

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING: 3 DECEMBER 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

Interim Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service

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

INTRODUCTION

The First Minister chaired agenda items 1 – 5.

1. The First Minister welcomed Jenny Pyper to her first meeting of the Executive as Interim Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

AGENDA ITEM 1

E (M) (20) 67 Minutes of Executive meeting held on 26 November 2020

2. The minutes of the Executive meeting of 26 November 2020 were agreed subject to an amendment requested by the Minister of Finance.

AGENDA ITEM 2

COVID-19 Report by the Minister of Health

3. The Minister of Health provided an update on developments in the COVID-19 pandemic, including the 'R' number and Community Mobility Update, in relation to which papers had been circulated; roll-out of the vaccination programme; numbers of hospital inpatients; ICU patients; and elective care hubs.
4. The Chief Scientific Adviser gave a presentation on, and the Executive discussed, statistical data relating to trends in the COVID-19 pandemic.

AGENDA ITEM 3

Actions from previous meetings

5. The First Minister advised that the action log had been circulated.

AGENDA ITEM 4

CCG Sit Rep

6. The First Minister advised that the CCG Sit Rep had been circulated.

AGENDA ITEM 5

COVID Management

E (20) 276 (C) The Executive COVID-19 Taskforce (ECT)

7. The First Minister introduced this paper, which included draft Terms of Reference for the Executive COVID-19 Taskforce.
8. Following discussion, the Executive agreed that the Interim Head of the Civil Service would engage with Ministers on taking forward the Executive COVID-19 Taskforce and finalising development of its draft Terms of Reference.

E (20) 274 (C) Christmas Bubble Arrangements

9. The First Minister introduced this paper.
10. Following discussion, the Executive:
 - (i) agreed that the configuration of Christmas Bubbles would be as outlined at the third bullet point at Paragraph 5 of Executive Memorandum E (20) 274 (C) – One bubble and two other households;
 - (ii) noted the supports and advice for those who would be isolated and vulnerable;
 - (iii) noted that advice for care homes, residents and families would be developed; and
 - (iv) noted the next steps of submitting a Written Ministerial Statement to the Assembly and announcing the decisions to the media.
11. The Director of Communications provided examples of graphics to be used in public information campaigns regarding Christmas Bubble Arrangements.

12. The Chief Medical Officer advised that he would consider guidance for charities on how they may provide support to those in need over the Christmas period.

E (20) 277 (C) Restrictions from 11 December 2020

13. The First Minister introduced this paper.

14. The meeting was adjourned at 2.00 p.m. to enable the First Minister and deputy First Minister to attend a meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee (EN).

15. The meeting was reconvened at 4.00 p.m.

16. Following discussion, the Executive:

- (i) noted the advice and recommendations from the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Scientific Adviser on each of the key restrictions included in the Executive paper;
- (ii) considered the proposed restrictions in the context of the arrangements for the Christmas period;
- (iii) noted that engagement with the hospitality sector had taken place and considered the suggestions put forward by them; and
- (iv) agreed the restrictions that needed to be in place when the current Regulations expired on 10 December, as set out at Annex A to Executive Memorandum E (20) 277 (C) - Restrictions from 11 December 2020, and as amended following discussion (attached at Annex A to these minutes for reference).

17. It was agreed that an Assembly communications and media handling approach would be put in place.

E (20) 275 (C) COVID-19 Heating Payment Scheme

18. The Minister for Communities introduced this paper.

19. The Executive agreed that the Covid-19 Heating Payment scheme should proceed under section 1(4) of the Financial Assistance Act (Northern Ireland) 2009.

The deputy First Minister chaired the remaining items on the agenda

AGENDA ITEM 6

Other matters requiring Executive decision

Irrelevant & Sensitive

AGENDA ITEM 7

Note of Urgent Decision

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

E (UP (20) 37 Newly Self-Employed Support Schemes (NSESS)

Any Other Business

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Airports

25. The Minister of Finance advised of proposed support payments to airports, which would require the use of a Ministerial Direction; and that he intended to bring the matter to the Executive in the near future.

Date of next meeting

26. The next meeting of the Executive would take place on Tuesday 8 December at 9.00 a.m.

ANNEX A TO E (M) (20) 68 - MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING: 3 DECEMBER 2020

Restrictions that need to be in place when the current Regulations expire on 10 December, as set out at Annex A to Executive Memorandum E (20) 277 (C) - Restrictions from 11 December 2020, as amended following discussion at the Executive meeting of 3 December 2020:

The Executive agreed that the following can open:

- Non-essential businesses, including retail and close contact services to include driving instructors.
- Pubs and private members' clubs serving a main or substantive meal that has been prepared in their own kitchen; restaurants and cafes. Contact details must be taken from all customers.

Mitigations, that were previously required, will stay in place. Food and drink can be purchased until 10.30pm but cannot be consumed on the premises after 11.00pm, and all persons must vacate the venue by 11.00pm.
- Hotels and guesthouses. Mitigations that were previously required will stay in place, including restrictions on food and drink.
- Gyms, swimming and diving pools can open for individual training, training with a personal trainer and non-aerobic classes of up to 15. Contact details must be taken.
- Outdoor events and gatherings, subject to a risk assessment if more than 15 attending and measures in place to limit risk of virus transmission, with an upper limit of 500 on participants.
- Sports events, subject to a risk assessment if more than 15 people attending with measures in place to limit risk of virus transmission.

An upper limit of 500 spectators is permitted. Inter-school competitive sporting events are not permitted.

- Outdoor exercise in groups of up to a maximum of 15.
- Places of worship.
- Outdoor and indoor visitor attractions, museums, galleries and libraries.

The following must remain closed:

- Wet pubs and private members' clubs not serving a main or substantial meal. Off sales are permitted up to 10.30pm. This applies to off sales, supermarkets and hospitality venues selling alcohol.
- Concert halls and theatres, except for rehearsals and recordings.
- Nightclubs.

The Executive also agreed that:

- Current arrangements for gatherings in domestic and private dwellings will remain the same as is currently in place, apart from the temporary arrangements over the Christmas period.
- Receptions for marriages and civil partnerships are permitted, with numbers subject to risk assessment determined by the place of worship, or venue. Mitigations that were previously required will stay in place.
- Wedding ceremonies and civil partnerships will continue and the number attending will be determined by the place of worship, or venue.

- Attendees and the organiser/operator of funerals must comply with funeral guidance issued by the Department of Health.
- No holidaying in groups outside of the domestic settings rules – this applies to venues, such as self-catering chalets, which can accommodate large numbers.