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MEMORANDUM E (20) 276 (C)

FROM: FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

TO: EXECUTIVE

DATE: 3 DECEMBER 2020

FINAL EXECUTIVE PAPER: THE EXECUTIVE COVID TASKFORCE (ECT)

Introduction

Following the Executive meeting on 26 November, First Minister and deputy First Minister wrote to Executive colleagues setting out a way forward on the management of Covid-19 as we move into 2021, particularly as our focus will increasingly be on Recovery.

2. Draft Terms of Reference for the Executive's Taskforce are attached for discussion. The Terms of Reference can be refined in light of the discussion.

Recommendation

3. The Executive is invited to:

- Discuss the attached Terms of Reference.

**The Rt Hon Arlene Foster MLA
First Minister**

**Michelle O'Neill MLA
deputy First Minister**

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Draft

Terms of Reference – Executive COVID Taskforce

Purpose

1. The overall purpose of the Executive's Covid Taskforce is to provide ongoing support to the response to the pandemic as we move through the next 6 months. It will help improve clarity of mission, co-ordination of activities, and provide an holistic approach to communication. The Executive's Taskforce will also co-ordinate a whole of Government strategy on recovery going forward in terms of rebuilding the economy and societal well-being. The Taskforce will build on, rather than replace, existing delivery arrangements.
2. The Taskforce will be chaired by the interim Head of the Civil Service and will support the key operational departments to ensure a coherent and comprehensive response to delivery. This will provide support to the Department of Health which leads the Executive's public health response, to the Department for the Economy and the Department for Communities in line with the Executive's strategic priorities for Covid-19: health and wellbeing, protecting the economy and protecting societal wellbeing. Other Departments will be included given the strategic importance of maintaining education, ensuring adherence and compliance to messaging, and maintaining critical infrastructure.
3. The Taskforce will provide a bridge between the overall collective effort and Executive priorities, and will provide a high level umbrella structure for the programme of activities. In that space, the Taskforce will operate as a delivery support mechanism, will provide the Executive with assurance, and will have a clear focus on strategic recovery.
4. The Taskforce will do this by providing practical co-ordination, support, and management of the central strategic arrangements within Executive departments, local government and public sector agencies around the COVID-19 test, track and trace; vaccination strategy and implementation plan; mass community testing; adherence and compliance; and strategic communications. It will have a clear focus on the overall Recovery effort.

Objectives

5. The Taskforce will seek to focus on 4 key areas initially and will keep this under review:-

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Adherence and compliance:

- Understanding the challenges with compliance
- Co-ordination of efforts and adoption of a strategic approach between relevant agencies and sectors in order to promote and encourage behavioural change within the community through non-pharmaceutical measures which increase public compliance, and contain and control the spread of the virus.
- Developing related communications and policy interventions
- Strategic public facing sectoral engagement

Protecting the public

- Planning and delivery of mass population interventions:
 - vaccines
 - testing
- Developing and legislating for any residual restrictions required

Strategic communications

- Clear daily Executive Covid message
- Aligned communication across Departments
- Additional Covid-specific support for in-house EIS and Departmental teams as needed
- Accessible, coordinated across Government, public facing communications

Recovery

- Economic and societal recovery will be central to Taskforce work
- Broader health recovery
- Alignment with delivery of the Executive's PfG framework
- External expertise and input as required

Membership

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6. The Taskforce will be chaired by Interim HOCS with attendance from DoH, TEO, DfE and DfC and other Departments, as required. Work stream leads will be identified/appointed for the 4 key delivery areas noted above and may draw on external expertise as necessary to encourage constructive challenge and assurance, as well as innovative thinking, building on lessons learned from other logistical initiatives. The Recovery workstream will be critical to help give confidence and certainty to the wider economy and society as we move through 2021 and may also draw on wider expertise from the private sector.

Modus operandi/reporting

7. The Taskforce will meet shortly to agree priorities and ways of working and thereafter meet fortnightly to receive progress reports from the 4 workstreams and discuss further actions, next steps etc. It will provide an opportunity to streamline existing groups without duplicating effort. It will receive updates from such groups and ensure joined up communications and actions across other relevant Departments. It will report formally to the Executive, on a monthly basis, on the development and implementation of the overall strategy and delivery of this approach.
8. Appropriate governance arrangements for the work of the Taskforce will be put in place. In Project Management terms the Taskforce will act as an overall Programme Board, with specific projects reporting progress. There will be some standardising of reporting and risk management to the Executive, however workstream leads will remain responsible for overall delivery, governance and accountability of their activities.

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