

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING: 17 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEETING WAS CONDUCTED VIA VIDEO LINK

Present: First Minister (Chair)
deputy First Minister (Chair)
Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Minister for Communities
Minister for the Economy
Minister of Education
Minister of Finance
Minister of Health
Minister for Infrastructure
Minister of Justice

In attendance: Junior Minister, TEO (Mr. Lyons)
Junior Minister, TEO (Mr. Kearney)
Head of Executive and Central Advisory Division, TEO

Dr Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer
Prof Ian Young, Chief Scientific Adviser
Karen Pearson, Director of EU Relations, TEO

INTRODUCTION

The deputy First Minister chaired agenda items 1 – 4.

AGENDA ITEM 1

E (M) (20) 52 Minutes of Executive meeting held on 10 September 2020

1. The minutes of the Executive meeting of 10 September 2020 were agreed subject to the amendments as requested by the Minister for Infrastructure and the Minister of Justice.

Matters Arising

Localised Restrictions

2. The Minister of Health advised of his intention to make a Written Ministerial Statement in relation to additional localised restrictions.

Economic Recovery Assessment

3. The Minister of Finance requested early consideration of his paper on Public Expenditure: 2020-21 Covid-19 Economic Recovery Assessment.

AGENDA ITEM 2

COVID-19 Report by the Minister of Health

4. The Minister of Health provided an update on, and the Executive discussed, developments in the COVID-19 pandemic, including the 'R' number; increases in hospital admissions and deaths; outbreaks in care homes; test statistics; increasing age demographic; addition of localised restrictions; enforcement of regulations; the need for clear and hard-hitting messaging for young people; and the need for the support of universities in disseminating a message to students on the consequences of their actions.
5. The deputy First Minister advised that the Executive Information Service was developing a communications strategy targeted at younger people.

AGENDA ITEM 3

Actions from Previous Meetings

6. The deputy First Minister advised that the Action Log had been circulated.

AGENDA ITEM 4

COVID-19 Management

E (20) 211 (C) Financial Assistance Due to Coronavirus to Producers in the Ornamental Horticulture Sector

7. The Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs introduced this paper.
8. The Executive:
 - (i) noted the First Minister's and Deputy First Ministers' support for the proposal to provide financial assistance to the ornamental horticulture industry;
 - (ii) agreed in principle to provide financial assistance to mitigate the effect of this hardship by means of a scheme provided for in accordance with the Financial Assistance Act (NI) 2009;
 - (iii) noted and approved the details of the financial assistance scheme included in Executive Memorandum E (20) 211 (C) paper; and
 - (iv) agreed that a Determination and Designation in accordance with the Financial Assistance Act (NI) 2009 be made as attached to the Executive paper.

E (20) 215 (C) Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020: Second Review of the Need for the Restrictions and Requirements

9. The Minister of Health introduced this paper.
10. The Executive agreed that:
 - (i) the requirement in regulation 3 for a review of the need for the restrictions and requirements in the No. 2 Regulations had been duly met;

- (ii) the current restrictions and requirements in the No. 2 Regulations continued to be an appropriate and necessary response to the serious and imminent threat to public health which was posed by the incidence and spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) in Northern Ireland; and
- (iii) overall, the restrictions and requirements imposed by these Regulations continued to be proportionate to what the Regulations sought to achieve, which was a public health response to that infectious disease threat in the context of a now rising rate of infection in Northern Ireland.

11. At the request of the Minister for Communities, the Minister of Health agreed to include a reference to housing in the text.

E (20) 213 (C) COVID-19 Hospitality

12. The deputy First Minister introduced this paper.

13. Following discussion, the Executive agreed amendments to the recommendations in Executive Memorandum E (20) 213 (C), to the effect that:

- (i) the opening of wet pubs would be deferred to 23 September 2020, to allow for the drafting of accompanying Regulations covering a range of mitigations relating to the proposals set out in Paragraph 3 of the Executive paper;
- (ii) that a limit of six people should be placed on table sizes, but with children aged 12 and under to be discounted from that number;
- (iii) that requirements for the use of face coverings in hospitality venues should be progressed; and
- (iv) that regulations should prohibit the operation of beer bikes.

14. The Executive further agreed that the discounting of children aged 12 and under should also be applied to the regulations regarding household gatherings.

E (20) 216 (C) Recovery Framework

15. The deputy First Minister introduced this paper.

16. The Executive:

- (i) noted the update in relation to the draft Recovery Framework; and
- (ii) approved the draft Framework attached at Appendix 1 to Executive Memorandum E (20) 216 (C).

17. The Minister of Education requested that the Education sector be included in public services, and advised that his officials would engage on this issue.

The First Minister chaired the remaining items on the agenda.

AGENDA ITEM 5

Schedule of Events/Media/Ad Hoc Committee

18. The First Minister advised that there were no matters to raise under this agenda item.

AGENDA ITEM 6

Other Issues requiring Executive Agreement

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Irrelevant & Sensitive

AGENDA ITEM 6

Note of Urgent Decisions

23. The Executive noted the following urgent decisions taken in accordance with paragraph 2.14 of the Ministerial Code:

Irrelevant & Sensitive

E (UP) (20) 29

COVID Response: Social Enterprise Funding Scheme

AGENDA ITEM 7

Any Other Business

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Date of next meeting

25. The next Executive meeting would take place on Thursday 24 September 2020 at 1.00 p.m.