

EXECUTIVE COVID CRISIS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MONDAY 23 MARCH 2020 AT 10.00AM

Senate Chamber Parliament Buildings and via dial in

Note for file

First Minister, deputy First Minister, Junior Minister Lyons, Junior Minister Kearney, Finance Minister, Economy Minister, Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister, Communities Minister, Infrastructure Minister (via dial-in) David Sterling (DS), Anthony Harbinson (AH), Karen Pearson (KP)

1. Sitrep

The committee noted that the sitrep was currently being formatted and will be presented on 24 March.

Departments were asked to ensure their DOC were up and running.

There was a discussion on staffing difficulties with the Hub. It was noted that meetings are taking place with consultancy firms to provide specialist skills. It was agreed that NICS HR will centrally coordinate staff, and engage with trade unions, in order to deliver services with public service workers as much as possible.

DS provided an update of the CCG meeting, which did not escalate anything for decision.

It was noted that DoF have awarded a contract for significant provision of PPE.

There was a discussion about the use of testing kits produced by private businesses, including by Randox, and it was agreed that further clarity would be sought urgently, including on NICE guidelines.

PSNI had reported no particular difficulties. There had been a drop in arrests, but there were concerns at indications of an increase in domestic abuse and problems of child protection due to enforced social isolation.

There was a discussion on grants to businesses. It was reported that payments were close to being issued but there was a need for data to be verified and for a system for people to register their bank details.

DE had reported that 570 schools will open today. 800 are willing to open but are not yet ready. The Committee noted that there was a judicial review by 55 schools

questioning the validity of the decision to open, and that issues around the key worker policy which will be discussed in ECCMC this week.

DfC had reported a drop in the numbers of civil servants and a steep escalation in demands for benefits. There was a discussion about ensuring staff who are unable to work from home are protected.

It was agreed that there would be an update on testing on 24 March.

2. Actions from previous meetings

It was noted that the public messaging campaign contract had been awarded and that a creative was to be sent to Ministers today.

It was agreed that the press conference should, as far as possible, be held at the same time every day.

3. Update

The Junior Ministers advised that the Assembly is establishing an ad hoc committee on COVID 19 which will be able to sit on non-sitting days in the Assembly chamber.

4. Mitigation of economic impact

There was a discussion on the Economy Minister's presentation on the mitigation of the economic impact.

It was agreed that the announcement on agency workers should happen as soon as possible.

The Infrastructure Minister noted support for relaxation of enforcement of drivers' hours regulations and for Rathlin islanders' appeal for a cessation of non-essential travel to the island.

It was noted that it was not yet possible to extend MOTs but urgent discussions with DfT were ongoing, and the Infrastructure Minister planned to announce the suspension of MOTs for lorries and buses.

Action No.	Meeting date	Subject	Action	Owner
9	23/03/20	Staffing	All departments to ensure their DOCs are operational and feeding in to the Hub sitrep	All Permanent Secretaries
10	23/03/20	Staffing	David Sterling to discuss central coordination of staffing with NICS HR to ensure appropriate deployment of available public service staff, including engagement with trade unions.	David Sterling
11	23/03/20	Business grants	Finance and Economy Ministers to coordinate announcement of small business grant once data has been verified	Min Dodds Min Murphy