

## PERMANENT SECRETARIES' STOCKTAKE

**Minutes of meeting on Friday 13 March 2020, 8.45am  
Executive Room, Stormont Castle**

**1. Present: David Sterling Chair**

Peter May  
Derek Baker  
Richard Pengelly  
Hugh Widdis  
Sue Gray  
Mike Brennan  
Neill Jackson  
Jill Minne  
Tracy Meharg  
Chris Stewart  
Mark Browne  
Chris McNabb

**Apologies**

Katrina Godfrey  
Brenda King  
Andrew McCormick  
Denis McMahon

**In attendance:**

Karen Pearson (for Andrew McCormick) Alex Gordon (for  
Brenda King), Julie Thompson (for Katrina Godfrey),  
Robert Huey (for Denis McMahon), NR  
(Secretary)

**2. Minutes of 6 March 2020 Meeting**

The minutes were agreed.

**3. Matters Arising**

Updates on matters arising from the previous meeting were provided.

**4. Executive and Assembly update**

Neill Jackson provided details of current Executive issues and updated the Board on papers that may be tabled at the Executive Meeting on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March. There was some discussion on the possibility of a special Executive Meeting to discuss the Budget w/c 16 March with a further possibility of a follow-up meeting w/c 23 March. Sue Gray advised that she will speak to her Minister and propose for the Minister to write to

FM/dFM on the potential of a special Executive Meeting to discuss the budget.

**Action: Sue Gray**

5. **Covid-19 Update**

David Sterling opened the discussion advising that Covid-19 is top priority for the NICS. He noted that there will be a CCG (NI) meeting w/c 16 March with the possibility of attendance by FM and dFM. David asked all Permanent Secretaries to revisit their cumulative impacts and resilience plans for their department in the event of an impact on the NICS.

**Action: All**

David also highlighted that communication is key regarding Covid-19 and that a core script on key issues should be issued to Ministers. Chris McNabb advised that he's working on an updated core script and this will issue to Ministers shortly.

**Action: Chris McNabb**

David proposed the setting up new two teams. One to deal with cumulative impact on essential services and the other on coordinating resilience planning. It was suggested that the Operation Delivery Profession (DfC) would lead on essential services with Civil Contingency Branch (TEO) leading on coordination.

**Action: Tracy Meharg  
/ Chris Stewart**

Tracy Meharg raised the issue of hand sanitiser being provided for all NICS buildings. Permanent Secretaries agreed they would liaise with their departmental services branch to ensure that sanitiser is being ordered.

**Action: All**

There was discussion on each Permanent Secretary issuing a note to their department to update and reassure staff that the NICS is taking forward all precautionary matters in relation to Covid-19. NICS HR advice on Covid-19 should issue along with the note.

**Action: All**

Richard Pengelly provided an update on the latest Covid-19 position and advised that there was no change to the cases in NI as of this morning and advised that everyone should adhere to the advice from Public Health Agency (PHA).

Derek Baker raised the issue on the differential position of school closures north and south regarding Covid-19. Richard Pengelly advised that he

would issue a note to Derek explaining the understanding on the relative position.

**Action: Richard Pengelly**

6. **HOCS update**

David Sterling noted the publication of the RHI report today. Sue Gray advised that her Minister will bring a paper to the Executive on Monday to discuss the findings.

7. **Tour de Table**

**TEO**

HOCS Office to issue HOCS NDNA presentation to PSS.

**Action: HOCS Office**

David to meet with Leslie Hogg to discuss Assembly business.

**Action: HOCS Office**

Note to issue to staff on the RHI findings on behalf of the NICS Board.

**Action: HOCS Office**

Mark Browne advised on the impact of timeframes to Victims and HIA payments.

**DSO**

Hugh Widdis alerted Perm Secs to the current pressures within legal advisory legal services.

**DoF**

Jill Minne advised that a formal pay offer had been made to FDA and NIPSA yesterday and will be presented to Trade Unions today.

NR

**13 March 2020**