Minutes of the meetings held on 16 January 2025.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Elective Care – Oral Briefing from the Royal College of Surgeons of England in Northern Ireland

The following representatives joined the meeting at 2:05pm:

- Mr Niall McGonigle, Royal College of Surgeons Northern Ireland Director;
and
- Mr Mark Haynes, Consultant Urologist.

The representatives briefed the Committee on elective care.

Colin McGrath joined the meeting at 2.15pm.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health (DoH) for detail of what actions the Department is taking to increase Theatre time for surgeons.

6. Cervical Cytology Screening Review – Oral Briefing from the Department of Health, Public Health Agency, and SHSCT

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.33pm:

- Colm McCafferty, Acting Chief Executive, SHSCT;
- Dr Stephen Austin, Medical Executive Director, SHSCT;
- Joanne McClean, Director of Public Health, Public Health Agency (PHA);
- Tracey Owen, Deputy Director of Public Health, PHA; and
- Siobhan Broderick, Director of Population Health, DoH.

The officials briefed the Committee on the Cervical Cytology Screening Review.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to DoH to receive further information as to the following:

- detail of how senior management was held responsible for failings of screeners under their line management;
- confirmation that the procedures for screening which were in place were adequate and that failings came about from screeners not following the procedures;
- detail of what consideration was given by senior management to notify the governing body of the disciplinary proceedings for screeners;
- the Committee to be provided with a full breakdown of the new screening process and timescales for dissemination of screening results; and
- the Committee to receive a copy of the records of the performance management exercises carried out for screeners across the Trusts from the time of the failings in the screening process, to include an explanation that gives appropriate context of how the process was carried out at that time.

The meeting was suspended at 5.50pm

Colin McGrath left the meeting at 5.50pm

The meeting recommenced at 5.55pm

7. Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Tobacco and Vapes Bill

Members considered a draft Committee Report on the Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Tobacco and Vapes Bill.

Agreed: The Committee has considered the draft Report and is content with the Report as drafted and that it be published.

8. SL1 The Health and Social Care Pension Schemes (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025

The Committee considered SL1 The Health and Social Care Pension Schemes (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025. The Regulations will increase

member contributions in order to meet the required scheme yield and correct pre-existing errors within the HSC pension scheme regulations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it is content with the merits of the policy and that the Department make the Statutory Rule.

Colin McGrath returned to the meeting at 5.57pm

9. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted a response from the Department to the Committee's request for comment to correspondence which the Committee had received from the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain.
- ii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department on the draft Budget 25/26 Equality Impact Assessment and Rural Needs Impact Assessment and the 12-week consultation on the Equality Impact Assessment which opened on 15 January 2025 and which will close on 9 April 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to receive a breakdown of how the £8.4 billion will be spent across the Health and Social Care Service.

- iii. The Committee considered a response from the Health and Social Care Trusts regarding Trusts accessing the medical records of individual childminders.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to Unite the Union for comment.

- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance on Budget 2025/26.

- v. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Commissioner Designate for Victims of Crime Northern Ireland to individuals concerning petitioning for reform of domestic abuse in family courts in Northern Ireland.
- vi. The Committee noted a progress update from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust on works associated with water safety on the new Maternity Hospital.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered a draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing on the Infected Blood Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to take place at 2.00pm on 30 January 2025.

The meeting was adjourned at 6.02pm.

Liz Kimmins MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Health

30 January 2025