

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

NOTE OF CIVIL CONTINGENCIES GROUP (O) MEETING

Wednesday 28 October 2020 14:30 – 15:30

Present

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| Derek Baker (Chair | Permanent Secretary, DE |
| Andrew McCormick (Chair) | Director General, TEO |
| Denis McMahon | Permanent Secretary, DAERA |
| Katrina Godfrey | Permanent Secretary, DfI |
| Tracy Meharg | Permanent Secretary, DfC |
| Sue Gray | Permanent Secretary, DoF |
| Peter May | Permanent Secretary, DoJ |
| Richard Rodgers | DfE |
| Colin Woods | DfE |
| NR | DAERA |
| Chris Stewart | TEO |
| Karen Pearson | TEO |
| Chris McNabb | EIS |
| Andy Cole | TEO |
| Mark McGuicken | TEO |
| Stephen Reid | NI EPG Joint Chair (Local Government) |
| ACC Alan Todd | PSNI |

In Attendance

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| Joan McCaffrey | Local Government |
| Ch Insp I&S | PSNI |
| NR | TEO |

Apologies

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| Mike Brennan | Permanent Secretary, DfE |
| Richard Pengelly | Permanent Secretary, DoH |
| Peter Toogood | TEO |
| Ch Supt I&S | PSNI |

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome & Apologies

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the CCG (O) Meeting, thanked Members for attending at short notice and apologies were noted.

Agenda Item 2 – Context & Approach

2. The Chair explained that the meeting was further to the recent TEO submission to Ministers, who agreed a CCG (O) approach with an initial weekly rhythm in sequence with the Executive Meeting on a Thursday; in agreeing the approach FM/dFM had also requested the Chair provide pre and post meeting updates. The Chair also noted a proposed DownRep to NI EPG on a Friday.
3. CCG (O) will have a sharper focus on decision making with key information and analysis brought to the Meeting to assist in that, and to agree actions forthcoming from the meeting. Membership will be limited to Permanent Secretaries with the NI Emergency Preparedness Group Joint Chairs for PSNI and Local Government. Additional attendees may be invited as required.

Agenda Item 3 – Concept SitRep/ Actions Grid

4. The Chair informed Members that Ministers requested the SitRep be reactivated on a weekly basis in order to get a consolidated overview of the strategic issues. SIB have been engaged to support the NI HUB in developing a weekly SitRep. Information is commissioned weekly through C3 leads in the absence of DOC stand-up. The initial draft sent to Members was a concept only and for discussion at the Meeting.
5. Chris Stewart (TEO) made 3 key points on the SitRep to Members:
 - to build on the success of the previous SitRep and ensuring that the product was more concise, with a tighter focus that Ministers and CCG required to give a strategic overview of the Big Picture and the decisions that will need to be made at CCG or the Executive;
 - the SitRep is classified as Official Sensitive and not intended to be public facing and therefore should be handled in the appropriate manner; and
 - the core principle is that the SitRep should only be based on information that departments require to run their business and any additional requests should be by exception and authorised at Senior Level.
6. Karen Pearson (TEO) referred Members to Slide 6 of the SitRep which showed the change of the R value at Local Government level, referencing Local Government Districts showing an increase against the trend.
7. Andy Cole (TEO) asked Members to provide feedback on the concept of the SitRep particularly if there was analysis to assist decision making for CCG.

8. Chris Stewart confirmed to the Chair that the first SitRep will issue to the Executive next Thursday as the SitRep is currently being finalised.
9. Stephen Reid (NI EPG Joint Chair – Local Government) was content with the format of the SitRep and the clarity of detail saying that the immediacy and accuracy of the information was critical with Local Government looking to PHA and DoH.
10. The Chair informed the Meeting that one of the purposes of the SitRep was to identify and escalate to CCG specific actions where decisions are required. Two decisions from the SitRep were escalated for specific CCG discussion and agreement. He advised that Action 2 (testing for those personnel working on critical national infrastructure) was resolved yesterday and can be closed. Alan Todd (PSNI) was content to defer discussion on Action 1 (setting up of a Health-led SCG) until Agenda Item 5.

Agenda Item 4 – Civil Contingencies Architecture

11. Andy Cole referred Members to the NI Civil Contingencies Schematic emphasising the importance of the approach being taken will be docked into the existing civil contingencies architecture, without creating further structures or overhead, thereby ensuring that the strategic level is connected with the necessary operational response through Local Government and PSNI colleagues. It also links in with the Covid work strands being undertaken by Karen Pearson.
12. Andy confirmed to Stephen Reid that NI EPG should be part of the CCG structure on the Schematic; Stephen asked that the Schematic was corrected to show the NI EPG Joint Chairs sitting in CCG and clearly showing the line to the three EPGs and 11 councils.

ACTION 1: TEO to amend NI Civil Contingencies Schematic to show NI EPG Joint Chairs as part of the CCG Structure

Agenda Item 5 – Recovery Group/ Restrictions Governance

13. Karen Pearson referred Members to the Paper on 'Covid – Governance for the Autumn and Winter' and explained the proposed governance for recovery/restrictions and the four proposed work streams on strategy, legislation, communications and finance. Karen also advised the Meeting of the three existing groups – Cross-Departmental Group, DOH Modelling Group and the Face Coverings Working Group.
14. Karen explained the purpose of the proposed workstream on Finance was to ensure that agreed financial support was triangulated across DoF, DoH and DfE but not to interfere in financial systems or structures in anyway.

15. Sue Gray (DoF) confirmed to the Chair that this work was already being undertaken by DoF who were liaising closely with DoH and DfE and that another group was not required to be set up. Sue agreed to speak further to the Chair about this.
16. Karen also outlined the planning horizon in terms of Covid Strategy, the timeframe that is involved and the decisions required for consideration by the Executive next week on the Framework. The Chair advised Members that the intention is to put a paper on this to the Executive next Tuesday.
17. Alan Todd explained to Members the reason that PSNI have requested the establishment of a health led SCG by saying that some of the principles, under normal civil contingency arrangements for NI, are designed around short term emergencies which the blue lights take a lead; pandemics sit slightly different to that. A cross-departmental structure is required to decide the strategic and tactical out workings of that structure which would be SCG under normal arrangements in an acute emergency but given the health pandemic, and as the SitRep shows, all the information driving enforcement and other actions is health data and guidance and the need to be informed by health led guidance – therefore, it requires a Health chair to direct in a pandemic what was required to achieve positive outcomes across partnerships in the longer term.
18. Chris Stewart agreed to discuss with PSNI and Local Government the approach that was required for them to access health data and guidance that is required to allow tactical operational decisions to be made on the principle of achieving the same outcomes through a different structure.

ACTION 2: TEO to discuss with PSNI and Local Government the approach required to access health data and guidance to facilitate their Organisations' decision-making requirements.

Agenda Item 6 – Rhythm & NI EPG

19. The Chair advised Members that the proposed rhythm for CCG (O) will be to meet weekly on Wednesday afternoons. This will allow sufficient space to brief Ministers before COVID Executive meeting on Thursday. It will also allow a weekly rhythm of engaging with NI EPG on a Friday to include the joint Chairs of the three EPGs which will allow dissemination of any CCG decisions and Executive decisions, across all District Council areas.
20. Andy Cole confirmed to the Chair that to allow the DownRep meetings to NI EPG to commence from Friday 6 November, engagement will take place with DoH colleagues on the scope and approach, given the importance in shaping the response for Local Government and PSNI, of the necessary health data.
21. Stephen Reid advised the Meeting that the NI EPG Joint Chairs would be happy to liaise with TEO on this to ensure clarity is given on expectations and where the focus lies.

Agenda Item 7 – AOB

22. Peter May (DoJ) advised the Meeting that he had spoken to Richard Pengelly (DoH) on Monday about obtaining health data to inform DoJ priorities and the operational level; Richard was going to discuss this with the PHA Chief Executive and Peter was still awaiting to hear the outcome of this discussion.
23. Stephen Reid raised the issue on the need for how early intelligence information is communicated given the growing infection rates in certain Local Government Districts and how to fast track this information down to key people on the ground especially if interventions are required and councils and other partners are required to execute their roles earlier – there was a need to be agile.
24. Karen Pearson confirmed to Katrina Godfrey (DfI) that nothing further was required on concurrent events; the Cross-Departmental Group is providing the required information that is needed at pace.
25. Karen asked the Chair to take an action to organise a meeting before the weekend with Local Government/ PSNI on how that structure would best work on communicating early intelligence information so that everything is in place by next Friday:

Agenda Item 8 – Date of Next Meeting

26. The Chair thanked everyone again for attending at short notice and advised the next Meeting will be on Wednesday 4 November 2020 at 14:30; the NIHUB Secretariat will issue an invite to Members for this Meeting.

NIHUB, Secretariat
28 October 2020