

**MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING: 3 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**MEETING WAS CONDUCTED VIA VIDEO LINK**

- Present:** First Minister (Chair)  
deputy First Minister (Chair)  
Minister for Communities  
Minister for the Economy  
Minister of Education  
Minister of Finance  
Minister of Health  
Minister for Infrastructure  
Minister of Justice
- In attendance:** Junior Minister, TEO (Mr. Lyons)  
Junior Minister, TEO (Mr. Kearney)  
Head of Executive and Central Advisory Division, TEO  
  
Dr Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer  
Karen Pearson, Director of EU Relations, TEO
- Apologies:** Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

**INTRODUCTION**

The deputy First Minister chaired agenda items 1 – 4.

1. The deputy First Minister advised of apologies received from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

**AGENDA ITEM 1**

**E (M) (20) 50          Minutes of Executive meeting held on 20 August 2020**

2. The minutes of the Executive meeting of 20 August 2020 were agreed.

3. The Minister for Infrastructure and the Minister of Justice raised their concerns about the timing of issue of the agenda and final versions of Executive papers for the meeting; and also apparent advance briefing of the media and sectoral interests of the matters to be considered and decided at the meeting. The Minister of Finance advised of his concern regarding suggestions that Executive decisions had been pre-agreed in light of lobbying ahead of Executive meetings. The deputy First Minister pointed out that the timing of the papers meant that they could not have been shared outside the Executive Office before circulation to Ministers. The First Minister considered that it was not appropriate to make matters relating to the operation of the Executive public through social media.
4. The Executive agreed that a written protocol on the timescale for the circulation of Executive papers should be drafted for consideration at the next Executive meeting.

## **AGENDA ITEM 2**

### **COVID-19 Report by the Minister of Health**

5. The Minister of Health provided an update on developments in the COVID-19 pandemic, including the position in care homes; number of deaths; admission to hospitals; contact tracing figures; and the rise in the number of positive cases in people 39 years and younger.
6. The Minister of Education provided information on how testing in schools would be carried out. It was agreed that Education Authority and Public Health Authority officials would work jointly to ensure a common approach and that clear messaging would be developed.
7. The Chief Medical Officer advised that he would liaise with the British Medical Association in relation to messaging around school-based risk assessments.

### **AGENDA ITEM 3**

#### **Actions from Previous Meetings**

8. The deputy First Minister advised that the Action Log had been circulated.

### **AGENDA ITEM 4**

#### **COVID-19 Management**

**E (20) 202 (C)      COVID 19 – Powers and Procedures, Regulations, Hospitality and Face Coverings**

**E (20) 203 (C)      COVID 19 – Potential Easements of Restrictions**

9. The deputy First Minister advised that these two papers should be considered in tandem.

10. Following discussion, the Executive:

- (i) noted the powers available to it;
- (ii) agreed that further consideration should be given to designating an appropriate department to issue directions on upper limits for outdoor events;
- (iii) noted that it would receive fuller advice on Face Coverings Regulations at its meeting on 10 September;
- (iv) agreed an indicative opening date for soft play areas of 14 September, subject to consideration of mitigations and ratification at the meeting of 10 September; and
- (v) agreed that engagement would take place with representatives and stakeholders in the hospitality and entertainment sectors and other relevant interests to bring forward for the meeting on 10 September a comprehensive and coherent programme of measures to facilitate a safe re-opening.

## **COVID-19 any other business**

### **Funding for Universities**

11. The Minister of Justice raised the issue of funding for universities to allow for additional places for medical and dental students. The Minister for the Economy advised that further information on enrolments would be available in the following week.

### **Reimbursement of Pay Lost by HSC Staff owing to participation in Strike Action**

12. The Minister of Health raised the issue of Reimbursement of Pay Lost by HSC Staff owing to participation in Strike Action, in particular issues regarding repercussiveness of such action. It was agreed that the Minister of Health would seek legal advice on the issue for consideration as a substantive item at the next Executive meeting.

### **Extension of the Furlough Scheme**

13. The Minister of Finance raised the extension of the Furlough Scheme. The Executive agreed that the Minister should write to Treasury on the matter.

### **Adjournment**

14. The Executive meeting was adjourned until 3.30 p.m. to enable the first Minister and deputy First Minister to attend a Joint Ministerial Committee (EN) meeting.

**Irrelevant & Sensitive**

### **Travel Agents**

16. The First Minister advised of the difficulties being faced by travel agents in light of COVID 19 travel restrictions. The Minister of Finance advised that his department would consider any proposals for support brought forward by the relevant Minister.

### **Taxis/Coaches**

17. The deputy First Minister advised that she and the First Minister would meet with the Minister for Infrastructure in relation to support to be provided to the taxi and coach industries. The Minister for Infrastructure advised of her understanding that the meeting should also include the Minister for the Economy.

### **Driving Tests/MOTs**

18. At the request of Junior Minister Lyons, the Minister for Infrastructure provided an update on provision of driving test and MOT services.

### **Covid 19 Social Enterprise Funding Scheme/Social Inclusion Strategy**

19. The Minister for Communities requested that the papers she had circulated on the COVID-19 Social Enterprise Funding Scheme and the Social Inclusion Strategy be agreed by urgent decision procedure. The First Minister advised that she would be seeking further engagement in relation to the Social Inclusion Strategy.

### **Media Leaks**

20. The Minister of Health advised of the leaking of Executive considerations in relation to the hospitality and music industries, and university funding matters, about which he had been approached during the adjournment of the Executive meeting.

**The First Minister chaired the remaining items on the agenda.**

## **AGENDA ITEM 5**

### **Schedule of Events/Media/Ad Hoc Committee**

21. The First Minister advised of correspondence from the Speaker requesting that Ministers observe key requirements, courtesies and conventions in recognition of the Assembly's scrutiny and accountability role.

## **AGENDA ITEM 6**

### **Other issues requiring Executive agreement**

22. There were no papers for this agenda item.

## **AGENDA ITEM 7**

### **Any Other Business**

23. There were no items of other business for consideration under this agenda item.

### **Date of next meeting**

24. The next Executive meeting would take place on Thursday 10 September 2020 at 2.00pm.