Health Budget Oversight Group Minutes

21st January 2021 14:30

Health Service Executive: Stephen Mulvany, Colum Maddox, Mark O'Donoghue, Tim Cummins, Anne-Marie Hoey, Damien McCallion

Department of Health: Aidan Gilchrist, Claire Doyle, John O'Grady, Eoin Halpin, Denise McCarthy, Kevin Colman, Linda Learmouth, Louise Carrigan, Daniel Curry, Paul Bolger, Shane Corr, Margaret Campbell, David R. Smith, Rhona Broderick, Emer Hanney, Caoimhe Dolan, John Heslin, Evan Walker

D/Public Expenditure and Reform: Ronnie Downes (Chair), David Owens, Terry Jennings, Patrick Moran, Robert Scott, Deirdre Collins, Seán Prior, Helen Murphy, Andrew Condon, Kevin O'Farrell.

1. **Minutes of Meeting of 17th December 2020**

Minutes from the previous HBOG meeting on 17th December were agreed by the group.

2. **Covid-19**
   - **State-of-Play**

DoH provided an update on the state of play in relation to Covid-19 expenditure and an estimate of the 2020 year-end cash position. It was agreed the year end cash position required further explanation and that a joint technical meeting between HSE and DoH would take place in order to facilitate an understanding of these cash balances.

- **Testing/Tracing Position**

Queries were raised regarding the financial outlay on testing and tracing in January. DoH advised that activity is currently high. The longer term cost impact of this activity was discussed and it was concluded that it is not yet possible to draw any conclusions about how this position will develop over the course of the year.

The mandate given to the Department of Transport (DoT) to put testing in place at ports was discussed. DoH noted that costs associated with this testing would be borne by DoT. HSE are providing assistance to the DoT on this matter.

- **End of Year Flash Report**

The end-December flash report was discussed. It was noted that the flash report is not the HSE's official financial reporting, it is intended to provide a running estimate of what Covid-19 costs are likely to be.

It was agreed by all parties that the purpose of the flash report is to report on costs that will be a draw on the specific Covid-19 funding set out in the Letter of Determination. It was acknowledged that the report, while a useful aid to the work of the HBOG, is not subject to the same checks and balances as the HSE's official financial reporting.

3. **Vaccinations – Costings**

DoH and HSE are also engaging on costings around the Covid-19 vaccination programme. This work will be brought to Government once completed.

A separate meeting between DoH and DPER is planned to discuss vaccine costings.

4. **PPE Update**

No tenders were received to carry out the planned PPE audit. HSE advised that work is ongoing to appoint an organisation to carry out this work. The end-Q1 deadline to complete the work is unaffected. DoH highlighted that the HSE held considerable stocks of some PPE stock items at year end and that they are engaging with HSE to understand the funding impacts of this in 2021.

DoH and HSE are engaging on PPE as a priority work stream. Work is needed on PPE modelling, taking into account the gap between clinical guidance and actual use of PPE.

5. **Pay/Numbers including Recruitment Update**

DPER raised queries around recruitment targets. HSE stated that recruitment is accelerating and early signs are positive. A number of strategies are being used to recruit and recruitment capacity is being increased.

DoH are engaging with HSE on the Pay and Numbers Strategy with a view to agreeing the strategy and to begin reporting against it as soon as possible.

6. **NSP – State-of-Play/Timing**

HSE have submitted a revised version of the NSP to the Minister for Health, which is currently under consideration. DoH noted that it is intended to progress the NSP to finality quickly.

DPER raised queries on the timeline for provision of expenditure and recruitment profiles. DoH noted that their intention is to provide these within deadlines.

7. **AOB**
   - **HBOG Calendar**

It was noted that HBOG meetings will take place on the third Thursday of each month at 14:30.