

**FROM: CHRIS STEWART  
DIRECTOR, EXECUTIVE SUPPORT & PROGRAMME FOR  
GOVERNMENT**

**DATE: 24 August 2020**

**TO: PS/FIRST MINISTER  
PS/DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**

copy recipients listed below

**C3 COVID-19 RESPONSE – LESSONS LEARNED REVIEW AND FUTURE  
ROADMAP**

**Summary**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>A review of the civil contingencies arrangements for managing the response to Covid 19 has identified key learning points.</b>
<b>Timing</b>	<b>Routine</b>
<b>Fol implications</b>	<b>This submission is likely to be disclosed if requested.</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>I recommend that Ministers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>• note the content of the report and covering note; and</b></li><li><b>• agree that the forthcoming review of civil contingencies arrangements should identify options for revised civil contingencies policy and operational arrangements, for consideration by the Executive.</b></li></ul>

**Background**

1. In May 2020 Dr Andrew McCormick was asked by the NI Hub Chief of Staff, Anthony Harbinson<sup>1</sup>, to sponsor an important piece of work to review the lessons learned from the deployment of the C3 structures to manage the Northern Ireland

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony has now returned to his substantive post in the Department for Justice. The Civil Contingencies Policy Branch is headed by Andy Cole (Grade 5) reporting to me.

response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and how these lessons learned could shape the future roadmap for our civil contingency capability.

2. I attach copies of Andrew's covering note to Permanent Secretaries (Annex A) and the report itself (Annex B).
3. I endorse the Report and the conclusions in Andrew's covering note. Over the past year, the C3 arrangements have successfully adapted and responded to two very different (and unprecedented) sets of challenges: the potential for a no-deal Brexit; and the Covid-19 pandemic. The key lesson is that success was a triumph of people over process: it stemmed from the efforts of all those involved in responding to the challenges, whilst overcoming the inherent weaknesses and lack of resilience in the C3 arrangements, which had been largely unchanged for some years.
4. Going forward, it is clear that we need to crystallise the progress made, and retain sufficient capacity, flexibility and resilience to mount a response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, any challenges emerging from the end of the Brexit transition period, any other reasonably foreseeable contingencies, and an element of the unknown.
5. Some of the lessons learned need to be implemented quickly. This is underway, and will be a priority within the Executive Office's business planning. However, it is clear from the report that some more fundamental change may be required, and that the successful management of civil contingencies risks requires revised arrangements that are endorsed and prioritised by the Executive, with appropriate resourcing. With that in mind, I have asked Andy Cole to carry out a root and branch review of civil contingencies arrangements, including the role, functions, and capacity of the Civil Contingencies Policy Branch, and the C3 operational arrangements in light of the lessons learned report; and to bring forward options for consideration by Ministers. Subject to your agreement, a paper will be prepared for the Executive in due course.

### ***Recommendations***

6. I recommend that Ministers:
  - note the content of the report and covering note; and
  - agree that the forthcoming review of civil contingencies arrangements should identify options for revised civil contingencies policy and operational arrangements for consideration by the Executive.

Personal Data

**CHRIS STEWART**

cc    **PS/Minister Lyons**  
      **PS/Minister Kearney**  
      **David Sterling**  
      **Andrew McCormick**  
      **Karen Pearson**  
      **Peter Toogood**  
      **Andy Cole**  
      **Alison Clydesdale**