

**From the Minister of Finance**

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Dear Arlene and Michelle

**TEO EXECUTIVE PAPER - MOVING FORWARD: THE EXECUTIVE'S PATHWAY  
OUT OF RESTRICTIONS - DOCUMENT FOR DISCUSSION**

Thank you for your Executive paper of 28 February providing the Executive's Pathway out of Restrictions document for discussion at today's meeting.

If we are to stop the virus surging again as we relax the restrictions, we need good compliance with the regulations that remain in place. Financial assistance for those affected by the continuing restrictions is also essential to maintaining compliance. We need to be able to deliver that financial assistance at the same time as putting the roadmap in place. Therefore, as we roll it out the roadmap we must ensure that it takes account of practical issues around delivery of the business support schemes and it is therefore welcome that this latest version is more simplified especially around retail and close contact services.

However there still remains some practical issues with the lifting of restrictions with regard to how the Localised Restrictions Support Scheme (LRSS) operates and the need for clarity around the proposals.

This includes concerns with regard to the need for clarity around premises that cannot sell alcohol. The wording for Phase 2 under Hospitality mentions that 'Premises where alcohol cannot be consumed...' can re-open for indoor and outdoor table service – we need to be clear about whether this is to be interpreted as licensed premises would not be allowed to re-open, or licensed premises would be allowed to re-open but would not be able to sell alcohol. The distinction here is crucial for both enforcement and the targeting of continued financial support.

Furthermore, the data in the licensing system cannot be easily matched with other systems to distinguish between licensed and unlicensed restaurants. As such, it will only be possible to differentiate licensed and unlicensed cafes and restaurants for the purpose of correctly targeting the LRSS funding if we commit large numbers of staff to undertake an intensive manual exercise that may take several weeks to complete and will delay the payment of support. This will inevitably draw negative commentary on the coherence of the Executive's plan.

As an Executive, we also need to clarify the expectations around when support payments will cease as the restrictions are relaxed. It is my officials' understanding that as soon as a business type is permitted to re-open, the support payments should stop. Therefore, support payments to close contact and retail would stop even if there are requirements around maximum numbers in their establishments for example.

There are other cases where the issues are more difficult. For example, is it expected that a hospitality business should continue to receive financial support under the LRSS if it is legally allowed to re-open for outdoor table service but cannot do so due to the lack of suitable outdoor space? There are concerns around the practicalities of this, since the only option for providing support to these businesses would be through self-declaration by the applicant, bringing the associated risks of fraudulent claims.

The paper states that the Executive has provided over £370 million of lifeline support to over 30,000 businesses – however this figure seems to exclude a significant amount of business support provided by the Executive, including my Department's LRSS which has provided £185 million in support to businesses to date.

Finally as the roadmap is converted into Health Protection regulations, there must be close engagement with DoF and DfE officials to ensure that the financial assistance can be effectively administered to support the restrictions.

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**Personal Data**

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