



Subject:	Motion : Support for Health and Social Care Workers - Responses from Permanent Secretaries
Date:	24th January, 2020
Reporting Officer:	Mr. John Walsh, City Solicitor
Contact Officer:	Mr. Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To consider responses from the Permanent Secretary, Department of Health, and the Permanent Secretary, Department of Finance, in relation to a motion on Support for Health and Social Care Workers which was passed by the Council on 2nd December.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is requested to note the responses and take any such action as may be determined.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The Committee will recall that the Council, at its meeting on 2nd December, passed the following motion on Support for Health and Social Care Workers, which had been proposed by Councillor McAteer and seconded by Councillor Groves:

“This Council supports the overwhelming result of the Royal College of Nurses’ ballot in favour of industrial action, supports the industrial action already being undertaken by UNISON and the decision of the other Health and Social Care (HSC) Trade Union, NIPSA, to ballot members on industrial action.

Health and social care workers are the system’s greatest assets and are entitled to fair pay and conditions, safe staffing levels and parity of pay with NHS colleagues.

Health and social care workers are taking action as they are no longer willing to see patients being denied the care to which they are entitled. There are currently over 7,000 non-medical vacancies, including 3,000 nursing posts, within the HSC system in the north of Ireland. These frontline vacancies are having a detrimental impact upon patient care and staffing, compromise the safety of staff and patients alike, contribute to long waiting lists and add enormous pressure to the existing HSC workforce, who are doing everything they can to care for patients.

This Council calls upon the Permanent Secretary, Department of Health, to engage respectfully and meaningfully with Trades Union representatives on a pay deal. It calls also upon the Permanent Secretary, alongside his colleagues in the Department of Finance and the Head of the Civil Service, to secure the funding that is needed to achieve pay parity for health workers.

Furthermore, the Council agrees to convene an all-Party meeting with those Trades Unions representing health and social care staff to hear directly the challenges which they are facing and to take such action thereon to support staff and patient care at this time.”

3.2 Responses have since been received from Ms. S. Gray, Permanent Secretary, Department of Finance, and Mr. R. Pengelly, Permanent Secretary, Department of Health, copies of which are attached. A response has yet to be received from the Head of the Civil Service. It should be noted that the responses were written prior to the recent restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the ensuing discussions between the Health Minister and health unions.

3.3 Ms. Gray points out that health and social care staff are central to the delivery of a vital public service and that she understands the deep sense of frustration felt by them at this time. She concludes by highlighting the challenging budgetary position being faced currently across the public sector and by stressing her commitment to working with colleagues in the

<p>3.4</p> <p>3.5</p> <p>3.6</p> <p>3.7</p>	<p>Department of Health and with the Head of the Civil Service and other parties to find a way forward.</p> <p>Mr. Pengelly refers to the work which the Department of Health has undertaken to date, in partnership with trades unions, to progress pay discussions and highlights the significant constraints in terms of affordability and the inability in the absence of Ministers to achieve pay parity with other regions. He explains that the decision to depart from pay parity was taken at Ministerial level and that it would be the responsibility of any incoming Minister to restore parity. He provides details of the Department of Health's latest financial offer, affirms its commitment to securing a resolution and stresses that continued industrial action could only exacerbate an already difficult situation. He concludes by confirming that Health and Social Care Trusts have developed contingency plans, with a view to minimising disruption for the wider public, and that they would work with unions at a local level to protect vital services.</p> <p>The Committee will be aware that the aforementioned motion approved the holding of a meeting between an All-party deputation from the Council and trades unions representing health and social care staff. Given that discussions between the Health Minister and the unions are advancing, the Committee might wish to consider if that meeting is still required.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 - Response from Permanent Secretary - Department of Finance</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Response from Permanent Secretary, Department of Health</p>