

Minutes of proceedings of the Plenary Meeting of the Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health held in the Boardroom, Corrigan House, Fenian Street, Dublin 2 on Wednesday, 14th March 2012.

Present: Dr Seamus O’Hickey (Chairman), Dr Wayne Anderson, Mr Michael Kilcoyne, Mr Denis Lyons, Mr Stephen McDermott, Dr Joe Mullen, Mr Ray Parle, Mr Gerry Flannery, Bernadette McDonnell (representing Ms Teresa Cody).

In attendance: From Secretariat: Ms Etain Kett, Ms Pheena Kenny.

Apologies: Mr Rowland Reece, Professor Denis O’Mullane, Professor John Clarkson, Mr Luke Varley, Councillor Jack Bourke (illness)

EB Minute 01/12: Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting were noted.

EB Minute 02/12: Condolences

A minute’s silence was observed as a mark of respect to each of the following, Dr Brian O’Herlihy, former Vice-Chairman of the Expert Body on Fluorides and Health and Ms Mary Parle RIP.

EB Minute 03/12: Minutes of the last meeting (10th November 2010)

The minutes of the meeting on 10th November 2010 were agreed. These were then signed by the Chairman.

EB Minute 04/12: Matters Arising

It was noted that it was 1 ¼ years since the Expert Body met because of financial uncertainties with regards to the future of the Expert Body.

It was noted that there have been changes in the membership of the Expert Body since the last meeting of the Expert Body.

It was noted that Professor Denis O’Mullane is now Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee of the Expert Body.

It was noted that the EU Directive 2007/53/EC regarding the use of toothpaste in 0-6 year olds was transposed into Irish legislation, Statutory Instrument No. 6 of 2008.

It was noted that the proposed National Oral Health Policy has not been published.

It was further noted that a National Oral Health Lead (interim) has been appointed in the HSE and she is leading on the implementation of the recommendations of review of the HSE dental services.

It was noted that the Department of Health (DoH) and the National Oral Health Lead are working closely on oral health policy issues.

EB Minute 05/12: Correspondence

A report of all correspondence received since the last meeting was noted.

EB Minute 06/12: Future Role of the Expert Body

Correspondence from Ms Teresa Cody, Department of Health was noted. It was further noted that proposals for the restructuring of the Expert Body are still under consideration within the Department.

It was noted that a new Secretary General would be appointed to the Department of Health.

It was further noted that the Health Service Executive would not be able to fulfill the work of the Expert Body and that expertise lies within the Expert Body regarding such items as the Code of Practice on the Fluoridation of Drinking Water 2007.

It was noted that the Department of Health acknowledged the level of co-operation between the Department and the Expert Body and also the prompt and detailed responses regarding Parliamentary Questions, queries from members of the Oireachtas, members of the Public, the HSE, County and City Councils and the Scientific Committee for Health and Environmental Risks (SCHER) of the European Union.

It was noted that although a plenary meeting had not been held since November 2010 that the Executive Committee and the Sub-Committees have continued to meet and continue to actively conduct the business of the Expert Body.

It was further noted that there is considerable work being undertaken by the sub-committees on an on-going basis with meetings approximately bi-monthly.

EB Minute 07/12: National Audit of Water Treatment Plants

It was noted that the National Audit of Water Treatment Plants is complete. It was further noted that all local authorities have carried out recommendations of the audit and that training has been undertaken since the audit.

It was agreed that representatives from the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Department of Health and from the Expert Body will meet to discuss plans for publishing the report.

It was noted that once the report is released a media panel will be available to address queries from the public.

EB Minute 08/12: Report of the Sub-committees

The Quality Assurance Sub-committee reported the following:

- It was noted that the final draft of the National Audit was forwarded to the members of the Executive Committee and to other members of the Expert Body for their comment.
- It was noted that a media panel has been established to work around matters relating to the National Audit.
- It was noted that the final copy of the report will be made available on the Expert Body website and that hard copies will be made available for relevant stakeholders. It was noted that a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section will be made available on the Expert Body website.
- It was noted that a PQ was forwarded from the Department of Health to the Expert Body in relation to the cost of the national audit and this information has been supplied.
- It was agreed that the next steps would be the review of the Code of Practice by the QA Sub-Committee.

The New and Emerging Issues Sub-committee reported the following:

- An update on the latest papers/documents reviewed by the NEI Sub-committee was presented to the plenary meeting. It was noted that approximately 40 papers had been reviewed since the last plenary meeting.
- Details of conferences attended by the NEI Committee members were noted with significant papers or presentations being discussed.
- It was noted that the Implementation Group on Bio-monitoring is currently being considered by the HSE.
- It was noted and agreed that the Expert Body is fulfilling its remit by having a constant overview of fluorides and general health through the NEI sub-committee which keeps itself informed of international developments and papers relating to fluoride.
- It was noted that the SCHER (Scientific Committee on Health and Environmental Risks) opinion on critical review of any new evidence on the hazard profile, health effects and human exposure to fluoride and the fluoridating agents of drinking

water was published on May 16th 2011. It was noted that the Expert Body opinions were included in the report. It was agreed that a formal response would be prepared by the Expert Body, it was further agreed to do so in consultation with IADR, WHO, FDI and EADPH. It was agreed that the overall thrust of the document is positive.

- It was noted that several Parliamentary Questions (PQ's) have been raised regarding the SCHER report.
- It was noted that Professor O'Mullane has applied for membership of the Scientific Risk Assessment Advisory Structure of Scientific Committees and database of experts. It was noted that a submission was made by the Expert Body regarding a Request for Scientific Opinion from SCCS regarding potential health risks posed by food-imitating and child-appealing chemical consumer products.
- Professor O'Mullane's briefing on the recent meeting of the European Association of Dental Public Health (EADPH) was noted. It was noted that it was hypothesised that perhaps there was no increased benefit for the continued fluoridation of water supplies. However dietary habits, the public dental service and the health insurance status in Ireland are such that this position is not supported in Ireland and it was acknowledged that water fluoridation is beneficial in Ireland. It was noted that further longitudinal epidemiological data is required for Ireland to indicate the dental status of the population. It was agreed that this matter would be brought to the attention of the Minister in the Department of Health. It was noted that there is a proposal with the Health Research Board at present regarding this matter. It was noted that if this proposal was unsuccessful that the Expert Body would follow up on it. It was noted that some EU member states are partly substituting sugar with *Xylitol* (which is linked with a decrease in decay levels).
- It was noted that a programme on ITV on Thursday 15th March, 2012 regarding dental general anaesthetics in the UK would highlight the very negative impact on the child of this procedure.
- It was noted that a proposal to carry out a baseline study to measure fluorosis/decay could still be undertaken, it was agreed that this matter would be kept on the agenda.
- It was proposed that the NEI committee be renamed. It was agreed that proposals for a new name would be made at NEI committee level and submitted to the Executive for approval.
- It was noted that the role of Vice-Chairman and a representative from Public Health Medicine were vacant at present.

EB Minute 09/12: Report of Executive Committee

The Report of the Executive Committee was noted.

EB Minute 10/12: Scientific Committee on Health and Environmental Risks (SCHER)

The SCHER opinion concerning the critical review of any new evidence on the hazard profile, health effects, and human exposure to fluoride and the fluoridating agents of drinking water were noted with regards to the Expert Body comments on their conclusions.

EB Minute 11/12: AOB

A ‘critical review of any new evidence on the hazard profile, health defects and human exposure to fluoridated agents of drinking water’ was tabled which noted comments by the Expert Body of fluorides and health on the final opinion published by written procedure on 16th May 2011 by the EU SCHER Committee.

It was agreed by the Plenary Committee that Mr Michael Kilcoyne would be the new Vice-Chairman of the Expert Body.

It was noted that Dr Joe Mullen was interviewed on Highland Radio on March 1st along with Mr Robert Pocock on water fluoridation.

It was noted the graffiti had been spray painted and posted (on small stickers) along lamp-posts and at the entrance to Corrigan House over the past year. It was noted that the Gardaí were informed of this.

It was noted that a group of about 10-12 members of the public opposed to water fluoridation attended the AGM of the Consumer Association of Ireland and directed protests at Mr Michael Kilcoyne, Chairman of the Consumer Association of Ireland, regarding water fluoridation.

It was noted that the Department of Environment’s public consultation on Irish Water is now closed and it was further agreed that comments received would be communicated to the Expert Body by Gerry Flannery.

It was noted that the American Council on Science and Health included water fluoridation in its ‘Top 10 of unfounded health scares of 2011’



EB Minute 12/12: Date of Next Meeting

The date for the next Plenary Meeting was agreed to be held in October/ November 2012.

The Chairman thanked all for their attendance and declared the meeting closed at 13:00pm

Signed: _____

Date: _____