

**FINAL DRAFT WITNESS STATEMENT OF BERNIE ROONEY @ 26 March 2024**

Stewart a comment that was said at the meeting 'it is anticipated it will become a global pandemic over the next three weeks.' Chris Stewart replied "That is a stark assessment.... I would welcome a briefing from the team on existing flu pandemic plans, focussing on the TEO role...." [Exhibit BRO/10 - INQ000201813].

46. I sent a submission, which had been requested and approved by Chris Stewart, to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister on 30 January 2020. The submission asked the Ministers to note the Minister for Health was a member of COBR (F); note the current position (as outlined in the submission); note the decisions agreed at COBR (F) on 29 January 2020; and to note the suggested line to take. The submission also stated that the Minister of Health (NI) would provide an oral update at the next Executive meeting [Exhibit BRO/18 – INQ000279353].

47. On the evening of 30 January 2020, I received a telephone call from the Chief Medical Officer expressing his dissatisfaction that I had prepared and submitted this submission. I apologised for my error and explained that I had been asked to prepare and submit it by Chris Stewart and that Dr Naresh Chada, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, had provided input and seen the submission prior to me forwarding it to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister [Exhibit BRO/19 – INQ000469468]

48. The Chief Medical Officer, Dr Michael Mc Bride asked for some amendments to be made to the submission and asked me to ensure that Ministers were provided with the amended version. He advised me that all submissions to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and Executive should be cleared by him personally and that this should not happen again. I amended the submission as instructed and ensured with the Ministers' Private Offices that the updated version, including Dr Mc Bride's comments, was the correct version and the one that should be presented to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

49. On 30 January 2020, Dr Michael Mc Bride emailed asking me to confirm that my submission, dated 30 January 2020 to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister had been updated. He further commented, "Given the professional and technical nature of these papers as Chief Medical Officer I will wish to clear all future Executive papers while the Department of Health remains the Lead Government Department" [Exhibit BRO/19 INQ000469468], BRO/20 - INQ000469470]

50. I did not attend the Executive meeting on 3 February 2020, as I was not invited to attend. I understand from the minutes of the Executive meeting of 3 February 2020, that "The