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READOUT | NI Secretary-FM/DFM, 4 November

3 messages

SOS Lewis <sos.lewis@nio.gov.uk> 4 November 2020 at 16:23

To: Senior Leadership Team <slt@nio.gov.uk>, Deputy Directors <Deputy_Directors@nio.gov.uk>, Irrelevant & Sensitive I&S @nio.gov.uk>, I&S Irrelevant & Sensitive @nio.gov.uk>, PS

SOS <ps.sos@nio.gov.uk>

Hi all

Please see below. Thanks to **NR** for coordinating the briefing.

NR

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Actions:

I&S

- **Fiscal team** - SOS committed to update FM/DFM "within the next 24 hours" on any further Barnett consequentials uplift. **Grateful if we can chase HMT and provide an update to PO for 3pm tomorrow.**
- **Political affairs** - Grateful for an update on the NI hub that DFM mentioned. I will chase on them on a response to our letter on the Fiscal Council and NDNA commitments from Fri when they are due to respond.

READOUT | 4 NOVEMBER, NI SECRETARY-FM/DFM

Attendees

- Secretary of State for NI
- First Minister
- Deputy First Minister

Secretary of State asked for an update on COVID-19 situation in NI.

First Minister said that they were in discussions at the moment with the Health Minister and NI CMO and CSO.

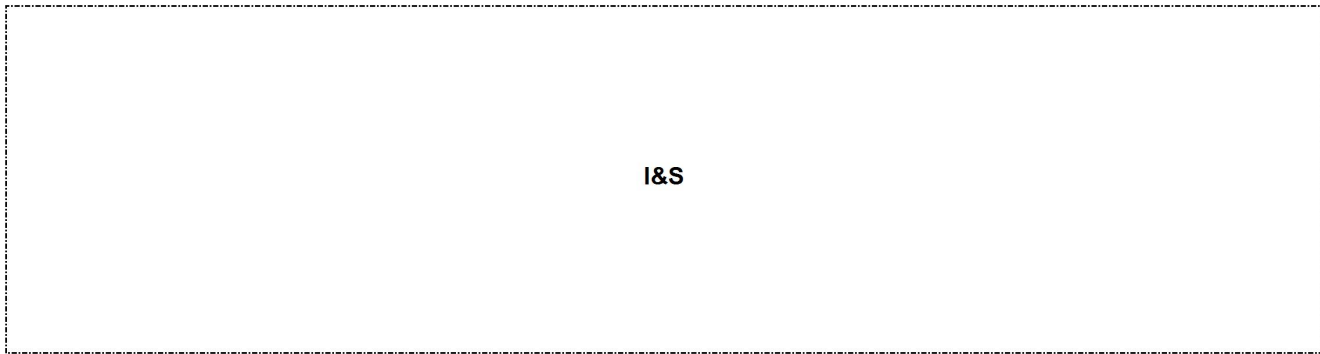
Deputy First Minister said that NI hospitals were currently seeing an increase in occupancy but it was too early to say definitively on cases.

Secretary of State questioned whether they had any feedback on how restrictions had worked so far.

First Minister said that they felt that the restrictions had had an impact, but the concern was now about the lead up to Xmas. He said that they were trying to find a way that did not damage the NHS but ensured that people's livelihoods were protected.

Secretary of State noted a few UK MP colleagues had not fully appreciated the lag effect on hospital occupancy rates and the impact of the doubling case rates. He asked whether the NI Executive would look at extending restrictions a bit further.

First Minister said it was too early to say at the minute. She said that they would watch the Welsh situation closely, however noted the difficulties around the definition of essential/non-essential businesses. She then asked for an update on Brexit

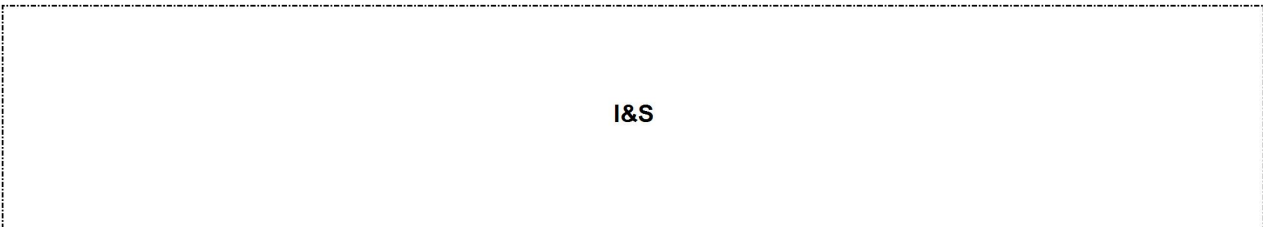


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Deputy First Minister asked for further detail on Barnett Consequentials for COVID funding.

First Minister said that CST had acknowledged that, on the back of the TFL support package, some Barnett would need an uplift.

Secretary of State confirmed that he would chase on the Barnett figures and aim to provide an answer within 24hrs.



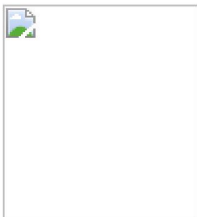
I&S

First Minister asked whether the establishment of the Fiscal Council would be a condition for future funding requests.

Secretary of State said that was not necessarily the case, however he pointed out that the NI block grant (£14.8bn), COVID funding (£2.4bn) and NDNA commitments (£2bn) was a significant amount of money and that HMT will want to know how that money was being spent. He said that the Independent Fiscal Council was an important part of the transparency measures in NDNA and noted the similar bodies in both the UK and Ireland.

DFM confirmed that the Department of Finance was bringing the papers on the Fiscal Council to the Executive shortly.

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NR	PS)	I&S
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MaryJo McKeever <maryjo.mckeever@nio.gov.uk> 5 November 2020 at 13:34
To: SOS Lewis <sos.lewis@nio.gov.uk> [redacted] NR [redacted]@nio.gov.uk>
Cc: [redacted] NR [redacted]@nio.gov.uk>, Economy Strategy Team <economy.strategy@nio.gov.uk>

Hi [redacted] NR [redacted]

Please see update on the hubs below, with thanks to [redacted] NR [redacted] and team for their input.

Scope the establishment of a Northern Ireland hub in London - discussions with NICS officials have been paused since the COVID outbreak, with the continuing pandemic likely to impact accomodation plans and thinking for both the NIO and NICS.

Explore creation of a UK Government hub in Northern Ireland - this was discussed at the 10th UPI meeting on 27th October. There was a sense that the NI hub should open as soon as practical, following the recent opening of Queen Elizabeth House in Edinburgh. The Erskine House building, which is planned to host HMRC officials, is under construction and near completion. The impact of COVID may continue to delay progress due to the uncertainty of post-COVID accommodation needs and working practices.

MaryJo McKeever

Head of Political Strategy
Political Affairs Group

[redacted] I&S [redacted]

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From: **SOS Lewis** <sos.lewis@nio.gov.uk>
Date: Wed, 4 Nov 2020 at 16:24
Subject: READOUT | NI Secretary-FM/DFM, 4 November
To: Senior Leadership Team <slt@nio.gov.uk>, Deputy Directors <Deputy_Directors@nio.gov.uk> [redacted] I&S [redacted]
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