

DRAFT MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING: 6 APRIL 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

INTRODUCTION

The deputy First Minister chaired items 1 – 4.

1. Ministers expressed their support for the Minister of Health in response to the threats he had received on social media in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

AGENDA ITEM 1

E (M) (20) 13 Minutes of Executive meeting of 3 April 2020

OFFICIAL - EXECUTIVE

2. The minutes of the Executive meeting of 3 April 2020 were agreed.

AGENDA ITEM 2

COVID-19 Report by the Health Minister

3. The Minister of Health provided updates on developments on COVID-19, including the delivery and distribution of Personal Protection Equipment and the deployment of the City Hospital Tower Block as a Nightingale Hospital facility.
4. Dr Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer, briefed Ministers on the COVID-19 Testing Strategy which had been circulated by the Minister of Health. The Executive noted that the paper would be developed further to provide further information on timescales, expansion of the scope of testing, demographic impacts and contact tracing.
5. The Chief Medical Officer agreed to provide a copy of the guidance for domiciliary and nursing care settings.

AGENDA ITEM 3

Actions from previous meetings

Action Log

6. The deputy First Minister advised that the Action Log from the previous Executive meeting had been circulated to Ministers.
7. The Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs provided an update on the impact of Covid-19 on the Agri-Food sector.

OFFICIAL - EXECUTIVE

OFFICIAL - EXECUTIVE

8. The Minister for the Economy provide a report on the application of social distancing in the workplace.

AGENDA ITEM 4

CCG Sitrep: Matters requiring Executive decision

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

The First Minister chaired the remaining items on the agenda

AGENDA ITEM 5

COVID-19 Management

E (20) 47 (C) Options for Introducing a Limited Early Medical Abortion Service for Women in Northern Ireland during the COVID-19 Emergency Period

10. The Minister of Health advised that he had circulated this paper for Executive consideration as he considered that the subject matter required it in accordance with paragraph 2.4.(v) of the Ministerial Code – significant and controversial and clearly outside the scope of the agreed programme referred to in paragraph 20 of Strand One of the Belfast Agreement.
11. Following discussion, the Minister of Health proposed that, as recommended in Paragraph 18 of Executive Memorandum E (20) 47 (C), an Executive Sub-Group, to be chaired by Junior Minister Lyons and Junior Minister Kearney, with membership from all the parties represented in the Executive, should be established to consider the matter and make a recommendation to the Executive.

OFFICIAL - EXECUTIVE

OFFICIAL - EXECUTIVE

12. There being no consensus on the proposal, a vote was taken, which upon a request from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, the Minister for the Economy and the Minister of Education, was conducted on a cross-community vote basis. The Minister of Health voting for, the Minister of Justice abstaining, and all other Ministers voting against, and cross-community support not therefore being demonstrated, the Minister of Health's proposal was not agreed.
13. The Minister for Communities proposed that that Executive agree Option 2 as contained in paragraph 14 of Executive Memorandum E (20) 47 (C), with the addition of amendments requiring urgent action, the use of virtual communications, including tele-medicine facilities, access to sexual health clinics and the inclusion of an up-front conscience clause.
14. There being no consensus on the proposal a vote was taken which, upon a request from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, the Minister for the Economy and the Minister of Education, was conducted on a cross-community basis. The First Minister, the Minister for the Economy, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs voting against; the deputy First Minister, and the Minister for Communities, the Minister of Finance, the Minister for Infrastructure and the Minister of Justice voting for; and the Minister of Health abstaining, and cross-community support not therefore being demonstrated, the Minister for Communities' proposal was not agreed.
15. The deputy First Minister proposed that the Executive agree to remit the matter back to the Minister of Health as not requiring Executive agreement and for him to make a decision on the content of Executive Memorandum E (20) 47 (C).
16. There being no consensus on the proposal a vote was taken which upon a request by the Minister of Education, the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the Minister for the Economy was conducted on a cross-community basis. The First Minister, the Minister for the Economy, the

OFFICIAL - EXECUTIVE

OFFICIAL - EXECUTIVE

Minister of Education and the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs voting against; the deputy First Minister, and the Minister for Communities, the Minister of Finance, the Minister for Infrastructure and the Minister of Justice voting for; and the Minister of Health abstaining, and cross-community support therefore not being demonstrated, the deputy First Minister's proposal was not agreed.

17. The First Minister advised that as no consensus had been achieved, **LPP/LAP** **LPP/LAP** with the Secretary to the Executive to confirm the timeframe for this engagement.

18. The deputy First Minister recorded her view that the Minister of Health had abdicated his duty to bring forward support for women in crisis.

19. The First Minister recorded her view that if the matter had not been brought to the Executive for consideration, she would have sought to have it referred to the Executive in accordance with Paragraph 2.4 (vi) of the Ministerial Code.

20. The Minister of Health reiterated his opinion that the matter was one for the collective decision of the Executive in accordance with Paragraph 2.4 (v) of the Ministerial Code.

AGENDA ITEM 6

Schedule of Events/Media/Ad Hoc Committee

21. The First Minister advised of statements to be made to the Assembly Ad Hoc Committee on COVID-19 this week by herself and the deputy First Minister; by the Minister for Agriculture, the Environment and Rural Affairs; and by the Minister for the Economy.

OFFICIAL - EXECUTIVE

OFFICIAL - EXECUTIVE

AGENDA ITEM 7

Matters requiring Executive agreement

22. There were no other matters requiring Executive agreement.

AGENDA ITEM 8

Any Other Business

Ferries and Ports

23. The Minister for Infrastructure provided an update on ferries and ports and advised that she would circulate details of the UK Government's proposed package of assistance when received.

Airports

24. The Minister of Finance advised that he would provide information on support for airports here in the coming days.

Further calls for volunteers with schools

25. The Minister of Education advised that a second call had gone out for volunteers to work within the schools sector.

OFFICIAL - EXECUTIVE