

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

FROM: Mark Sedwill

DATE: 30 January

PRIME MINISTER

CABINET

Irrelevant & Sensitive

MARK SEDWILL

AGENDA

1.

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2.

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3. **Coronavirus** (update from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care).

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10 Minutes

Introductory Points

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ITEM 1

Irrelevant & Sensitive

20 Mins

Summary

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Introductory Points

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Cabinet Discussion

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Conclusion

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ITEM 2 – Irrelevant & Sensitive

20 Mins

Summary

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Introductory Points

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ITEM 3 – CORONAVIRUS

10 Mins

Summary

The aim of this item is to provide an update to Cabinet on the Government's understanding of the outbreak and how it may progress. This should include the domestic response, support for UK Nationals overseas, how we are supporting the international response, and any escalation steps planned. No decisions are required at this meeting.

Introductory Points

- This is a new and rapidly evolving situation, with a lot of uncertainty about how the outbreak could develop. It's important we are ready at home and can ensure the safety of UK Nationals abroad, and continue to monitor the outbreak closely.
- The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care chaired a COBR on Wednesday 29 January. The committee agreed that although there is great uncertainty over the potential spread of this virus, we should begin to prepare for the reasonable worst case, which the Chief Medical Officer advises the likelihood is c.10%. We will use the reasonable worst case for pandemic flu to guide planning, and build on the existing work that is continuously underway for pandemic flu.
- The Chief Medical Officer ~~has also~~ agreed, with support from his colleagues across the 4 Nations, that the risk assessment level for the UK population should be ~~raised~~changed from low to moderate, following the WHO declaration that the outbreak is: ~~We will communicate this after the WHO Emergency Committee declares this outbreak~~ a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.
- I'd like to thank ~~the~~ Foreign and Commonwealth Office who have worked incredibly hard to ~~are working with the Chinese Government to~~ help UK Nationals in Hubei province ~~to~~ return home. Those who have returned to the UK will be isolated for two weeks, to reduce any risk to the wider UK population.

- The Chief Medical Officer and Government Chief Scientific Adviser are doing a great job ensuring we have accurate information to inform our response. ~~The UK is also supporting the international response, developing a diagnostic test and assessing the emerging evidence of the virus.~~

Cabinet Discussion

- Invite the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to provide an update on the outbreak, the actions taken to date to keep UK citizens safe and the shift from containment to management in the event of a reasonable worst case.
- Invite the Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to provide an update on the assisted departure for UK Nationals from Wuhan.
- Invite the Secretary of State for Transport to comment on the implications at UK airports.

Conclusion

- It is critical that we keep the risk to the UK under review and continue to adapt our response as the outbreak and our understanding of the virus develops. ~~should the risk to the UK population increase.~~ The Health Secretary will continue to lead the response, drawing on our world class scientists.
- It is prudent to begin planning for a reasonable worst, building on the great work done to date by all departments and local planners to prepare for a flu pandemic.
- It is vital that we continue to work closely with the Devolved Administrations to make sure citizens across the UK get the same level of care.
- It is important that our communications are accurate, disciplined and proportionate about the risk to the UK. The Chief Medical Officer will continue to speak on behalf of the Government on this issue. We must be careful not to create unnecessary alarm.

Background

On 31 December 2019, Chinese authorities notified the World Health Organisation of an outbreak of viral pneumonia in Wuhan City. The cause was identified as a previously unknown coronavirus. Coronaviruses are common throughout the world and can infect people and animals. Illnesses caused by coronaviruses range from the common cold to more serious diseases such as SARS. Case numbers continue to increase and are currently more than 7000, with cases continuing to be confirmed outside of China. The WHO Emergency Committee has not yet declared the outbreak to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

The UK has increased its preparedness, including implementing a range of port health measures for flights returning from China based on the best medical view of what will be effective. Precautionary SAGE (Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies) have been held to discuss a range of scientific questions and ensure common understanding of the science advice. Our understanding is improving continually, but questions remain, for example, at what stage transmission of the virus is possible.

As of 31st January, 19264 people have already been tested [for coronavirus in the UK](#). [There have been two positive cases, and the remainder have](#) ~~and~~ concluded as negative for coronavirus [in the UK](#).