

minutes. I believe the Welsh Government COVID-19 Inquiry team has provided the minutes of all these meetings to the Inquiry.

11. In terms of preparing the minutes, I followed a long-standing process. During the meeting I took handwritten notes of the discussion, which would invariably follow the issues and recommendations, as set out in the supporting paper. When drafting minutes, again I followed the usual process of producing an introduction of the item, which outlined the issues that Ministers would need to consider. This would be followed by a brief summary of what had been discussed ending with a conclusion setting out what Cabinet had decided.
12. This is in line with the guide to minute taking (M2BWGCM01/02-INQ000227561) and specifically section IV – The Discussion and Summing Up. This section also explains why the minute should be impersonal and this reflects the need to maintain collective responsibility, which is outlined in paragraph 6.1 of the Welsh Government Ministerial Code, which I exhibit at **M2BWGCM01/03-INQ000066055**.
13. I had no role in providing advice to Ministers or taking policy related decisions. The only decisions I took related to the management and supporting of staff in Cabinet Secretariat, and this continues to be the case. For example, in summer of 2020, we completed the process to recruit a team support for the team that supported Cabinet meetings. I decided, given the substantial increase in written questions being submitted to Ministers, to allocate the new member of staff to the Plenary team.
14. The First Minister also established a COVID-19 Core Group, which was open for all Ministers to attend, if they were able. It met on Wednesday mornings between March and July 2020. This was an opportunity for Ministers and officials to share information and provide updates on the major issues relating to the emergency. Opposition party leaders were also invited to these meetings, along with representatives from Local Government and the Third Sector. Other non-regular attendees included the Police, the Military, Ministers from the Wales Office, and representatives from the Wales TUC. I provided the notes for 20 of these meetings. From September 2020 this changed to technical briefings for opposition party leaders, which was supported by one of my team.