

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING: 7 MAY 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)
Secretary to the Executive
Head of Executive & Central Advisory Division TEO

Dr Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer
Mr Chris Stewart, Director of Executive Support and
Programme for Government, TEO

INTRODUCTION

The deputy First Minister chaired items 1 – 4.

1. The deputy First Minister advised the Executive that as from Monday 11 May, Executive meetings would be held twice weekly, on Mondays and Thursdays, with COVID-19 updates from the Minister of Health, and I&S being standing agenda items for Monday meetings.

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AGENDA ITEM 1

E (M) (20) 25 Minutes of Executive meeting of 4 May 2020

2. The minutes of the Executive meeting of 4 May 2020 were agreed.

Matters Arising

Irrelevant & Sensitive

AGENDA ITEM 2

COVID-19 Report by the Health Minister

4. The Minister of Health provided updates on developments and current issues in the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly support for and testing in care homes. The Minister reported a further unauthorised disclosure of information to the media which had been intended for publication.

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AGENDA ITEM 3

Actions from previous meetings

Action Log

5. The deputy First Minister advised that the Action Log from the previous Executive meeting had been circulated to Ministers.

AGENDA ITEM 4

CCG Sitrep

6. The Secretary to the Executive provided a read-out of the CCG meeting and the Situation Report which had been circulated to Ministers.

AGENDA ITEM 5

COVID-19 Management

E (20) 90 (C) Planning for Recovery: Second Review of Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2020

7. The Minister of Health and the Chief Medical Officer introduced this paper.
8. Following discussion, and subject to agreed amendments and the provision of an Executive Summary of the document, the Executive agreed:
 - (i) that the requirement in Regulation 2(2) for a second review of the Regulations had been met;
 - (ii) that the Regulations continued to be an appropriate response to the serious and imminent threat to public health which was posed by the

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incidence and spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) in Northern Ireland;

- (iii) that the restrictions and requirements imposed by these Regulations continued to be proportionate to what they (the Regulations) sought to achieve, which was a public health response to that infectious disease threat;
- (iv) that subsequent reviews should be conducted according to the terms set out above, in particular by timely re-appraisal of specific restrictions and requirements; and the incremental approach described in paragraphs 9 - 12 of the Executive paper should be adopted;
- (v) that the guiding principles set out in paragraph 13 of the paper should be adopted;
- (vi) that the arrangements for managing the process of review, including the qualitative risk-benefit framework and the structured process, should be adopted, and
- (vii) that the Executive should consider developing messaging aimed at giving people the knowledge and the confidence to enable them to live their lives as freely as possible within the existing legislative constraints and in line with public health advice, including a safe return to work.

9. The Minister of Health advised that, as the Executive paper was not intended for publication, he would commission material reflecting its contents which could be used by Ministers engaging in media activity later in the day.

The First Minister chaired the remaining items on the agenda

E (20) 91 (C) Use of Face Coverings in Northern Ireland as Part of our Response to Coronavirus

10. The Minister of Health invited the Chief Medical Officer to introduce this paper.

11. Following discussion, the Executive:

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- (i) agreed to recommend (as opposed to require) that the public consider the use of face coverings for short periods in enclosed spaces, where social distancing was not possible; and
- (ii) noted that the Department of Health would consider what further guidance on this issue was required.

E (20) 92 (C) Executive Approach to Coronavirus Decision Making

12. The Secretary to the Executive introduced this paper.

13. The Executive agreed that further comments should be provided by Ministers to the Secretary to the Executive, and that a revised paper should be circulated for Executive consideration in the following week.

AGENDA ITEM 6

Schedule of Events/Media/Ad Hoc Committee

14. The First Minister provided details of Ministers' forward engagement with the Assembly Ad Hoc Committee. It was agreed that the Minister of Justice and the Minister for Communities would liaise on a date for engagement with the Ad Hoc Committee in the following week.

AGENDA ITEM 7

Other Matters requiring Executive agreement

Irrelevant & Sensitive

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Irrelevant & Sensitive

AGENDA ITEM 8

Note of Urgent Decisions

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

E (UP) (20) 19 Coronavirus - Hardship Fund for Microbusiness

E (UP) (20) 20 COVID Support for Hospices

AGENDA ITEM 9

Any other business

Agriculture Hardship

18. The Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs raised the issue of agricultural hardship and the challenges being faced by the agri-food sector and emphasised the need for Executive action in the absence of any strategy for support from the UK Government. The Minister of Finance advised that his department would consider any proposition for support brought forward by the Minister, and would raise the matter with Treasury if appropriate.

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Addition of members of the Legal Profession to list of Key Workers

19. The Minister of Justice requested that members of the legal profession should be included in the list of key workers. It was agreed that she and the Minister for the Economy would liaise further to take this matter forward.

Designation of other bodies under Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2020

20. The Minister of Justice requested designation of other bodies in addition to PSNI to have an enforcement role in relation to the COVID-19 Regulations. It was agreed that the Secretary to the Executive would consider this further.

Press Statement

21. The Executive agreed the approach to be taken by the First Minister and deputy First Minister in relation to COVID-19 matters during their Press Conference later in the day.

Date of next meeting

22. The next meeting of the Executive would take place on Monday 11 May at 12.00 noon.

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