

## **COVID-19 Committee**

**21st Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Thursday,  
29 September 2022**

### **Pre-budget Scrutiny – Pandemic Preparedness**

#### **Introduction**

In the first agenda item of this week's meeting, Members will undertake pre-budget scrutiny with a focus on pandemic preparedness and the interim report of the [Standing Committee on Pandemic Preparedness](#).

The following witness will be in attendance:

- **Professor Andrew Morris** - Chair, Standing Committee on Pandemic Preparedness and Director/CEO HDR-UK and Vice-Principal Data Science, University of Edinburgh.

#### **Background**

The Standing Committee on Pandemic Preparedness is a permanent advisory group to the Scottish Government. It was established to bring together scientists and technical experts in order to advise on future pandemic risks and how to prepare for them.

Membership of the Committee is drawn from academia, public health and the Scottish Government.

The Committee's remit extends to:

- advice on preparedness for and response to future pandemics, but not to management of the response to future pandemics,

- all aspects of preparedness in relation to public health and connected issues, but not to economic or wider aspects of preparedness not connected to public health.

Professor Andrew Morris was appointed as the Chair of the Committee by the First Minister.

On 30 August 2022, [the Committee published an interim report](#) in response to the Commission issued by the First Minister to the Committee. The report detailed what it called four ‘big tick’ recommendations. These were:

1. To work with Public Health Scotland to develop proposals for a **Centre of Pandemic Preparedness** with the purpose of anticipating, preparing for and responding to pandemics.
2. **Data and analysis as basic infrastructure** is required to understand and respond to emerging threats. Support proposals as to how Scotland can enhance data collection and analysis in a trustworthy way as a matter of urgency.
3. Formalise the connection of **swift and independent scientific advice specific to Scotland** with UK decision-making structures and reinforce international networks.
4. Work across public health, research and industry to create a **triple helix partnership that supports innovation** while also boosting Scottish life sciences and research competitiveness.

The interim report is intended to set out recommendations that the Committee felt would be beneficial to set out in advance of the final report. The final report is expected to be published a year from now.

## Key Issues

Members may wish to explore the following areas:

- The budgetary impact of the interim report’s recommendations, for example;
  - Which recommendations have the most significant costs attached to them?
  - Will key organisations be able to enact the recommendations from existing resource allocations?
- What kind of body would the Centre for Pandemic Preparedness be? For example, would it be created as statutory non-departmental public body?
- How far short does Scotland’s data and analysis capabilities fall in relation to what the Committee thinks is required? Where should it be improved?
- In relation to formalising connections and networks within the UK and internationally, is there any scope to limit duplication and improve efficiency?

- Can Prof Morris provide more detail on how he thinks innovation, life sciences and research competitiveness in public health, industry and research can be boosted?
- Does the Committee intend to undertake any kind of cost-benefit analysis of the different aspects of a pandemic response and where the money is most effectively spent in preparedness?
- What work needs to start now on the interim recommendations and is there an understanding of the scale and funding required for this?
- Does Prof Morris expect the interim recommendations to be factored into the upcoming budget?
- Does Prof Morris expect the final report to have further budgetary implications?

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**20 September 2022**

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