

**MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING: 15 APRIL 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  
Dr Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer  
Professor Ian Young, Chief Scientific Adviser  
Ms Karen Pearson, Director, EU Relations, TEO  
Mr Peter Too good, COVID Recovery, TEO  
Name Redacted Behavioural Insights Team  
Name Redacted Behavioural Insights Team

**INTRODUCTION**

The First Minister chaired agenda item 1 - 4.

AGENDA ITEM 1

Minutes of previous meetings

**E (M) (21) 23**

**Minutes of the Executive Meeting of 1 April 2021**

1. The Executive agreed the minutes of the Executive meeting of 1 April 2021

2. The Executive agreed the minutes of the Executive meeting of 8 April 2021

**AGENDA ITEM 2**

**Covid-19 Report by the Minister of Health**

3. The Minister of Health provided an update on developments relating to the Covid-19 pandemic, including the vaccination programme; the reduced number of care home outbreaks; and the contact tracing service.
4. The Chief Scientific Adviser gave a presentation on, and the Executive discussed, statistical data relating to the pandemic, including the R number; positivity rates; testing capacity; incidence in local government areas; international comparators; and factors impacting modelling projections for the following six months.
5. The Chief Medical Officer restated the advisability of a phased approach to relaxations, and the need for continued strong messaging in relation to adherence to public health measures and mitigations. He also advised of ongoing work to develop a vaccine booster programme.

**AGENDA ITEM 3**

**Actions from previous meetings**

6. The First Minister advised that the action log had been circulated.
7. The Chief Medical Officer advised that an update on vaccine efficacy was being developed, which would be shared with Ministers in due course; and that this information was factored on an ongoing basis into data provided to the Executive to inform its decision making.

## AGENDA ITEM 4

### COVID management

#### Executive COVID Taskforce – update

8. The Secretary to the Executive provided an update on the work of the Executive COVID Taskforce.
9. Peter Toogood, COVID Recovery Team, TEO, and members of the Behavioural Insights team, gave a presentation on the behavioural science data and advice which formed part of the Pathway process on which proposals for Executive decisions on COVID, recovery and restrictions were based.

#### **E (21) 085 (C)      Pathway out of Restrictions – Proposals for Relaxation**

10. The First Minister introduced, and the Executive discussed, this paper
11. Ministers expressed concern that the content of the paper had been leaked to the media before the Executive had had an opportunity to consider the proposals and make decisions on the way forward.
12. Ministers discussed the proposed dates for relaxation of restrictions.
13. **The meeting adjourned at 1.45 p.m.** to enable further engagement on the proposed relaxations.
14. **The meeting was reconvened at 3.05 p.m.**
15. An amended table of recommendations on timescales for relaxations of restrictions was circulated to Ministers.

16. The Minister for the Economy recorded her concern regarding the economic damage being caused to the tourism, hotel and hospitality sector by its ongoing closure due to COVID restrictions, and the risk to jobs and future viability.

17. The Minister for Communities advised that she would engage with local councils in relation to deployment of COVID Marshals to support local adherence.

18. Following further discussion, and a number of amendments to recommendations, the Executive agreed as follows:

(i) From 23 April, the following could resume:

- Driving instruction and theory tests;
- Driving testing;
- Close contact services including training;
- Outdoor visitor attractions including outdoor activity centres;
- Equine Assisted Therapy and Learning (EATL) on an indoor and outdoor basis in gatherings of up to 30 people;
- Outdoor sport organised by a club, individual or individuals affiliated would be extended to include squad training; and
- Competitive outdoor sport organised by a club, individual or individuals affiliated, with participant numbers not exceeding 100 and no spectators permitted.

(ii) From 23 April, static band practice/rehearsal would be permitted in agreed outdoor locations.

(iii) From 30 April, the Executive agreed to:

- Increase the numbers permitted to gather in Domestic Setting Outdoors – to 15 people from no more than 3 households
- Reopen all of retail;
- Reopen and permit overnight stays in self-contained tourist accommodation for one household only;
- Reopen unlicensed premises, outdoors only with a maximum of 6 people from 2 households per table and contact details recorded;

- Reopen licensed premises, including social clubs, outdoors only, limited to 6 people from no more than 2 households and contact details recorded;
- Remove the curfew on takeaways;
- Remove the curfew on off licences; and
- Permit individual activities in gyms, swimming pools and other large venues – including with a carer and to allow 1-2-1 training/coaching with social distancing.

(iv) From 24 May, subject to review, the Executive indicated its hope to:

- Reopen unlicensed and licensed premises indoors with mitigations
- Reopen the remainder of Tourist Accommodation
- Allow visits indoors in Domestic Settings
- Reopen indoor visitor attractions; and
- Resume indoor group exercise and training in numbers limited to suit the venue.

19. It was agreed that details of these final decisions would be circulated to all Ministers for information.

#### **E (21) 084 (C)      International Travel – Executive COVID Taskforce – Update 5**

20. The deputy First Minister introduced this paper.

21. The Executive noted the content of Executive Memorandum E (21) 084 (C) - International Travel – Executive COVID Taskforce – Update 5.

#### **E (21) 086 (C)      Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021: First Review of the Need for the Restrictions and Requirements**

22. The Minister of Health introduced this paper.

23. The Executive agreed that:

- (i) the requirement in regulation 2 for a review of the need for the restrictions and requirements in the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (“the 2021 Regulations”) had been duly met;
- (ii) the current restrictions and requirements in the 2021 Regulations, as amended, were at that 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) 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;
- (iv) the restrictions would be formally reviewed on or before 13<sup>th</sup> May 2021; and
- (v) the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, as amended, remained a necessary and proportionate measure to reduce community transmission of the virus which caused COVID-19.

**The deputy First Minister chaired the remainder of the agenda.**

**Irrelevant & Sensitive**

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AGENDA ITEM 6

**Note of Urgent Decision**

30. The Executive noted the following urgent decision, taken in accordance with paragraph 2.14 of the Ministerial Code.

<b>E (UP) (21) 09</b>	<b>Further Re-Opening of Youth Services – Specifically Youth Centres</b>
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AGENDA ITEM 7

**Any Other Business**

**Irrelevant & Sensitive**



**Irrelevant & Sensitive**

**Date of next meeting**

39. The next scheduled meeting of the Executive in COVID/departamental format would take place on Thursday 22 April 2021.