

OFFICIAL – SENSITIVE - CABINET

Cabinet will wish to note that these minutes, except those items in italics, will be published in week commencing 25th January 2021

The Welsh Government
Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet
Wednesday 9th December 2020
(Teams)

Present: Rt. Hon. Mark Drakeford MS (Chair)
Rebecca Evans MS
Vaughan Gething MS
Lesley Griffiths MS
Julie James MS
Eluned Morgan MS
Ken Skates MS
Kirsty Williams MS
Jeremy Miles MS

Hannah Blythyn MS
Jane Hutt MS
Julie Morgan MS
Dafydd Elis Thomas MS
Lee Waters MS

Officials: Shan Morgan, Permanent Secretary
Des Clifford, Director General Office of the First Minister
Carys Evans, Principal Private Secretary First Minister
Will Whiteley, Deputy Director, Cabinet Division
Toby Mason, Head of Strategic Communications
Jane Runeckles, Special Adviser
Madeleine Brindley, Special Adviser
Alex Bevan, Special Adviser
Ian Butler, Special Adviser
Kate Edmunds, Special Adviser
NR Special Adviser
Paul Griffiths, Special Adviser
Clare Jenkins, Special Adviser
NR Special Adviser
Gareth Williams, Special Adviser
NR Special Adviser
Tom Woodward, Special Adviser
Christopher W Morgan (minutes)
NR Cabinet Secretariat
NR Specialist Policy Adviser
NR Specialist Adviser for Education Reform
Tracey Burke, Director General, Education and Public Services
Andrew Goodall, Director General, Health
Andrew Slade, Director General ESNR
Reg Kilpatrick, Director General COVID-19 Crisis Coordination
Frank Atherton, CMO
Rob Orford, Chief Scientific Adviser for Health

Dylan Hughes, First Legislative Counsel
Helen Lentle, Director Legal Services
Emma Watkins, Deputy Director Economic Policy
Duncan Hamer, Deputy Director Business
Tom Smithson, Deputy Director Restart
Liz Lalley, Deputy Director Recovery
Terry Kowal, Senior Legislative Counsel
Neil Buffin, Senior Lawyer

Item 1: COVID-19 Alert levels in Wales: A traffic light guide

- 1.1 The First Minister advised Ministers the purpose of the meeting was to consider proposals within the paper about further restrictions that may need to be put in place over the coming weeks, and specifically after Christmas, to help control the spread of the virus.
- 1.2 Any restrictions relating to COVID-19 would be for the purpose of preventing, protecting against, controlling or providing a public health response to the incidence, spread of infection or contamination. There must be a threat to public health and the restrictions had to be proportionate in what they were intending to achieve.
- 1.3 The First Minister invited the Chief Medical Officer to provide an overview of current transmission rates.
- 1.4 The number of cases were continuing to rise, with over 2,000 new infections being reported the previous day. There were now around 345 cases within every 100,000 of the population in Wales, which was above the infection rate prior to the start of the recent firebreak. Whereas, in Scotland the rate was just over 100 in 100,000 and in England around 150 in 100,000.
- 1.5 All Local Authorities in Wales, apart from Anglesey, were reporting increases in cases, and unfortunately fatalities were rising too. All this was putting pressure on hospitals.
- 1.6 Notwithstanding the possibility that recently introduced restrictions might bring about some stability, there was a concern that, with the likelihood of more people mixing for the five days around Christmas day, there would be a further significant increase in transmission rates during late December and early January. Therefore, it would be important for people to avoid mixing in the ten days before Christmas.

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- 1.7 The paper set out proposals for four Alert Levels in Wales, which mirrored some aspects of the systems in Scotland and England that had been shown to be effective. It was recommended, given the increase in transmission rates outlined by the CMO, that Ministers should agree, in principle, that Wales should enter Level Four restrictions from 28th December if transmission rates had not improved significantly before then. This possibility would need to be communicated to the public and businesses as soon as possible.
- 1.8 It was noted that there would be discussions with the health service on planning for increases in COVID-19 related admissions.
- 1.9 Cabinet agreed it was important to make public as soon as possible the further measures under consideration by the Government, to provide businesses with the time to prepare and for Ministers to set out what financial support would be available. It would also be important to give sufficient notice of the date restrictions would be lifted.
- 1.10 Ministers would now need to discuss these proposals with their stakeholders, in advance of a further Cabinet discussion the following afternoon, to facilitate an announcement on Friday.
- 1.11 In terms of the run up to Christmas, it was reported that two Local Authorities, Caerphilly and RCT, had decided to close schools from Wednesday 16th December. The Thursday and Friday of that week would allow staff to support TTP arrangements.
- 1.12 There would be a targeted communications plan focusing on peoples' behaviour before Christmas and highlighting the risks of people gathering. It would be important for businesses and the general public to understand that if there wasn't a significant decrease in virus transmission before Christmas, the Government would have no choice but to impose Level Four restrictions from 28th December.
- 1.13 It was agreed that Cabinet would convene again the following afternoon to finalise arrangements.