

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING: 1 JULY 2021

MEETING CONDUCTED VIA ZOOM

Present: First Minister (Chair)
deputy First Minister (Chair)
Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Minister for Communities
Minister of Education
Minister for the Economy
Minister of Finance
Minister of Health
Minister for Infrastructure
Minister of Justice

In attendance: Junior Minister, TEO (Mr. Middleton)
Junior Minister, TEO (Mr. Kearney)

Interim Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service
Head of Executive and Central Advisory Division
Sir Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer
Professor Ian Young, Chief Scientific Adviser

INTRODUCTION

The deputy First Minister chaired agenda items 1 - 4.

AGENDA ITEM 1

E (M) (21) 35 **Minutes of the Executive Meeting of 24 June 2021**

1. The Executive agreed the minutes of the Executive meeting of 24 June 2021.

AGENDA ITEM 2

Covid-19 Report by the Minister of Health

2. The Minister of Health provided an update on the vaccination programme and plans to increase vaccine uptake among younger age groups. He noted that JCVI were considering whether a booster vaccine should be provided in the autumn, and whether under 18s should be offered vaccinations

3. The Chief Scientific Advisor gave a presentation on, and the Executive discussed, statistical data relating to the pandemic. He noted the recent substantial rise in positive cases and test positivity, and increases of varying degrees being recorded across all age groups, with the delta variant now dominant. He also advised of increases in infection rates across all local government areas, and provided comparisons of positivity rates with England, Scotland and Wales. He advised that hospitalisation rates remained low, but had increased (from 1 admission per day four weeks ago to around 3.5 admissions per day currently) and were likely to continue to increase in coming weeks. An update on the modelling was provided, with the CSA noting that the trend now slightly exceeded the central scenario. He also explained new modelling demonstrating the benefits of an 85% vaccine uptake rate against a 90% vaccine update rate, noting that a 5% increase in uptake was modelled to have a significant impact in reducing the number of infections. In summary, the CSA advised that there would be a further wave of infections; that further relaxations would likely increase infection rates; and that poor enforcement of and adherence to existing regulations and restrictions was an issue of concern.

4. In response to the CSA update, Ministers noted the importance of consistent messaging and communication in encouraging vaccine uptake (including second doses), and particularly among younger age groups. It was agreed that Patricia Donnelly would be invited to update the Executive Committee on the vaccination programme.

AGENDA ITEM 3

Actions from previous meetings

5. The deputy First Minister advised that the action log had been circulated. The Minister for Infrastructure requested that the Executive discuss access to GP and dental surgeries at a future meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 4

COVID Management

Executive COVID Taskforce – update

6. The Secretary to the Executive advised that the ECT Dashboard and the weekly written update on the Executive COVID Taskforce had been circulated to Ministers. She explained that discussions were ongoing with stakeholders concerning the Covid Recovery Plan, and advised that funding was in place or in the process of being secured for all but a relatively small number of the proposed interventions

E (21) 149 (C) Ratification of Decision for Further Easements from 5 July

7. The Minister of Health introduced this paper which was discussed by the Executive.
8. Following discussion, the Executive agreed:
 - i. From 2 July, the cap on outdoor gatherings will be removed and the maximum number permitted will be determined by the risk assessment carried out for the venue.
 - ii. From 5 July all gatherings, indoors and outdoors (not including domestic settings) will only be subject to a risk assessment if they have more than 15 participants for indoors, or more than 30 participants for outdoors.
 - iii. Live music will be permitted in licensed and unlicensed hospitality businesses that sell or provide food and/or drink for consumption on the premises. This will be at ambient level only to allow conversation at normal levels and with suitable mitigations in place, such as screens.

- iv. Music will be permitted at outdoor events with no restriction on volume.
- v. The number of households permitted to meet outdoors at private dwellings will be increased from 3 to 5, with the maximum number of people remaining at 15, including children.
- vi. A restart of overnight residential stays for children and young people across all sectors.
- vii. To carry out a review of the current position on the Pathway out of Restrictions and at next week's Executive meeting will consider the sequencing of further relaxations and the process by which it is hoped to move forward over the summer, in line with the most up-to-date data.

The First Minister chaired the remainder of the agenda.

AGENDA ITEM 5

Other issues requiring Executive agreement

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Irrelevant & Sensitive

AGENDA ITEM 6

Note of Urgent Decision

Irrelevant & Sensitive

AGENDA ITEM 7

Any Other Business

Plans for Executive meetings during summer – Department of Justice

13. The Minister of Justice asked for an update on plans for Executive meetings over the summer. The Secretary to the Executive advised that a paper providing an update on Executive processes, and a schedule of meetings for July and August would be provided at the next meeting. .

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Date of next meeting

17. The next scheduled meeting of the Executive would take place on Thursday 8 July 2021.