

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING: 19 NOVEMBER 2020

MEETING CONDUCTED VIA ZOOM

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

INTRODUCTION

The First Minister chaired agenda items 1 – 5.

AGENDA ITEM 1

E (M) (20) 62 Minutes of Executive meeting held on 5 November 2020

1. The minutes of the Executive meeting of 5 November 2020, amended as requested by the Minister for Infrastructure, were agreed.

E (M) (20) 63 Minutes of Executive meeting commencing 9 November 2020

2. The minutes of the Executive meeting commencing 9 November 2020, amended as requested by the Minister of Justice, were agreed.

AGENDA ITEM 2

Action Log

3. The First Minister advised that the action log would be issued shortly.

AGENDA ITEM 3

NI SitRep for CCG

4. The First Minister advised that the SitRep had been circulated.

AGENDA ITEM 4

COVID-19 Report by the Minister of Health

5. The Minister of Health provided an update on developments in the COVID-19 pandemic, including: the 'R' number and the COVID-19 Community Mobility Report ', which had been circulated to Ministers; sick absence levels among Health Service staff; inpatient numbers; care home outbreaks; non-COVID service provision; and contact tracing.
6. The Chief Scientific Adviser gave a presentation on, and the Executive discussed, statistical data relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

AGENDA ITEM 5

COVID-19 Management

E (20) 267 (C) Modelling the course of the COVID epidemic and the impact of different interventions and recommendations.

7. The Minister of Health introduced and the Executive discussed this paper, which included an updated modelling of the course of the epidemic, and outlined options which might be available to maintain the position at manageable levels in the immediate run up to the Christmas period.
8. The Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs advised of his concerns regarding service provision by GPs, and resulting pressures on hospital services. The Chief Medical Officer outlined the range of services provided by GPs, and advised that he would provide information on hospital occupancy rates for the same period last year.
- 9. The meeting was adjourned at 4.20 p.m. to enable the Minister of Health, the Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Scientific Adviser to submit a summary of their proposals for Ministers' consideration.**
- 10. The meeting was reconvened at 6.10 p.m.**

Summary of Proposed Position (DOH)

11. The Executive discussed the 'Summary of Proposed Position' document which had been circulated by the Minister of Health during the adjournment.
12. The Minister for the Economy wished to record her concern at the impact on businesses of further restrictions being introduced.
13. The Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs wished to record his deep concern regarding the impact of closure on small businesses, and that this approach was not compatible with the proposal to keep off-licences open.

14. A revised version of the 'Summary of the Proposed Position' paper incorporating amendments agreed in discussion was circulated by the Minister of Health at 7.42 p.m.
15. The Executive agreed the proposed approach in the revised 'Summary of the Proposed Position' paper:

Summary of the Proposed Position:

With effect from 00.01 am, 27 November, for two weeks

- Closure of all retail except essential retail that was permitted to stay open in March
- Off licences will remain open, with an 8pm closing
- Closure of close contact services, and driving instruction (not motorcycles), except close contact for Film and TV production; those ancillary to medical, health and social care services; and elite-sports therapeutic services - i.e. – as 13 October- 19 November
- Closure of all hospitality (except for accommodation for essential travel). Takeaway and delivery, and food and drink in motorway services, airports and harbour terminals remain open.
- Closure of all leisure and entertainment (to include all soft play areas, gyms, swimming pools etc)
- Sporting events only permitted for elite sports. Individual/household outdoor exercise and school PE to continue.
- Elite sports events behind closed doors without spectators
- No household gatherings of more than one household, other than current arrangements for linked households (bubbles), with current exceptions for caring, maintenance, house moves, *etc.*
- Closure of places of worship, except for weddings, civil partnerships and funerals. Remain with 25 max for weddings and funerals
- Stay at home, work from home if at all possible, otherwise only leave for essential purposes such as education, healthcare needs, to care for others or outdoor exercise.
- Schools and childcare to remain open

- Universities / FE to provide learning at distance except where it is essential to provide it face to face.
- Public parks and outdoor play areas remain open
- Stay at home in guidance, with liaison with PSNI on policing and police visibility
- Financial support package to be developed over next few days

16. The Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs recorded his deep concern at the decision which by closing small business including hairdressers which had minor impact on the R number while leaving off licenses open, was not following the science as committed to previously by the Executive.

17. It was agreed that the Minister of Health would make a Written Statement to the Assembly, and that media activity should be arranged.

E (20) 266 (C) Funding Holiday Food Grants for Christmas 2020 to Easter 2022

18. The Minister of Education introduced this paper.

19. The Executive:

- (i) agreed to implement a Holiday Food programme for the holiday periods from Christmas 2020 to Easter 2022;
- (ii) provided Executive direction for funding support of up to £28.863m with the potential to increase to £43.295m in the event additional FSM applications were received for these grant payments;
- (iii) noted that as the legal authority to incur expenditure was a separate consideration from the Executive's endorsement of the policy proposal, this would be taken forward separately;

- (iv) noted, as work continued on the food poverty project by the Department for Communities, Executive colleagues would be updated on future proposals to tackle hunger and learning loss during, holiday periods.

20. The Minister of Finance advised that a reference in the paper to availability of funding of £7.8 million was contingent on Executive agreement to his paper on 2020-21 November COVID Funding, which had not been included on the agenda for this meeting.

The deputy First Minister chaired the remaining items on the agenda

AGENDA ITEM 6

Other issues requiring Executive agreement

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Any Other business

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Support for Airports

29. The Minister for the Economy raised the need for support to be provided to airports here. The Minister for Infrastructure advised of her intention to meet with airport representatives. The Minister of Health advised of the impact on the Air Ambulance Service of Belfast International Airport proposals to operate on a part-time basis.

Rathcoole Kids Video

30. The Minister for Communities informed the Executive of a video made by Rathcoole Studios, involving young people from the area, to promote a COVID health message. The Executive agreed to endorse the video and the message it contained.

Irrelevant & Sensitive

COVID-19 Charities Fund Update

32. The Minister for Communities provided an update on dissemination of the COVID-19 Charities Fund.