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MEMORANDUM E (21) 153 (C)

**FROM: FIRST MINISTER
 DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**

DATE: 8 JULY 2021

TO: EXECUTIVE COLLEAGUES

**FINAL EXECUTIVE PAPER: BUILDING FORWARD- CONSOLIDATED NI COVID
RECOVERY PLAN - UPDATE**

Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide an update to Executive Colleagues on the draft Building Forward – Consolidated Covid Recovery Plan. An updated draft of the Plan will be brought back for Executive consideration and approval later this month.

Detail

2. Over 160 stakeholders were invited to provide views on the draft Consolidated Covid Recovery Plan for here. Letters of invite issued providing a link to the Citizen Space Platform to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire, which was designed around the four recovery accelerators, closed for responses at 5pm on Friday 2 July 2021.
3. Stakeholders were also invited to attend information sessions to help answer queries in relation to the draft Plan. 22 organisations were represented at these sessions and there were 33 responses to the online questionnaire. A further six organisations provided feedback by email. Overall this represents a 24% response rate.

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4. At the Executive meeting on 24 June, Ministers were asked to provide their feedback on the draft recovery Plan. To date, feedback has been received from three Ministers.

Stakeholder feedback

5. In relation to Stakeholder feedback exercise, overall responders indicate they welcomed the Plan and the collaborative approach taken in the document. 76% of responders agree the 24 month period is the correct timeframe for focusing on accelerating recovery and two thirds indicate broad support for the identified accelerators as representing a foundation to build recovery upon.
6. A number of organisations call for greater alignment and read across with ongoing strategies, including ownership of actions and information on how the plan be implemented and measured.
7. Many highlighted the tight window for providing feedback. Officials recognise this and have given a commitment to continue to engage with stakeholders, highlighting that this exercise was the first step in what will be an ongoing process as we plan for implementation.
8. Much detailed feedback was provided for each of the recovery accelerator areas, which mostly represents stakeholders' calls for their specific areas of interest to be strengthened or more visible in the plan – this feedback will be more relevant as we progress to implementation.

Funding

9. A significant number of organisations raise funding of the Recovery Plan as a key issue and the need for prioritisation of actions in line with the available funding.

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10. At the time of producing the draft recovery Plan, the information available showed that the plan was 39% funded, 9% unfunded, leaving 52% of interventions with unconfirmed funding status.
11. Following allocation of June monitoring, Departments are actively reconsidering the funding position of their interventions for the current year and the funding position will be updated once this exercise is complete.
12. The Finance Minister wrote to Executive colleagues on 25 June in relation to the budget process for 2022-23 onwards. In that letter he noted that one of the most important aspects will be agreeing collective Executive priorities. If the delivery of the Recovery Plan is agreed as a funding priority in the short term this will pave the way for the implementation and delivery of the longer term outcomes through the Executive's Programme for Government outcomes.

Section 75 considerations

13. Some organisations state the need for Section 75 obligations to be fully discharged when developing necessary policy responses to Covid-19 to ensure they actively promote equality of opportunity and do not exacerbate inequalities. An exercise is ongoing to determine the status of Section 75 consideration at intervention level. Once this is complete, officials will engage with the Equality Commission to help ensure Section 75 obligations are fulfilled in relation to the Plan.

Next steps

14. Officials are engaging with Departments to review the draft Recovery Plan in light of stakeholder feedback. An amended draft Recovery Plan will be brought to the Executive for approval later in July. Further information on the funding position of the draft Recovery Plan will also be provided at that time.

Recommendation

15. It is recommended that the Executive:
 - note this update and that an amended draft Recovery Plan will be brought to the Executive for approval later this month; and

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- provide written feedback on the draft Recovery Plan if not already done.

PAUL GIVAN MLA

First Minister

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