

agenda

Title of Meeting	121 st Meeting of the Public Health Agency Board
Date	23 April 2020 at 1.30pm
Venue	Fifth Floor Meeting Room, 12/22 Linenhall Street, Belfast

standing items

- | | | |
|-----------|---|-----------------|
| 1
1.30 | Welcome and apologies | Chair |
| 2
1.30 | Declaration of Interests | Chair |
| 3
1.30 | Minutes of Previous Meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting held on 19 March 2020 • Extraordinary Meeting held on 10 April 2020 | Chair |
| 4
1.35 | Matters Arising | Chair |
| 5
1.35 | Chair's Business | Chair |
| 6
1.40 | Chief Executive's Business | Chief Executive |

items for noting

- | | | |
|-----------|--|---------------|
| 7
1.45 | Governance in Emergency | Chair |
| 8
2.00 | Update on COVID-19: Duties specific to PHA | All Directors |

closing items

- | | | |
|-----------|--|--|
| 9
3.00 | Any Other Business | |
| 10 | Details of next meeting:
<i>Thursday 21 May 2020 at 1.30pm</i>
<i>Fifth Floor Meeting Room, 12/22 Linenhall Street, Belfast, BT2 8BS</i> | |

Title of Meeting	120 th Meeting of the Public Health Agency Board
Date	19 March 2020 at 1.30pm
Venue	Meeting Rooms, Linum Chambers, Bedford Street, Belfast

Present

Mr Andrew Dougal	- Chair
Mrs Valerie Watts	- Interim Chief Executive
Mr Edmond McClean	- Interim Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Operations
Professor Hugo van Woerden	- Director of Public Health
Alderman William Ashe	- Non-Executive Director
Mr John-Patrick Clayton	- Non-Executive Director (<i>via telephone</i>)
Mr Leslie Drew	- Non-Executive Director (<i>via telephone</i>)
Ms Deepa Mann-Kler	- Non-Executive Director (<i>via telephone</i>)
Alderman Paul Porter	- Non-Executive Director
Professor Nichola Rooney	- Non-Executive Director
Mr Joseph Stewart	- Non-Executive Director

In Attendance

Mr Paul Cummings	- Director of Finance, HSCB
Mr Robert Graham	- Secretariat
Ms Jenny Redman	- Boardroom Apprentice

Apologies

Mr Rodney Morton	- Director of Nursing and Allied Health Professionals
Dr Aideen Keaney	- Director of Quality Improvement
Ms Marie Roulston	- Director of Social Care and Children, HSCB

26/20 | Item 1 – Welcome and Apologies

- 26/20.1 | The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Mr Rodney Morton, Dr Aideen Keaney and Ms Marie Roulston.
- 26/20.2 | The Chair said that on behalf of the Board, that he wished to convey his immense gratitude to PHA staff and to acknowledge the challenges which PHA staff are facing at this time and for the marvellous work they are doing on behalf of the health of the people of Northern Ireland.
- 26/20.3 | The Interim Chief Executive advised that while some officers were not

present at the meeting, they were currently involved with work dealing with the COVID-19 situation.

27/20 Item 2 – Declaration of Interests

27/20.1 The Chair asked if anyone had interests to declare relevant to any items on the agenda. No interests were declared.

28/20 Item 3 – Minutes of previous meeting held on 20 February 2020

28/20.1 The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 20 February 2020, were approved as an accurate record of that meeting.

29/20 Item 4 – Matters Arising

29/20.1 There were no matters arising.

30/20 Item 5 – Chair’s Business

30/20.1 The Chair advised that he had no business in addition to the report he had circulated to members via e-mail.

31/20 Item 6 – Chief Executive’s Business

31/20.1 The Interim Chief Executive informed members that senior staff in both the HSCB and PHA now follow a daily routine of meetings. She said that the two organisations’ senior management teams meet at 8:30am each day. Furthermore, she said that there is a pre-SILVER meeting which takes place at 12:15pm in advance of the daily SILVER meeting at 12:45pm with HSC Trusts. GOLD meetings are also held on a daily basis.

31/20.2 The Interim Chief Executive said that she had attended the meeting chaired by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister where each of the Government departments had given an overview of the key issues affecting their areas. She said that she had met with the Permanent Secretary and had written to him to advise that as HSCB and PHA are concentrating on COVID-19 related work, business continuity plans have now been formally invoked. She highlighted in particular the increased workload of the communications team in dealing with the volume of media enquiries. She added that in the light of the Prime Minister’s recent guidance, steps will be taken to ensure that PHA complies with any advice.

32/20 Item 7 – Update on COVID-19

32/20.1 Professor van Woerden gave a presentation on COVID-19. He began by outlining the typical models of a pandemic and what could happen in the event of an intervention. He explained that we have now moved from the “contain” phase to the “delay” phase and that during this phase,

- there will be an increased emphasis on surveillance.
- 32/20.2 Professor van Woerden said that it has been a challenge preparing for this pandemic as this is a new type of virus. He said that the Department of Health will be publishing detailed plans in due course. He gave an overview of the assumed epidemiology and the estimates of how many people in Northern Ireland may become infected. He emphasised the possibility of a second curve or peak in the incidence of the virus.
- 32/20.3 Professor van Woerden gave members an overview of the structure in place showing the links between Trusts, the PHA and HSCB, and the Department of Health in terms of reporting and outlined the daily rhythm of meetings that takes place. Going forward, he said that there should be an increased emphasis on communication, with the whole system working together, and society as a whole playing its part. He added that the approach being taken to deal with the outbreak will need to be regularly revised and improved and it will be crucial to monitor the psychological impact and maximise resilience.
- 32/20.4 The Chair thanked Professor van Woerden for his comprehensive presentation. He asked for more information about testing, particularly in view of the emphatic and repeated calls by the World Health Organisation on the importance of comprehensive testing. Professor van Woerden said that efforts are being made to increase the capacity for testing so that up to 1,000 tests can be conducted daily. He explained that presently, only the Belfast Trust can undertake tests. The Interim Chief Executive said that HSCB/PHA has been given offers of support across a range of areas and that these are being considered.
- 32/20.5 Mr McClean noted that Professor van Woerden had stressed the importance of communication. He said that PHA's messaging arrangements are integrated with those of the Department of Health, but added that there is an increased burden on public staff whose time is being requested to carry out media commitments on a daily basis. He added that the content of the message is changing and there will be a ramping up of television advertisements.
- 32/20.6 Alderman Porter thanked the staff for their work so far. He sought clarity on the low number of tests carried out to date, and asked about whether nurseries would be closing. He also asked what stage of the pandemic Northern Ireland is currently is. Professor van Woerden said that BSO is attempting to scale up the number of tests, but that there are issues with lab capacity and that for clinical governance reasons, tests have to go through a validation process before they can be used. With regard to guidance, he noted that guidance can change very quickly. He said that Northern Ireland is roughly at the same stage as Wales and Scotland, but slightly behind the Republic of Ireland.
- 32/20.7 Ms Mann-Kler noted that there has been a lot of press attention on PPE

and sought assurance on progress. She asked whether there is the support in place should staff revert to home working. She expressed concern about the different approaches being taken on each side of the Irish border. Mr Cummings said that at the moment, the number of concurrent users for remote working is capped because of limited IT capacity, but it is hoped to increase this shortly. Professor van Woerden assured members that BSO is working as hard as it can to secure the required equipment.

- 32/20.8 Mr Clayton asked about the impact on staff as well as the economic impact and impact on the nation's public health in the longer term. Professor van Woerden noted that as a result of the 2008 economic downturn there was an effect on life expectancy, particular those in the lower socio-economic classes. He said that it is important that efforts are made to dealing with this pandemic in the short term. Mr Stewart asked how far away we are from the peak. Professor van Woerden suggested that by not taking any measures, it may be another 4 weeks, but measures could be taken to delay this, but it would take 2 weeks to know if the measures were making a difference.
- 32/20.9 Mr Drew asked whether HSCB/PHA was giving consideration to the management of the aftermath. Professor van Woerden said that Brendan Bonner's team has been working on this. He noted that in Northern Ireland there are strong links with the community and voluntary sector. Mr McClean said that it is important to be mindful of the pressure with that sector. The Chair asked if the Chief Medical Officer had met with the community and voluntary sector. Professor van Woerden confirmed that a meeting had taken place where their role was recognised and that the Chief Medical Officer will use that sector as a vehicle for communication.
- 32/20.10 The Chair asked about communication with the lower socio-economic groups. Professor van Woerden acknowledged that more could be done. Mr McClean said that PHA is conscious that there will be different levels of understanding between urban and rural communities. He said that PHA will be aiming to keep its messages simple and to repeat the same message time and time again. Professor van Woerden said that the key message is the "Catch it. Bin it. Kill it". The Chair commended the tremendous work of the communications staff. He also highlighted the tireless work of public health staff in participating in a huge number of media interviews in order to keep the Northern Ireland public properly informed.
- 32/20.11 Professor Rooney asked about working with universities to tap into any knowledge or intelligence they are building. Professor van Woerden explained that there is a Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) which draws expertise from across the UK, including Northern Ireland, but he added that he is keen to expand the scientific advice within PHA and that a meeting is taking place this afternoon regarding this. He said that it is important that the 4 Chief Medical Officers are

- working together and for PHA, it is important that any messages being given out do not underline the core message.
- 32/20.12 Professor Rooney said that PHA's key message should highlight physical distancing and maintaining social connections. She asked about the aftermath of the pandemic from a mental health perspective. Professor van Woerden said that Brendan Bonner and his team are looking at this. Mr Cummings said that the task facing the HSC is enormous and that every member of staff is working above and beyond their normal workload but this pandemic may run until July.
- 32/20.13 Alderman Ashe said that this is a time when the community sector will be needed, but it is becoming depleted. He agreed with the point made by Professor Rooney about the impact of this situation on people's mental health, as people risk becoming more isolated and more vulnerable. Mr McClean assured members that PHA is closely monitoring contracts with external organisations whose contracts are due for renewal. He added that the PHA will work to guarantee that there is flexibility to ensure stability and continuity at this time.
- 32/20.14 The Interim Chief Executive expressed the view of the Chief Medical Officer that this work is now the full time work for the PHA. The Chair asked about the number of ventilators. Mr Cummings advised that a business case has been approved, but it may take up to 10 weeks for the equipment to arrive. Mr McClean said that although PHA is being asked to undertake quicker procurements it is important that it is mindful of its governance requirements. Mr Stewart agreed that a record of all such exercises needs to be kept.
- 32/20.15 Ms Mann-Kler thanked all of the staff for their work to date and thanked the Interim Chief Executive for her decision to delay her retirement. She asked that from a governance point of view, if there could be more regular updates for PHA Board members, perhaps a weekly meeting. The Interim Chief Executive said that from this point on it will be important to keep members informed in the absence of having formal Board meetings.
- 32/20.16 Alderman Porter noted that PHA is a small organisation and asked if there are mechanisms in place in the event of staff falling ill. He also asked about PHA making payments in advance to community and voluntary sector organisations to assist them. Mr Cummings said that PHA pays contracts in advance as long as it satisfied that the required governance arrangements are in place. Professor van Woerden said that there are daily senior management team meetings at 8:30am where the Directors are monitoring business continuity arrangements. He added that PHA is encouraging staff to work from home where possible.
- 32/20.17 Professor van Woerden said that PHA is becoming increasingly aware of fragilities within the HSC system with single-handed GP surgeries closing and increased pressure on pharmacists.

32/20.18 Mr Clayton shared the concerns of other members, but said that he had particular concerns in relation to social care, and specifically ensuring that low paid domiciliary care workers have the right equipment. He expressed concern that workers may have symptoms, but continue to go to work in order to earn a living. Professor van Woerden acknowledged that there are challenges and said that under the HSC SILVER structure, there are various cells which are looking at a range of issues, including provision of equipment. Mr Cummings said that he was hopeful that the challenges around the supply of PPE would be resolved.

32/20.19 The Board noted the update on COVID-19.

33/20 Item 8 – Finance Report (PHA/01/03/20)

33/20.1 The Finance Report was noted by members.

34/20 Item 9 – Update from Chair of Governance and Audit Committee (PHA/02/03/20)

34/20.1 Members noted the minutes of the Governance and Audit Committee from the meeting held on 9 December 2019.

35/20 Item 10 – Updated PHA Equality and Disability Action Plans 2020-22 (PHA/03/03/20)

35/20.1 The Board **APPROVED** the updated PHA Equality and Disability Action Plans 2020-22.

36/20 Item 11 - HSC R&D Division Annual Report (PHA/04/03/20)

36/20.1 The HSC Research and Development Division Annual Report was noted by members.

37/20 Item 12 – Any Other Business

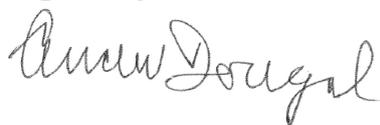
37/20.1 There was no other business.

38/20 Item 13 – Details of Next Meeting

Thursday 23 April 2020 at 1:30pm

Meeting Rooms, Linum Chambers, Bedford Street, Belfast, BT2 7ES

Signed by Chair:



Date: 23 April 2020

Title of Meeting	Extraordinary Meeting of the Public Health Agency Board
Date	10 April 2020 at 2.00pm
Venue	Fifth Floor Meeting Room, 12/22 Linenhall Street, Belfast

Present

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| Mr Andrew Dougal | - Chair (<i>via video link</i>) |
| Mrs Olive MacLeod | - Interim Chief Executive |
| Mr Edmond McClean | - Interim Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Operations |
| Mr Rodney Morton | - Director of Nursing and Allied Health Professionals |
| Professor Hugo van Woerden | - Director of Public Health |
| Alderman William Ashe | - Non-Executive Director (<i>via video link</i>) |
| Mr John-Patrick Clayton | - Non-Executive Director (<i>via video link</i>) |
| Ms Deepa Mann-Kler | - Non-Executive Director (<i>via video link</i>) |
| Professor Nichola Rooney | - Non-Executive Director (<i>via video link</i>) |
| Mr Joseph Stewart | - Non-Executive Director (<i>via video link</i>) |

In Attendance

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|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Mr Paul Cummings | - Director of Finance, HSCB |
| Mr Robert Graham | - Secretariat |

Apologies

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| Alderman Paul Porter | - Non-Executive Director |
| Dr Aideen Keaney | - Director of Quality Improvement |
| Ms Marie Roulston | - Director of Social Care and Children, HSCB |
| Ms Jenny Redman | - Boardroom Apprentice |

1 Item 1 – Welcome and Apologies

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| 1.1 | The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Alderman Paul Porter, Dr Aideen Keaney and Ms Marie Roulston. |
| 1.2 | The Chair welcomed Mrs Olive MacLeod to her first meeting as Interim Chief Executive of the Public Health Agency. |

2 Item 2 – Declaration of Interests

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|-----|---|
| 2.1 | The Chair asked if anyone had interests to declare relevant to any items on the agenda. No interests were declared. |
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3 Item 3 – COVID-19 Current Northern Ireland Situation -

- 3.1 Professor van Woerden began his presentation by saying that the focus at this stage of the epidemic is now on surveillance. He said that this is Day 27 of the delay phase, and we will shortly enter the contact phase. He acknowledged that there have been some concerns about the data being produced, but he said that this is a complex area and that there have to be caveats against simply producing raw numbers.
- 3.2 Professor van Woerden reminded members of the typical characteristics of a pandemic outbreak curve, and how measures are being put in place to flatten the curve, but to acknowledge the risk of a rebound or second wave. He said that there is a particular focus at the moment on care homes as well as what is happening in primary and secondary care. He highlighted the clinical features of the first cases, and then gave an overview of the number of cases and the geographical spread of these across Northern Ireland.
- 3.3 Professor van Woerden suggested that there has been a small amount of flattening out, and advised that the 4 UK Chief Medical Officers are meeting this evening with the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) to determine if any of the current restrictions can be eased.
- 3.4 Professor van Woerden noted that there has been an increase in the number of people who are very worried about the virus, which is concerning, but there is evidence of good awareness of the campaigns that are in place. In terms of the use of transport, he showed that this had markedly decreased.
- 3.5 Going forward, Professor van Woerden said that the key priorities are around communication, internally in PHA itself, within the HSC, and with the public. He reiterated that everyone has a role to play and he believed that Northern Ireland will provide good care for its population. He said that there also needs to be a continued focus on the resilience of not only PHA staff, but also the general public in these times.
- 3.6 The Chair suggested that producing a graph of weekly figures, rather than daily figures would be more meaningful and more amenable to drawing inferences. Professor van Woerden noted the suggestion.
- 3.7 Mr Clayton asked about the PHA's role in terms of managing outbreaks in care homes given there are 22 confirmed outbreaks of COVID-19 in this sector and 25 other cases of respiratory disease. He expressed concern that vulnerable people use these facilities and there are concerns for the staff working there in terms of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and testing. Professor van Woerden acknowledged that intensive care and domiciliary care are two areas of major concern. By way of background, he explained that there is a daily rhythm of meetings which take place involving Gold (the Department), Silver (PHA/HSCB/BSO) and Bronze (Trusts and agencies), and at these

meetings the issue of PPE had been discussed. He advised that PHA assists the Department of Health with preparing guidance, but that it is up to the Department to issue the guidance. He added that as part of Silver, there are several “cells”, one of which is infection prevention control. In terms of the role of the health protection team in PHA, he explained that when there are more than two cases of a disease, the team gives guidance in terms of reducing any risk of spread and it carries out an epidemiological analysis. He said that the number of tests being carried out is ramping up to approximately 1,000 per days and that it is critical that staff and domestic care workers are tested.

- 3.8 Mr Morton advised that during the flu season, the health protection team can support up to 50 homes. He said that updated health protection advice in relation to infection prevention control will be issued on Monday. He added that RQIA is also providing support to that sector. He advised members that the Department of Health has outlined its expectation that we act as a health economy with all parts of the sector supporting each other.
- 3.9 Mr Morton acknowledged that there has been a high level of media coverage about PPE. He said that there is a clear expectation that Trusts will work with care homes and care home providers. He added that Public Health England (PHE) is constantly updating the PPE guidance and there are pressures, particularly for community care staff. He said that some of the recent modelling carried out would indicate that more PPE is required.
- 3.10 Mr Morton said that within the nursing community, there has been increased support in terms of providing training in areas such as infection prevention control, managing deteriorating patients, and end of life care. He said that nursing staff are helping to cover in care homes where there are shortages.
- 3.11 Mr Stewart sought assurances that if PHA is running the testing facility at the SSE Arena, that the staff there are adequately protected. Professor van Woerden stated that this was the case, and said that PHA is supporting this facility. Mr Morton advised that over 18,000,000 items of PPE have been issued in the last 7 days.

4 Item 4 – Testing

- 4.1 The Chair asked how PHA could be sure that the tests being carried out were valid.
- 4.2 Professor van Woerden advised that the laboratory in Belfast has tried up to six different tests. He explained that the virus affects cells and then spills into the blood so that if you take a small sample of blood it is possible that there is no trace of the virus in that sample. He further explained that you can conduct a test for the DNA of the virus by looking for antigens on the surface of the virus, or you can test for the antibodies

that the body produces to attack the virus. He said that work on all of these tests is ongoing, but there is an issue with a shortage of reagents, and the fact that this is a new virus and we are learning about it all the time. He also pointed out that some of the more thorough tests can take longer to complete, so there is a trade-off.

- 4.3 The Chair pressed the issue of reliability of the tests. Professor van Woerden said that the reliability is currently around 70%, but that the technology will take months to mature. He assured members that hospitals tested all patients and staff that are coming forward. The Chair asked about how to have greater information on people who are asymptomatic. Professor van Woerden said that an approach can be used called seroepidemiology [*study of the distribution of serum antibodies*]. He added that we are a number of weeks away from being able to use blood samples for seroepidemiology from population samples. However, he said that there may be the opportunity at an earlier date to test samples from biochemistry labs and from blood donors, in order to understand aspects of the population pattern. He added that the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) is also surveying 1,000 people per week for symptoms, which provides some information on the pattern of cases in the community, and these data are being shared with academic colleagues for analysis and results are awaited.
- 4.4 Mr Clayton made a comparison between the approaches in UK and Germany in terms of testing, and noted their lower death rate. Professor van Woerden said that there will be a look-back exercise after this first phase as different countries have taken different approaches, and we should actively seek to learn from other countries. He pointed out that straight comparisons are problematic because of issues like genetics and how different populations are composed and how they respond in different ways.
- 4.5 The Chair asked about the status of antibody testing. Professor van Woerden said that Northern Ireland is currently working with up to 19 different manufacturers and is looking at the reliability of their tests, and a decision would then be taken as to what is most appropriate for our use. He said that Randox is working as part of a consortium with the UK Government, but that appropriate support will be sought for Northern Ireland.
- 4.6 Professor Rooney noted that through work she is involved in, there remain concerns from staff about testing and it is important to get messages out. Professor van Woerden said that safety is paramount, and it is important that staff are valued for their work and that everything is done to protect them. He said that BSO PALS and the infection prevention team are working tirelessly to ensure that staff get the protection they need, and the HSC will work with local producers to do this. He said that local factories are being re-purposed to assist, but that there is a race to keep the supply chain stocked.

5 Item 5 – Overview of Current Response Arrangements

- 5.1 Mr McClean advised that PHA has developed a Business Continuity Plan specifically relating to COVID-19. He said that it is an evolving document and noted that over the last four weeks, normal business has, on a phased basis, almost come to an end as PHA focuses solely on those areas that must be maintained. He explained that PHA is working collaboratively with HSCB and BSO in a range of “cells” as part of the HSC Silver arrangements, as well as with Trusts and other agencies as part of Bronze.
- 5.2 Mr McClean advised that PHA has worked to develop the infrastructure to support staff to move increasingly to remote working. He said that perhaps up to 50 staff maintain an in-office presence.
- 5.3 Mr McClean explained that there are cells established to cover areas such as supply and logistics, integrated care, acute care, social care, infection control, human resources and business continuity. He also said there is a scientific cell and a knowledge management cell. He advised that there is a communications cell which not only deals with the day and daily messaging, but is also looking at the key messages that will need to come out in two weeks or two months from now.
- 5.4 Mr McClean said that the HSC Leadership Centre is also providing assistance in terms of project management support. He added that PHA is mindful of its governance requirements at this time and reviews this Business Continuity Plan on a regular basis. He said that PHA gets information on its staff on a daily basis, and is very mindful of the wellbeing of its staff at this time.
- 5.5 Ms Mann-Kler noted the approaches taken in Hong Kong and Singapore in dealing with the virus, and asked whether what is developing is as expected, and what are the key concerns at this moment. Professor van Woerden said that it is important to look at the learning from places like Hong Kong and Singapore but he pointed out that these are city states, which were able to introduce lockdowns much more easily on a geographical basis. He said that the Chief Digital Information Officer, Dan West, is looking at this area and the use of apps. In terms of the biggest concern, he said that this would be long term impact on the economy and how this will affect the most vulnerable in society.
- 5.6 The Chair noted that at the last meeting, Professor van Woerden made reference to a second wave and asked about whether appropriate controls, such as landing cards at airports and ports, could be put in place at this time. Professor van Woerden advised that there is a group looking at this.
- 5.7 Professor Rooney said that she has been involved in different work with staff across HSCB and PHA during this time, and she has been impressed with the professionalism and joint working and that this

should be commended.

- 5.8 Mr Stewart asked the Executive Directors for their sense of how their plans and arrangements have been working. Mrs MacLeod said that having come into the role of Interim Chief Executive only two weeks previously, she has been very impressed with the cohesiveness of the arrangements. She said that there are aspects that are working, but she conceded that there are areas of duplication and she has highlighted these to the Minister. She informed members that the Chief Medical Officer and the Permanent Secretary commissioned a review into the Gold and Silver structures, and that the initial feedback was extremely positive. She said that PHA is starting to think about the second wave. Mr Cummings added that the review team had been extremely complimentary about the staff and their dedication, and for the ideas that are being generated. He thanked Professor van Woerden for his horizon scanning. The Chair asked if these new ideas were being acted upon. Mr Cummings said that these ideas are being fed into the different cells and that Directors are stepping outside their professional remits and challenging each other.
- 5.9 Mr McClean said that there is now a challenge for PHA, as it moves to 7-day working, to ensure that staff are able to stop and take time away from work as appropriate, as there is a great reliance on a small number of people. He added that as a Board, there needs to be an acknowledgement of the considerable demands being placed on PHA by the Department of Health. The Chair said that he was pleased to hear that there are such plans in place and that people are looking after one another. Mr Clayton sought assurances that all issues relating to remuneration have been resolved as we move to 7-day working. Mr Cummings advised that this was the case.
- 5.10 Mr Stewart asked about the impact on the budget. Mr Cummings said that there would not be a significant impact on the PHA budget, as most of the money is being spent by HSCB. In terms of the overall picture for the HSC, he did not know what the year-end position would look like given that £170m worth of PPE is about to be purchased. He suggested that the budget could be overspent by as much as £1bn.
- 5.11 The Chair asked about the purchasing of ventilators and noted that at the last meeting, it was suggested that there may be a delay in receiving these. Mr Cummings said that particular order was redirected by the WHO, however through some inventive networking a new source had been found which will deliver up to another 50 ventilators from Galway.
- 5.12 Ms Mann-Kler asked that if, hypothetically, a vaccine were available tomorrow, would PHA be ready to roll it out. She also suggested that the daily briefings from Northern Ireland could learn from the Downing Street briefings in having key messages affixed to the lecterns. Professor van Woerden said that PHA would be able to respond rapidly if a vaccine programme was required to be rolled out, and that there are

mechanisms in place starting with targeted immunisation. Mr McClean noted the suggestion regarding the lecterns and said that he would pass this onto the communications team.

- 5.13 Mr McClean informed members that PHA is monitoring staff absence, and that this is not running any higher than normal. He added that PHA has redeployment arrangements under way, and that people are working flexibly with home working in place.

6 Item 6 – Post-Pandemic Planning and Priorities / Community Resilience and Recovery

- 6.1 Professor van Woerden advised that Brendan Bonner has been working with the Department of Health and other key stakeholders to develop an extensive plan. He said that there is good representation at system level and that there is a number of national initiatives as well.
- 6.2 Mr Clayton noted that although there has been an injection of funding because of the impact on job losses and the economy shutting down, he asked what the role of the PHA had been in informing the NI Executive response with regards to economic support, given the impact on public health. Professor van Woerden said that there is a group under the Civil Contingencies Group for Northern Ireland (CCGNI) where the Gold levels of other government departments are considering the implications across different departments. He said that the Department for the Economy is leading on this.
- 6.3 Mr McClean advised members that in respect of contracts with community and voluntary sector organisations, PHA has offered assurances about funding for the next three months. He added that PHA would hope to work with these services and use their local knowledge in a much more flexible way. He said that this would be reviewed in early June and he hoped that the wider community and voluntary sector is doing what it can to support individuals and communities who are isolated.
- 6.4 Ms Mann-Kler asked whether there has been an increase in the volume of calls to suicide helplines. Professor van Woerden said that there has been an increase in calls to domestic violence helplines. Professor Rooney said that there are concerns about not only abuse, but dealing with grief. She acknowledged the good work that is being done in this area by PHA, in conjunction with the Department for Communities.
- 6.5 The Chair asked what pre-requisites would be essential before any of the lockdown restrictions would be eased. Professor van Woerden advised that there is a meeting taking place this evening of the four Chief Medical Officers and a formal meeting of SAGE is taking place next Tuesday. He said that SAGE will provide advice to the Government, who will ultimately decide. He added that a range of factors need to be taken into consideration, for example, the number of

people in ICU, but he felt that Northern Ireland is faring better than he would have anticipated last month.

7 Item 7 – Any Other Business

- 7.1 With there being no other business, the Chair reiterated his appreciation, on behalf of the Board, to PHA staff for their endurance, inventiveness and grit in dealing with this herculean challenge on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland.

8 Item 8 – Details of Next Meeting

Thursday 23 April 2020 at 1:30pm

Fifth Floor Meeting Room, 12/22 Linenhall Street, Belfast, BT2 8BS

Signed by Chair:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ann Douglas".

Date: 23 April 2020