

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING: 6 SEPTEMBER 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)**
 - 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**
 - Dame Brenda King, Attorney General for Northern Ireland**

INTRODUCTION

The deputy First Minister chaired agenda items 1 - 3.

1. The deputy First Minister welcomed Dr Jayne Brady to her first meeting as Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service and Secretary to the Executive. **Irrelevant & Sensitive**

Irrelevant & Sensitive

AGENDA ITEM 1

Covid-19 Report by the Minister of Health

2. The Minister of Health provided an update on the consideration of plans to vaccinate 12-15 year olds, advising that the UK's four Chief Medical Officers will engage with stakeholders to consider whether vaccination should be extended to this age group.
3. The Chief Scientific Advisor gave a presentation on, and the Executive discussed, statistical data relating to the pandemic. He noted a recent modest fall in case numbers and hospital admissions but advised that there would likely be an increase by the end of the month as the return of schools and universities took effect. He explained that updated modelling had been developed based on a number of assumptions, including the impact of the return to school and universities and vaccine uptake rates.
4. A number of Ministers expressed concern at the handling of the return to school, and asked whether clear guidance could be provided for schools. The Minister of Education explained that additional funding will be provided to schools to assist with contact tracing and noted that the Public Health Agency planned to issue advice to school principals on how to operate the guidance.

AGENDA ITEM 2

Actions from previous meetings

5. The deputy First Minister advised that the action log had been circulated.

AGENDA ITEM 3

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 noted that a roundtable meeting was planned with the CMO, local government and Public Health Agency to progress discussions on adherence. She also

provided an update on the NICS New Way of Working project, noting that each department should be in a position by December to fully implement a New Ways of Working strategy.

**E (21) 172 (C) Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions)
Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021: Sixth Review of the
Need for the Restrictions**

7. The Minister of Health introduced this paper.

8. The Executive agreed that :

- i. the requirement in regulation 2 for a review of the need for the restrictions and requirements in the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (“the 2021 Regulations”) had been duly met;
- ii. the current restrictions and requirements in the 2021 Regulations, as amended, were at this point in time an appropriate and necessary response to the serious and imminent threat to public health which is posed by the incidence and spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) in Northern Ireland;
- iii. overall the restrictions and requirements imposed by these Regulations continued to be proportionate to what the Regulations seek to achieve, which is a public health response to that infectious disease threat;
- iv. the regulations are reviewed again in 4 weeks’ time on 30 September.

**E (21) 177 (C) COVID 19 - Ratification of Relaxation of Decisions:
domestic settings indoors, house parties, raves, night
clubs, hospitality, face coverings, working from home,
socially distance, live music/dancing, risk assessments**

9. The deputy First Minister introduced this paper.

10. Following discussion, the Executive agreed:

- i. **Domestic indoor settings:** the maximum number of people who may meet indoors in a domestic setting is increased to 15 from up to 4 households.
- ii. **Hospitality settings:** the current requirement for table service will be eased, both indoors and outdoors, to enable customers to go to the bar to place orders or pay. However, in indoor settings, customers will still be required to return to their table in order to consume their food or drink. The prohibition on standing to consume food and drink outdoors will be removed in outdoor settings. The hospitality sector will need to consider how best to manage the movement and queueing of customers to mitigate risk. In addition, the requirement to wear face coverings while not seated indoors will continue.
- iii. The prohibition on movement and standing to allow customers to play darts, pool, gaming machines etc is removed.
- iv. **Music and dancing:** in relation to indoor, live performance events (concerts and gigs) the requirements for tickets to be purchased in advance and allocated seating is removed. However customers must still be seated and the requirement to record contact details for all attendees continues.
- v. The current restriction on music to background or ambient levels where that restriction currently applies is removed.
- vi. The current restriction on dancing in indoor settings is removed insofar as it applies to post wedding and civil partnership celebrations.
- vii. **Working from home:** while the message to work from home where possible and appropriate remains, the Executive would encourage employers to plan for a return to the workplace with consideration of mitigations to control the spread of the virus and engagement with employees and their representatives on the beneficial use of flexible working where appropriate.

11. The First Minister recorded that the DUP supported moving the requirement for social distancing from regulations to guidance for seated indoor venues, indoor attractions and shops and enclosed shopping centres; and that it also supported withdrawing messaging to work from home.

The First Minister chaired the remaining items in the agenda

AGENDA ITEM 4

Other issues requiring Executive agreement

**E (21) 171 Progress to address Domestic and Sexual Abuse and
Executive funding for cross-cutting initiatives**

Irrelevant & Sensitive

E (21) 175 Building Safety Programme

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Irrelevant & Sensitive

E (21) 176

Afghan Refugees

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Irrelevant & Sensitive

AGENDA ITEM 5

Any Other Business

Ministerial Advisory Panel on Infrastructure

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Outstanding papers

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Irrelevant & Sensitive

EU Exit

AGENDA ITEM 6

EU Exit Action Log

Irrelevant & Sensitive

AGENDA ITEM 7

E (EU) (21) 174

EU Exit Dashboard

Irrelevant & Sensitive

AGENDA ITEM 8

E (EU) (21) 173

**Update on NI Medicines Discontinuations
(for discussion)**

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Irrelevant & Sensitive

AGENDA ITEM 9

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Date of next meeting

The date of the next scheduled meeting of the Executive is Thursday 9 September.