

**MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING: 10 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 First Minister chaired agenda items 1 – 4.

**AGENDA ITEM 1**

**E (M) (20) 51          Minutes of Executive meeting held on 3 September 2020**

1. The minutes of the Executive meeting of 3 September 2020, amended as requested by the Minister for Infrastructure, were agreed.

## **Matters Arising**

### **Circulation of Executive Papers**

2. The First Minister advised that, following discussion at the previous Executive meeting in relation to timing of circulation of Executive papers, it was proposed that, save in exceptional circumstances, any papers not circulated by close of play on the Tuesday before an Executive meeting were unlikely to be considered for that meeting, the agenda for which should be issued the preceding day. In addition, to enable a more strategic approach to Executive business planning, information would be requested from departments on a monthly basis by the Executive Office on papers expected to be circulated over the following three months.

## **AGENDA ITEM 2**

### **COVID-19 Report by the Minister of Health**

3. The Minister of Health provided an update on, and the Executive discussed, developments in the COVID-19 pandemic, including the 'R' number; the position in care homes; number of deaths; admission to hospitals; contact tracing figures; capacity of the testing system; the impact of schools reopening on COVID testing demand; and variations in COVID incidence in different locations.

## **AGENDA ITEM 3**

### **Actions from Previous Meetings**

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

## **AGENDA ITEM 4**

### **COVID-19 Management**

#### **E (20) 210 (C) Consideration of Need for Local or General Restrictions to Reduce Progression of the COVID-19 Epidemic**

5. The Minister of Health introduced, and the Executive discussed, this paper.
6. The First Minister advised that she and the deputy First Minister were mindful that messaging needed to be balanced to permit ongoing economic activity, and that they and the Minister of Health had agreed on a form of language to be used in references to avoiding unnecessary travel. It was also agreed that care was needed in relation to references to people who had previously been required to shield.
7. **The Executive meeting was adjourned to enable Ministers to attend a number of other meetings and events.**

#### **E (20) 206 (C) Update on Hospitality and Soft Play Areas**

8. On reconvening, the Executive continued its consideration of Executive Memorandum E (20) 210 (C) – Consideration of Need for Local or General Restrictions to Reduce Progression of the COVID-19 Epidemic, in tandem with Executive Memorandum E (20) 206 (C) – Update on Hospitality and Soft Play Areas.
9. The Minister of Justice advised of her concerns relating to proposals and recommendations contained in these Executive papers, particularly matters relating to enforcement, equality issues and consistency of messaging to the public.
10. The Minister for Infrastructure advised of a range of matters on which she had concerns, including mixed messaging which would be perceived by the public in relation to proposals in the two Executive papers.

11. Following further detailed discussion on Executive Memorandum E (20) 210 (C) - Consideration of Need for Local or General Restrictions to Reduce Progression of the COVID-19 Epidemic, the Executive agreed:

- (a) that a number of local restrictions be imposed on the areas identified in the table at paragraph 6 of Executive Memorandum E (20) 210 (C), subject to the further recommendations on geographical coverage in paragraphs 12 and 13– initially for a period of two weeks, subject to weekly monitoring and review;
- (b) that in those areas with local restrictions, care home and hospital visiting should be minimised and the elderly and those previously shielding should be advised to minimise their interactions with other people and adhere to advice on preventative measures;
- (c) that residents in relevant areas should be advised to only travel outside their area for essential purposes, including work or education;
- (d) that a working group on compliance and enforcement of the regulations be established but led by the Executive Office rather than the Department of Justice and chaired at Ministerial level;
- (e) that the Minister of Health’s position regarding Wet Pubs be noted; and
- (f) that measures should be effective immediately, with regulations and other work to follow over the coming week.

12. In relation to Executive Memorandum E (20) 206 (C) - Update on Hospitality and Soft Play Areas, the Executive:

- (a) noted progress on hospitality and wet pubs;
- (b) agreed an indicative date of 21 September for wet pubs; and
- (c) ratified soft play to reopen on 14 September.

13. The First Minister thanked the Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Scientific Adviser for the work, advice and support they had provided, and continued to provide, to the Executive.

**14. The Executive meeting was further adjourned to enable the First Minister and deputy First Minister to engage in media activity relating to COVID-19 developments.**

**E (20) 208 (C)      Draft Recovery Framework**

15. On reconvening, the First Minister introduced this paper for initial discussion.

16. The Executive agreed that Ministers should provide written responses to the Executive Office, and that it would be considered in further detail at the Executive meeting of 17 September.

**E (20) 209 (C)      Public Expenditure: 2020-21 COVID-19 Economic Recovery Assessment**

17. The Minister of Finance introduced this paper.

18. The Executive:

- a) noted the overall level of funding available;
- b) agreed the allocations of £19.2 million to the Department of Education for PPE and £3.2 million to the Department for the Economy for additional teaching grant;
- c) agreed that funding in future years arising from the agreement to additional university places will be provided to the Department for the Economy and the Department of Health as part of the Budget process;
- d) agreed to defer further allocations pending Executive's consideration of its response to recovery; and
- e) agreed to bring forward proposals for sectors which have missed out on existing support.

19. The Minister for Communities requested early agreement to her Urgent Decision request on the Social Enterprise Funding Scheme.

20. The Minister for the Economy advised that she would engage directly with the Minister of Finance in relation to Barnett Consequential issues.

21. The Minister of Finance advised that any further bids in respect of PPE should be submitted as soon as possible.

**E (20) 207 (C) COVID 19: Infrastructure Recovery**

22. The Minister for Infrastructure introduced this paper.

23. The Executive:

- (a) noted the progress that had been made by the Department for Infrastructure on COVID-19 recovery;
- (b) agreed that the Executive's recovery plans, Investment Strategy and Programme for Government must fully recognise the importance of investment in infrastructure to help improve the economy and the wellbeing of our citizens.

24. The Minister of Finance advised that he had written to the Minister for Infrastructure in relation to budgetary matters.

**The deputy First Minister chaired the remaining items on the agenda.**

**AGENDA ITEM 5**

**Schedule of Events/Media/Ad Hoc Committee**

25. The deputy First Minister notified the Executive of correspondence from the Speaker advising that as the Assembly intended to return to two sittings each week, there should be sufficient opportunity for Ministers to make statements, and therefore less need for sessions of the Ad Hoc Committee on COVID-19 Response.

**AGENDA ITEM 6**

**Other Issues requiring Executive Agreement**

**Issues not requiring Discussion**

**Irrelevant & Sensitive**

**AGENDA ITEM 7**

**Any Other Business**

**Irrelevant & Sensitive**

**Date of next meeting**

**30.** The next Executive meeting would take place on Thursday 17 September 2020 at 1.00 p.m.