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**COVID-19 STRATEGY 20(04)
27 JULY 20**

COVID-19 STRATEGY

COVID-19 EXERCISE WINTER PREPAREDNESS (STRAND 3) – PROJECT FAIRLIGHT

TERMS OF REFERENCE

PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY

1. **Purpose.** Project FAIRLIGHT was commissioned by the PM in COVID-S in order to verify the robustness of XWH C19 winter planning measures for central Government. It will:

- a. Test the Government's readiness to respond to the reasonable worst-case scenario (Scenario 3: Pre-Winter Peak and significant winter resurgence), in particular the effectiveness of planning for and operational readiness to deliver, key responses and interventions to mitigate the impacts.
- b. Give assurance that planned interventions will deliver capability to reduce the likelihood and impact of the most severe effects, working up through an escalating level of response.
- c. Commence the exercise at a point where local outbreaks begin to escalate, then the national level of transmission increases, leading to community transmission, progressing to national level controls, with knock on impacts on public services, public order and the economy.
- d. Identify gaps in the plans, interdependencies, vulnerabilities and core assumptions which may need to be refined or bolstered ahead of winter and ensuring that the core governance and processes around responses to the scenarios are known and resilient.

2. **Authority.** PM has directed this exercise. No 10 and Cabinet Office (PMO) are the convening authority (Kate Josephs is the SRO, Colin Dingwall the key client). As part of the 10 strands of the PMOs C19 Winter Preparedness plan, MOD is responsible for 'Strand 3 - Exercise', as laid out in the Cabinet Office paper titled COVID-19 STRATEGY 20(04) dated 02 July 2020. A Steering Group, to meet weekly, with senior representation of the Cabinet Office, MOD and Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) will oversee delivery of the exercises.

FORMAT (HOW)

3. **Ex Design.** On behalf of the Cabinet Office, MOD will deliver an exercise to rehearse the operational management of C19 interventions nationally. The exercise methodology

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will explore central co-ordination, Departmental operational plans, the seams between Departmental activities and Departmental crisis management structures. The exercise will use the existing C19 governance structures and functions to provide a realistic representation of XWH command and control procedures, decision-making and authorities. To develop the exercise the team will identify priority operational areas for testing (broadly taking the C19 portfolio Tier 1 and 2 projects) and seek departmental input to establish the most challenging strategic-level dilemmas. The wider context to winter (end of EU transition, winter flooding) planning will form a backdrop to the exercise – the way in which the exercise will reflect these will be agreed with HMT, SAGE and CCS who are leading the wider work on contingency planning for winter.

4. **Ex Delivery.** The headline event will be a 2 – 3 day (working hours only) exercise in the use of national intervention measures in response to Scenario 3 (Pre-winter peak and significant winter resurgence). The exercise will be delivered using a comprehensive and credible scenario which progressively deteriorates over winter, and which at certain defined points will require inter-departmental planning aimed at all SROs and Programme Directors from across government, using the COVID governance structures. It will be preceded by an SRO Workshop on winter preparedness run by PMO on 29-30 July and underpinned by detailed desk-top study and assessment of all departmental Winter COVID plans to develop the exercise scenario. The delivery of the exercise will also include the following elements

- a. **Focussed workshops.** These will be used by the FAIRLIGHT team in order to help to understand or refine discreet elements of Departmental plans and may take place before or after the main exercise.
- b. **Involvement of current central decision-making forums.** Ministerial-level engagement will be requested and the more we can use the current, central decision-making architecture (e.g. COVID-O) which represents and exploits the existing system and communications in the exercise, the more realistic it will be.
- c. **Judgement Panel.** A judgement panel, including subject matter experts (SMEs) will be required to offer impartial analysis and further insight into the Departmental plans. Following the exercise, the FAIRLIGHT team, using the Judgement Panel, will produce a Post Exercise Report (PXR) with an assessment of the further work and integration required. This will be delivered to the SRO, via the PMO.
- d. **Engaging Devolved Administrations (DAs).** We are developing plans for DAs to be invited as observers to the exercise, but this will be considered alongside wider engagement with the DAs in winter planning.

PARTICIPATION (WHO)

5. **Ex Participants.** The primary training audience is the C19 team in No 10/Cabinet Office and Senior Responsible Officers (SROs), Programme Directors and their teams across central government. COVID-O (or a simulated substitute for it) would be used to direct or endorse the plans and decisions of the primary training audience in short interventions during the exercise (owing to their seniority). All Departments will be expected to provide specialists to man the specialist sub-cells, including from relevant subordinate agencies. LA/LRF might be engaged in delivery of the exercise where relevant to the response, however a wider test of LA/LRF capability does not form part of

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this exercise. A visual representation of the suggested exercise structure is at Annex A.

6. **Senior Representation.** The exercise will seek to involve Ministers and COVID-O if possible. CDL will be engaged first on the plan for and approach to the exercise. In terms of officials, Simon Case, the Permanent Secretary for COVID-19 Taskforce, and Kate Josephs, the DG Delivery for the COVI-19 Taskforce will be the lead officials.

PROGRAMME (WHEN)

7. **Timeline.** The exercise and work-up opportunities are scheduled as follows – note the precise timescales for the exercise itself are yet to be confirmed as they are dependent on the availability of principles:

a. **29 – 30 Jul 20** – Cross-Government Winter Planning Workshop. This will set the baseline for the subsequent exercise. During the Workshop, the Project FAIRLIGHT Team will be introduced and present the exercise format, participation and start-point. This will enable all Departments to understand their own level of involvement and what will be expected of them during the exercise.

b. **3 – 21 Aug 20** – Playbook revision and comment through desktop review. Possible pre-exercise workshops to refine scenarios and improve preparedness.

To be confirmed – subject to availability

c. **24 – 26 Aug 20** – Likely primary exercise window, to be finalised by PMO who are awaiting Ministerial and senior official availability.

d. **26 – 28 Aug 20** – Further refinement and adaptation of Departmental plans, through workshops, and Post Exercise Report (PXR) development, including with Judgement Panel input.

e. **1 Sep** - Final Report.

LOCATION (WHERE)

8. Owing to COVID restrictions and the number and spread of participants, it will be impractical to have a centrally organised event for all participants. Thus, there will have to be a predominantly virtual structure to the exercise, where most of the participants access the event remotely. Individual elements may take place in person (see next para), but in the worst case the entire exercise may have to be delivered virtually.

9. The desired 'in person' element to the exercise would be predominantly for SROs, the FAIRLIGHT team, C-19 taskforce and COVID-O (if desired) to simulate the key decision making aspects of the exercise. This might be best hosted by COBR infrastructure to enable access to XWH communication.

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Enclosure:

1 Illustrative Exercise Construct

Distribution:

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