

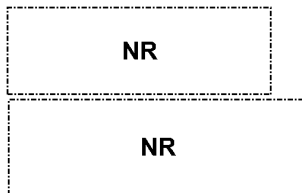
RESTRICTED HANDLING

SC(22)10th Conclusions

SCOTTISH CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD IN ST ANDREW'S HOUSE, EDINBURGH AT
9.30 AM ON TUESDAY, 8 MARCH 2022

Present:	Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP John Swinney MSP	First Minister Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery
	Keith Brown MSP Kate Forbes MSP Mairi Gougeon MSP Rt Hon Angus Robertson MSP	Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture
	Shona Robison MSP	Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government
	Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP Humza Yousaf MSP	Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (*) Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (*)
In Attendance:	John-Paul Marks CB Rt Hon Dorothy Bain QC George Adam MSP Mairi McAllan MSP Professor Sir Gregor Smith James Hynd Ruairaidh Macniven David Rogers Shirley Rogers	Permanent Secretary Lord Advocate Minister for Parliamentary Business Minister for Environment and Land Reform (*) Chief Medical Officer (*) Director for Cabinet Solicitor to the Scottish Government (*) Director, Constitution Director, Performance, Delivery and Resilience (*)
	Brian Dornan Alison Irvine Lisa McGuinness	Deputy Director, for Constitutional Futures (*) Head of Cabinet Secretariat Permanent Secretary's Principal Private Secretary (*)
	Michelle Rennie Ewan Crawford Leanne Dobson Kate Higgins Ross Ingebrigtsen David Livey Liz Lloyd John MacInnes Colin McAllister Stuart Nicolson Chris Mackie	First Minister's Principal Private Secretary Special Adviser (*) Special Adviser (*) Special Adviser (*) Special Adviser (*) Special Adviser (*) Special Adviser (*) Special Adviser (*) Special Adviser (*) Special Adviser (*) Special Adviser (*) First Minister's Official Spokesperson (*) First Minister's Policy and Delivery Unit (*) PS/First Minister (*) Assistant Head of News (*) Constitutional Futures Division (*) Lead Transition, Constitution and Rights (*) FM Covid Briefing Unit (*)
	NR	
	Julie Grant	
	NR	



PS/Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary
for Covid Recovery (*)
Cabinet Secretariat (*)
Cabinet Secretariat (*)
Cabinet Secretariat

** by tele-conference*

Apologies

1. Apologies were received from Mr Matheson. He was represented by Ms McAllan.

Minutes of Meeting held on 1 March 2022

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2022 (SC(22)9th Conclusions) were approved.

Parliamentary Business (Paper SC(22)32)

3. Mr Adam outlined the planned business in the Parliament during the weeks commencing 7, 14, 21 and 28 March, as set out in the tables in Annex A of paper SC(22)32.

4. He drew Cabinet's attention to the legislative consent motion on 9 March on the UK Government's fast-tracked Economic Crime (Transparency & Enforcement) Bill; the Ministerial Statement on 10 March on the Rail Accident Investigation Branch report into Carmont passenger train derailment (discussed further under SCANCE); and the addition of a Scottish Government debate on 15 March on the Covid Strategic Framework, the title of which was still to be confirmed.

5. **Cabinet agreed** the planned business in the Parliament for the week commencing 21 March, subject to any further changes that might be required.

(Action: Minister for Parliamentary Business)

COVID-19: Coronavirus Update (Paper SC(22)33)

6. The First Minister invited Mr Swinney to provide Cabinet with an update on the progress of the COVID-19 pandemic and the work under way to counter its effects.

7. Mr Swinney outlined that since the publication of the Strategic Framework Update on 22 February and as of last week, the position had deteriorated slightly. The BA.2 sub-variant represented an increasing proportion of cases in Scotland and while the total number of daily cases were broadly stable they remained at a high level.

8. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) COVID-19 infections survey and data available through Test and Protect indicated that the prevalence of COVID in Scotland was increasing (though it was noted that this was lagged data).

9. Hospital occupancy had similarly continued to increase, which was putting additional pressure on the NHS. However, ICU pressures were not increasing at the same rate. It was possible that the increased transmissibility of the BA.2 sub-variant might be causing higher levels of nosocomial infection on hospital wards, and this was being investigated by Public Health Scotland.

10. Data would continue to be monitored carefully in advance of Cabinet's three-weekly review of measures the following week, but the current trajectory of COVID infections of was of some concern.

11. Mr Yousaf agreed with Mr Swinney's assessment of a deteriorating situation. 11,685 cases would be reported that day with a further 19 deaths, representing an increase in case numbers of 56 per cent from the previous week. The previous day 1360 people in hospital with COVID-19 had been confirmed, an increase from 1191 the previous week. The 7-day cumulative incidence was 1005 per 100,000.

12. Increases had been observed in every local authority area in Scotland, except for the Shetland Islands, in both younger and older age cohorts. The slowest rate of increase was in those aged 17-39, who coincidentally were the most recent to have received their booster vaccination.

13. The spring booster programme had begun for those eligible (older age cohorts and the immunosuppressed).

14. In discussion the following points were made:

(a) While daily case figures gave an indication of trend they did not show an accurate picture of prevalence; ONS survey data, hospitals occupancy figures and the number of deaths gave a better indication of the current situation;

(b) A detailed assessment of the current situation was required, with modelling to forecast how the position might change over the coming weeks to support decisions on the proposed lifting of measures at Cabinet the following week. Most important to consider was the impact of increased rates of COVID-19 infections on hospitals, and therefore key to the decisions regarding the lifting of remaining restrictions would be case numbers in hospital;

(c) There would be difficult handling challenges associated with any change to timescales of lifting restrictions, as set out in the Strategic Framework Update;

(d) Vaccinations should continue at pace given they provided essential tool in Scotland's efforts to reduce the impact of COVID-19, and there was to be a specific focus on the campaign;

(e) The Scottish Government should ensure there was a good understanding the effectiveness of "hospital at home" and maximise the