

Meeting of 11 May 2021

Attending: First Minister, deputy First Minister, Jenny Pyper, Stephen McGlade, Philip Weir, Donal Moran, Deirdre Griffith, NR

- **Prime Minister call scheduled for 12 May** – Jenny indicated her willingness to join the call in support of Ministers and provided an update on her call with the Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary, James Bowler, the day before. UKG plan to initiate a judge-led review on lessons learned post-Covid and were seeking views on the inclusion of NI; Scotland and Wales have indicated that they would wish to be included in this review. Jenny rehearsed the pros and cons of involvement, including the likely need for such work to be undertaken in any event and the cost of going solo. Jenny also suggested that any future funding which may be available from HMT may be predicated on the UK-wide review. FM was supportive of NI's involvement; dFM agreed that a review was required but would wish to see further details on terms of reference before making any firm decision. She also suggested that we might also wish to initiate a complementary review bespoke to NI.
- **HOCS competition** – Jenny provided a status update on the progression of the recruitment competition.
- **TEO Permanent Secretary** – Jenny advised that she will invite expressions of interest for this position from the current Permanent Secretary cohort later this week with a tight turnaround on a decision on the most suitable candidate. This will begin the process of the envisaged restructuring of TEO and the HOCS/Perm Sec split of duties, and the establishment of a Grade 5 led Think-Tank which will provide an agile response to issues such as those seen recently in Violence Against Women and Girls, Travel Agents Support Scheme and the Building Safety oversight. Jenny will keep Ministers appraised of progress.
- **Recovery Strategy** – Jenny outlined the progress to date and explained that proposals will be mapped through four areas to drive recovery: labour market interventions; inequalities, health of the population; and green growth and sustainability. FM raised the growing pressure from **Hospitality Ulster**(HU) in relation to an earlier date for reopening of indoor hospitality. While decisions to date have been taken largely on advice from DOH/CMO/CSO, any such decision may be a political judgement call. Jenny counselled against meeting HU in advance of any Executive decision around restrictions.
- **Executive meeting this week**- FM was keen to see any risks on relaxations quantified in order to support decisions; dFM advised that all risk factors, including economic and social, should be factored in to any decision. dFM also shared her view that she is not convinced of the need for a 'pilot' event; FM said that the issue of adherence at large events should be more the focus given that we have not yet returned to normality in this regard.