

OFFICIAL – SENSITIVE - CABINET

*Cabinet will wish to note that these minutes, except those items in italics, will be published in week commencing 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020*

**The Welsh Government  
Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet  
19<sup>th</sup> October 2020 (10:45am)**

Present: Rt. Hon. Mark Drakeford MS (Chair)  
Vaughan Gething MS  
Lesley Griffiths MS

Via video link: Rebecca Evans MS  
Julie James MS  
Eluned Morgan MS  
Ken Skates MS  
Kirsty Williams MS  
Jeremy Miles MS  
Jane Hutt MS (from item 5)

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

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

Rob Orford, Chief Scientific Adviser for Health (via video link)

Fliss Bennee, Co-Chair TAC (via video link)

Simon Brindle, Director Restart Coordination (via video link)

Helen Lentle, Director Legal Services (via video link)

Liz Lalley, Deputy Director Restart (via video link)

Terry Kowal, Office of Legislative Counsel (via video link)

**NR** Legal Services (via video link)

**NR** Legal Services (via video link)

Jo Trott, COVID-19 response (via video link)

Tom Smithson, COVID-19 response (via video link)

### **Item 1: Preparations for a proposed Fire-break**

- 1.1 The First Minister informed Cabinet that the main purpose of the meeting was to take a decision on whether to apply the proposed fire-break and consider whether Secondary Schools should remain open during this period.
- 1.2 Ministers were reminded that any restrictions put in place 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. The CMO was invited to give his view on the current situation.
- 1.3 For the first time during the second wave of infections, the incidence for Wales measured higher than 100 cases per 100,000 people. Of particular concern, was the rate of infection within the over 60s that was now 80 cases within 100,000, which was close to the rates seen in March.
- 1.4 The TAC advice was that there should be a comprehensive fire-break to prevent the exponential rise in cases, as single interventions were not likely to reduce the incidence. In addition, if schools were to remain open, then a wide range of other measures should be put in place. However, a limit on the number of pupils in schools would help reduce the rate of infection.
- 1.5 Ministers recognised that any lessening in the proposed restrictions would require a longer implementation period to bring about the required reduction in rate of transmission.
- 1.6 It was agreed that there would be a two week fire-break, starting at 6pm on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> October and ending on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November. It would be for the shortest possible period but it would have to be sharp and deep to have the maximum impact on the virus. Everyone in Wales would be required to stay at home. This would mean working from home wherever possible, with the exception of critical workers and those whose jobs prevented them from doing so. This reflected the lockdown in March. A longer period with less restrictions would not be affordable or sustainable.

- 1.7 *There would need to be clarity within the guidance about how those with disabilities could exercise and Local Authorities should be encouraged to keep public toilets open.*
- 1.8 Ministers agreed that it was important to consider the health and wellbeing of children and young people, and recognised that, whereas schools could be considered a safe environment, there was always the risk associated with young people continuing to mix in an unregulated environment after school.
- 1.9 Cabinet confirmed that childcare settings would stay open during the firebreak, while primary and special schools would re-open, as normal, after half-term. In terms of Secondary Schools, following the advice of the CMO and the TAC, it was agreed that they should re-open after the half-term for children in years seven and eight only.
- 1.10 Pupils would be able to attend schools to take exams but others would continue their learning from home for that week. This decision was based on the rationale that different provision would need to be established for young children of key workers, if it was not provided in school, and recognition that older children were able to better engage with distance learning. This also reflected the fact that any relaxation of restrictions would add to the marginal risk, and undermine the efficacy of the fire-break.
- 1.11 All Secondary School teachers would be expected to attend classrooms and provide online learning. *Teachers would be expected to undertake welfare checks on those pupils required to stay at home. There was likely to be a need for extra resources to provide free schools meals. It would be important to engage with teaching and non-teaching Trades Unions.*
- 1.12 *Guidance for Further Education Institutions would need to be updated to reflect the decision on Secondary Schools.*
- 1.13 Universities would continue to provide a blend of in person and on-line learning. It would be important for students to understand that the requirement for people to stay at home applied to them and they would have to remain within their designated accommodation, when not attending classes.
- 1.14 In terms of other matters, the First Minister was awaiting a response to his letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer seeking early access to the new expanded Job Support Scheme for Welsh businesses, which would avoid the need for them to apply to both the Job Retention Scheme and the Job Support Scheme during the fire-break period. Given the urgency, the Welsh Government had offered to pay the extra costs to help businesses retain staff.

- 1.15 The CMO was planning to write to all the people who were on the shielded list later that week to ensure they had the most up to date advice, *but was clear that they would not be asked to return to the same level of shielding as they were in March.* It would be important to engage with the BAME outreach workers and consider how best to communicate with the digitally excluded.
- 1.16 It was noted that Local Authorities would be responsible for administering the £500 payment to people who were to self-isolate and were on very low incomes. In addition, work was underway to review and regularise the different fixed penalty notices that had been introduced, to ensure that they were fair, proportionate and were being applied consistently.
- 1.17 Officials would now need to proceed with the decisions taken by Cabinet. It was noted *that the script that the First Minister would use at his press conference would be shared with Ministers,* and there would be further discussions later that week on introducing a new set of national measures for the whole of the country post fire-break.

***Officials to take into account comments made by Ministers***

Sections 35 & 36