

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING: 21 JANUARY 2021

MEETING CONDUCTED VIA ZOOM

Present: First Minister (Chair)
deputy First Minister (Chair)
Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
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)

Interim Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service
Head of Executive and Central Advisory Division, TEO
Dr Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer

INTRODUCTION

The deputy First Minister chaired agenda items 1 - 5

AGENDA ITEM 1

Minutes of previous meetings

E (M) (21) 03 Minutes of the Executive Meeting of 8 January 2021

1. The Executive agreed the minutes of the Executive meeting of 8 January 2021.

2. The Executive agreed the minutes of the Executive meeting of 14 January 2021.

AGENDA ITEM 2

COVID-19 Update

3. The Minister of Health provided an update on developments relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the pressures facing hospitals; the changing demographic of new positive cases; the contact tracing system; and progress with the roll-out of the vaccination programme.
4. The Chief Medical Officer gave a presentation on statistical data relating to trends in the COVID-19 pandemic, including reference to the 'R' paper and the Community Mobility Report, on which papers had been circulated to Ministers; incidence in Local Government areas; and matters relating to new variants of the virus.

AGENDA ITEM 3

Actions from previous meetings

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

Assembly Business

6. The deputy First Minister updated the Executive on the response received from the Speaker regarding mitigation measures to be put in place for Ministers' attendance in the Assembly Chamber and other aspects of Assembly business.

AGENDA ITEM 4

NI SitRep for CCG

7. The deputy First Minister advised that the CCG Sit Rep ad been circulated.

AGENDA ITEM 5

COVID Management

Update – Retail

8. The deputy First Minister provided an update on a Round Table meeting that she and the First Minister had had with representatives of the retail sector, focusing on developing a partnership approach to ensuring adherence to public health mitigation measures; and following which the First Minister and deputy First Ministers had issued a statement to emphasise public health messaging.
9. The Executive agreed that the prohibition on Click and Collect services should be revisited in due course to ensure that it remained an appropriate measure in the context of an extension to current restrictions.

Data Sharing

10. The Minister of Health expressed his concern at the continuing lack of response on the part of the Irish Government to reaching an agreement for the sharing of data on arrivals from other countries.

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| E (21) 020 (C) | Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020: Sixth Review of the need for the Restrictions and Requirements |
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11. The Minister of Health introduced this paper.

12. The Executive agreed:

- (i) the requirement in regulation 3 for a review of the need for the restrictions and requirements in the No. 2 Regulations had been duly met;
- (ii) that the current restrictions and requirements in the No. 2 Regulations, as amended, were at this point in time an appropriate and necessary response to the serious and imminent threat to public health which was posed by the incidence and spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) in Northern Ireland;
- (iii) that overall the restrictions and requirements imposed by these Regulations continued to be proportionate to what the Regulations sought to achieve, which was a public health response to that infectious disease threat in the context of the increasing rate of infection in Northern Ireland since September;
- (iv) that the current restrictions be extended until 5 March 2021 (a 4 week extension);
- (v) that the restrictions should be reviewed on or before 18 February 2021; and
- (vi) TEO lead and coordinate the development of a refreshed 'Pathway to Recovery', working in partnership with DoH and others, and bring recommendations to the Executive on the process and methodology for relaxing restrictions as soon as practicable.

13. The Minister of Education advised that following further consultation he would bring forward a paper relating to extension of school closures beyond the half-term break.

14. The Minister for Communities advised of the need for a strategic discussion on the health overarching COVID strategy.

15. The deputy First Minister advised of, and the Executive discussed, concerns raised by a number of health service unions in relation to the announcement by the Minister of Health of military support to be provided to the Health service

E (21) 019 (C) Amendment to the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) Regs (Northern Ireland) 2020 - England Fines for Information Offence

16. The Minister of Health introduced this paper.

17. The Executive agreed to align with the proposed uplifted fine for information offences in England (£500) with subsequent increases up to a maximum of £4000 for further breaches of the regulation.

E (21) 023 (C) 2020-21 January Monitoring Round and COVID Funding Position

18. The Minister of Finance introduced this paper.

19. The Executive:

- (i) noted the level of COVID-19 funding available;
- (ii) agreed that funding held centrally now be made available for Covid response;
- (iii) agreed the proposed COVID-19 allocations at Annex F to Executive Memorandum E (20) 023 (C);
- (iv) agreed that the Economy and Education Ministers be provided with additional flexibility to reallocate COVID allocations as described in the Executive paper;
- (v) noted the update in relation to the Fresh Start agreement, ongoing Treasury engagement and the Central Issues;
- (vi) noted the level of reduced requirements at Annexes A and B to the Executive paper;

- (vii) noted the amount surrendered under the Education EYF scheme and the need to provide this funding in future years;
- (viii) agree the proposed reclassifications at Annex D to the Executive paper;
- (ix) agreed the proposed January Monitoring allocations at Annex G;
- (x) agreed to urgently bring forward further proposals to utilise the available COVID and non-COVID funding;
- (xi) noted that the January Monitoring round concluded with £294.2 million Resource DEL COVID funding unallocated and a further £52.2 million Resource DEL, £28.3 million Capital DEL and £55.7 million Financial Transactions Capital of non-Covid funding still available; and
- (xii) noted the need to ensure no public comment is made on the outcome of this Monitoring Round until the statement has been made to the Assembly.

E (21) 018 (C) Bed and Breakfast, Guest House and Guest Accommodation Providers Support Scheme

20. The Minister for the Economy introduced this paper.

21. The Executive:

- (i) agreed to the establishment of the Bed and Breakfast, Guest House and Guest Accommodation Scheme;
- (ii) agreed the proposed Scheme as outlined in the attached Annex to Executive Memorandum E (21) 18 (C) ; and
- (iii) noted the Minister for the Economy's intention to issue a Ministerial Direction to the Department for the Economy Accounting Officer to proceed to implement the Executive's decision on the Bed and Breakfast, Guest House and Guest Accommodation Scheme.

E (21) 022 (C) Support Scheme for Large Tourism and Hospitality Businesses

22. The Minister for the Economy introduced this paper.

23. The Executive agreed:

- (i) to the establishment of the Large Tourism & Hospitality Business Support Scheme and the payment structure proposed;
- (ii) that should the additional funding be made available, the scheme would further cover the additional 6 weeks of restrictions from December to February using the same payment structure at a cost of £11.1 million; and
- (iii) the Minister for the Economy's intention to issue a Ministerial Direction to the Department for the Economy Accounting Officer to proceed to implement the Executive's decision on the Large Tourism & Hospitality Business Support Scheme.

The First Minister chaired the remain item on the agenda

AGENDA ITEM 6

Other issues requiring Executive agreement

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Date of next meeting

35. The next scheduled meeting of the Executive would take place on Tuesday 26 January.