

Minutes of the 132nd Imtac Meeting

Date and place: 11th May 2020, ZOOM meeting.

Present: Bert Bailie (Chairperson), Sheelagh McRandal, June Best, Sam Bell, Jean Dunlop, Diane Marks, Aaron McKane, Nuala Crilly, Alison Lockhart, Christine McClements, Eileen Drumm, John McErlane, Dave Morton.

Observers: Richard Williams (Consumer Council), Sean Coulter & Scott McClenaghan (both Department for Infrastructure), Naomi Roberts (Equality Commission), Terry Butler (Translink).

Secretariat: Michael Lorimer

Apologies: Andy Boal, Terry McCrory, Paul McCloskey.

1. Introductions and updates

- 1.1 Bert welcomed everyone to the meeting, acknowledging the difficulties everyone is currently experienced. He asked members to introduce themselves and to say something about their lives at present.
- 1.2 Bert briefed members about the arrangements that have been put in place to ensure the Secretariat can work from home including formulating and implementing an Emergency Home Working Policy.
- 1.3 Michael briefed members about discussions with the Department around responding to the COVID-19 situation in relation to the Blue Badge Scheme and encouraging walking and cycling as well as discussions with Translink and DfC about the COVID-19 response.

- 1.4 Richard updated members on the recent work of the Consumer Council which has been dominated by the issue on airline flight cancellations and refunds. Richard briefed members about planned discussions with Translink around the next phase of the response to COVID-19.
- 1.5 Terry updated members on the emergency measures introduced by Translink in response to COVID-19 including emergency timetables, free travel for NHS workers and screens for drivers. He indicated some of the challenges created by social distancing requirements and the lack of PSV testing for vehicles.
- 1.6 Sean briefed members on the re-profiling of community transport services to deliver food and medication and some of the challenges involved. Sean also indicated that new applications for the 60 plus SmartPass are currently not being processed due to staff home working and the requirement for people to attend Translink stations. He confirmed that renewals for other SmartPass holders are being sent out and processed as normal.
- 1.7 Naomi updated members about contact between the Equality Commission and Government Departments and the Housing Executive about the COVID-19 response. Issues raised included treatment guidelines and the use of do-not-resuscitate (DNR) forms, access to PPE and testing, impact on education for Special Education Needs (SEN) pupils, housing and homelessness and domestic violence. Naomi also updated members on the plans and timetable for the establishment of the IMNI Disability Forum.
- 1.8 Members raised concerns about the erosion of SEN rights as a direct result of the Coronavirus legislation and wider impacts on disabled children and families. Members also highlighted the difficulties created by social distancing measures and the widespread fears over treatment and use of DNR forms. Members asked that the situation regarding Concessionary Fares application be monitored.

2. Chairperson's updates

- 2.1 Bert briefed members about the successful A4N meeting hosted by Imtac in Belfast in March. He informed members of the sad news that MACS member, Sheila Fletcher who had attended the meeting, had passed away since.
- 2.2 Bert updated members on the positive meeting with Minister Mallon in March and on remote meetings including a meeting of the Business Group and a meeting with the Sponsor Team in the Department held in April.
- 2.3 Arising from the recent Business Group meeting Bert asked members to consider a proposal which is supported by the Department in principle to defer the planned recruitment for 2020 in light of the impact COVID-19. Members agreed the proposal.
- 2.4 Michael updated members on the impact COVID-19 has had on the completion of some 2019 / 20 Work Programme tasks. He also briefed members about the submission of a draft 2020 / 21 Work Programme following a request from the Department. The new Work Programme is drafted to reflect the uncertainty created by COVID-19 and is designed to be flexible.
Action: Michael to circulate copies of the Work Programme.
- 2.5 Sheelagh updated members on the small underspend relating to the 2019 / 20 budget caused by the impact of COVID-19 and plans to have the accounts audited. She also briefed members on the draft budget submitted to the Department in April, reduced to £63400 to take account of reduced costs in quarter one. Following the recent Business Group meeting online banking for payment of members expenses is being explored.
- 2.6 Bert informed members that it is planned to draft the Annual Report as usual this year but indicated that there may some delays in submitting it to the Minister due to the COVID-19 situation.

3. Draft Statement from Imtac on living with COVID-19

- 3.1 Bert asked members for feedback around the draft statement. Members raised a range of issues and concerns which broadly echoed issues raised in the draft. In relation to transport and access to services these concerns included the difficulties accessing shopping and basics, the impact on travelling by public transport and taxis, specific issues relating to rural areas including having to travel to exercise due to a lack of infrastructure. Members also raised issues with access to education for disabled children.
- 3.2 In relation to access to health concerns were expressed about access to services and to hospital treatment including the use of DNR forms. Members also expressed concerns around requiring everyone over 70 to continue to self-isolate in the longer term. Members also raised concerns about impacts on Budget and future potential spending cuts.
- 3.2 In relation to communication members expressed a feeling of being left behind and a frustration that voices are not being heard. There was strong support for the call for engagement with some members suggesting that the previously proposed Executive Disability Forum should be formed urgently. Specific concerns were raised about problems with internet access in rural areas.
- 3.3 Members agreed that following consultation with the Department the amended report reflecting discussion should be published and circulated widely including to Minister Mallon and Minister Hargey
Action: Michael to redraft based on discussions and consult with the Department with a view to publication.

4. Minutes of the last meeting / Matters arising

- 7.1 The minutes of the last meeting were approved.
Proposed: Sheelagh McRandal Seconded: Dave Morton
- 7.2 Bert provided an update on actions progressed and actions still pending. Actions pending included:
- A letter to Minister Poots re assistance dogs and Brexit,

- A draft report on the pedestrian event
- A letter to Minister Hargey re pavement cafes
- A draft report into urban and rural DRT
- The crash testing of wheelchairs / scooters.

8. Any other business

8.1 There was no further business.

9. Date and time of next meeting

9.1 An Imtac meeting was planned for 3rd June 2020 pre-COVID. It is proposed to look at holding another meeting on this date.