

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING: 13 OCTOBER 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

Dr Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer
Prof Ian Young, Chief Scientific Adviser

INTRODUCTION

The First Minister chaired the first part of the meeting.

1. The First Minister advised that this additional Executive meeting had been convened in light of the extremely serious situation with regard to COVID-19.
2. The Minister for Infrastructure and the Minister of Justice expressed their concerns with regard to the late circulation of papers for the meeting.
3. The Minister for Infrastructure proposed that the meeting be adjourned. Following discussion, the meeting was adjourned to enable Ministers to consider the papers, and to engage as required with the Minister of Health, the Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Scientific Adviser.

4. The meeting was reconvened at 11.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 1

E (20) 243 (C)	Modelling the course of the COVID epidemic and the impact of different interventions and recommendations.
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5. The Minister of Health introduced, and the Executive discussed, this paper.
6. The Minister of Health advised that recommendations in the paper had been transcribed into the TEO Executive paper *E (20) 244 (C) - COVID-19 Consolidated Impact Assessment, and Proposals for Restrictions*, which would be considered separately at the meeting.

E (20) 244 (C)	COVID-19 Consolidated Impact Assessment, and Proposals for Restrictions
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7. The First Minister introduced, and the Executive discussed, this paper.
8. The deputy First Minister advised of amendments to elements of the Minister of Health's paper *E (20) 243 (C) - Modelling the course of the COVID epidemic and the impact of different interventions and recommendations*, which had been transcribed into this paper, including reference to sales of alcohol in off licenses and supermarkets ending at 8.00 p.m, and indoor shopping centres to remain open, but combined with urgent engagement with the retail sector to ensure that it was doing everything it could to help suppress the virus.

9. The Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs advised of his concerns regarding the absence of scientific basis for, and the impact of, proposed restrictions in relation to funerals and weddings.
10. The Minister of Justice recorded her concern that the proposals in the paper offered no exit strategy from what could not be a permanent state of existence for the economy.
11. The Minister for Infrastructure advised of her concern that the four week duration would increase the likelihood of another intervention being required in the month of Christmas.
12. The Minister for the Economy advised of her concerns regarding the impact of restrictions on the economy, with many sectors under threat of severe and lasting damage; and of her wish to engage with Ministers to explore the supports which may be provided.
13. The Minister for Communities advised that she would circulate a paper with information on social isolation and related support programmes for the Executive meeting of 15 October.
14. The First Minister advised that urgent engagement would be required with the Minister of Finance to consider a range of financial support interventions.
15. The Minister of Education advised of his concerns regarding the closure of schools, but that in recognition of the need to reduce transmission of the COVID-19 virus, and following discussion with the Minister of Health and the Chief Medical Officer, he had agreed that the half-term holiday break for schools should be extended from 19 – 30 October, with schools reopening on Monday 2 November. To ensure this, the Department of Education would allocate to schools two of the Optional Days and the remainder of the additional time through Exceptional Closure Days. As across other jurisdictions the issue of schools, along with other

considerations, would be kept under continuous review by the Executive in the weeks and months ahead.

16. The deputy First Minister emphasised that this was compromise proposal and that her preference was that schools would close for a four week period.
17. The proposal that schools should close for the two week period specified was agreed by the Executive.
18. The Minister for Infrastructure advised that she would engage with the Minister of Education in relation to school transport matters.
19. The Executive:
 - (i) considered the economic and societal impact assessment of the interventions proposed;
 - (ii) noted the scope, scale and limitations of the financial support mechanisms available;
 - (iii) agreed that interventions aimed at a major reduction in the rate of transmission were needed immediately; and
 - (iv) considered the options set out in the paper and agreed the proposals outlined in paragraph 4 of Executive Memorandum E (20) 244 (C).
20. The deputy First Minister advised that the Executive Information Service would develop and circulate lines to take, and that a statement on the Executive's decisions would be made to the Assembly the following morning.

E (20) 240 (C)

The Economic Impacts of Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions and the Way Forward

E (20) 240 (C)(a)

The Possible Economic Impact of new COVID-19 Restrictions

21. The Executive noted the issues raised in Executive Memorandum E (20) 240 (C) and E (20) 240 (C) (a).

The deputy First Minister chaired the remaining items on the agenda

AGENDA ITEM 2

E (20) 241 (C)

Additional - Support Scheme for Hospitality Businesses (in Derry City and Strabane Local Government District) directly affected by new Executive Regulations announced on 1 October 2020.

22. The Minister of Finance introduced this paper.
23. The Executive agreed:
- (i) the clarification of the eligibility rules for the scheme at paragraph 6 of Executive Memorandum E (20) 241 (C);
 - (ii) the addition of a third tier of payments as outlined at paragraph 7 of the Executive paper;
 - (iii) the implications for the estimated costs as outlined in paragraph 10 of the Executive paper; and
 - (iv) the Minister of Finance's response to the comments made by Executive colleagues.

Date of next meeting

24. The date of the next scheduled meeting of the Executive would be Thursday 15 October at 1.00 p.m.

