

Summary of Public Health Committee meetings held in October 2013

A draft Terms of Reference (ToR) was circulated for discussion at this meeting. Terms of reference are important as they define a committee's remit. All of the committees are having ToRs developed under the same format and once agreed these will be published on the SHG website.

Under the ToRs the committee has political responsibility for Disaster Management and Health and Safety as well as Public Health. As a number of directorates across SHG are involved in these activities there is a need to reflect this in the Public Health Committee ToR. This is a work in progress.

It is a legal requirement for meetings to be held in public unless the Chairman directs otherwise. It was affirmed that there would be a presumption in favour of openness and the practice of having an open agenda would continue with the public being given advance notice of the agenda.

There was a discussion paper on medical fees and charges. Two areas of concern were raised; the waiting time for returning Saints to be eligible for local rates and the automatic entitlement of SHG staff and their families for local rates. No decision was reached and further work is required across the whole of SHG to review fees and charges to ensure that the same eligibility criteria are used by all directorates.

Alcohol abuse was recognised as a public health concern and a commitment was made by the Director, with the support of the committee, to take the work of the Diocesan Commission's Report on Alcohol Abuse forward.

In reviewing the hospital redevelopment proposal the recommendation was that initial work should concentrate on the operating theatre and the creation of a diagnostic suite for X-ray, ultrasound and possibly a CT scan. It was agreed that the Director take this forward for consideration in the Capital Programme.

Legal issues associated with home slaughter were discussed between the committee and the Crown Counsel. The present method of environmental health officers visiting home slaughter operators does not meet Public Health regulations but it does provide a level of food safety and health protection to the public. The intention under the Public Health regulations is to move all animal slaughtering to licensed abattoirs but this could have a detrimental effect on backyard producers. To date a solution has not been reached but committee resolved to work towards finding one.

Ian Rummery

Chairperson – Public Health Committee