

OFFICIAL – SENSITIVE - CABINET

Cabinet will wish to note that these minutes, except those items in italics, will be published in week commencing 23rd August 2021

**The Welsh Government
Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet
12th & 14th July 2021 (via Teams)**

Present: Rt. Hon. Mark Drakeford MS (chair)

Rebecca Evans MS
Vaughan Gething MS
Lesley Griffiths MS
Jane Hutt MS
Julie James MS
Eluned Morgan MS
Jeremy Miles MS
Mick Antoniw MS

Dawn Bowden MS
Hannah Blythyn MS
Julie Morgan MS
Lynne Neagle MS
Lee Waters MS

Officials: Shan Morgan, Permanent Secretary
Des Clifford, Director General Office of the First Minister
Will Whiteley, Deputy Director Cabinet Division
Toby Mason, Head of Strategic Communications
Jane Runeckles, Special Adviser
Madeleine Brindley, Special Adviser
Alex Bevan, Special Adviser

NR Special Adviser

Ian Butler, Special Adviser
Kate Edmunds, Special Adviser
Sara Faye, Special Adviser
Clare Jenkins, Special Adviser
Andrew Johnson, Special Adviser


NR Special Adviser

Tom Woodward, Special Adviser
Christopher W Morgan, Cabinet Secretariat (minutes)

NR Cabinet Secretariat

Tracey Burke, Director General, Education and Public Services
Andrew Goodall, Director General, Health
Reg Kilpatrick, Director General, COVID-19 Crisis Coordination
Andrew Slade, Director General, Economy, Skills and Natural Resources

NR Cabinet Office


Frank Atherton, CMO
Rob Orford, Chief Scientific Adviser Health
Fliss Bennee, Co-Chair TAC
Tom Smithson, Deputy Director COVID-19 Restart
Liz Lalley, Deputy Director Recovery

- 4.2 Community transmission of COVID-19 was high with case numbers increasing, mostly amongst younger less vaccinated people. Rates in the over 60s was increasing but a lot more slowly. The estimated reproduction rate for Wales was now between 1.2 and 1.6.
- 4.3 The pressure on the NHS in Wales remained stable and it was experiencing the lowest levels of COVID-19 since reporting had begun, although if cases continued to rise rapidly so could hospital admissions.
- 4.4 There were around 3,666 confirmed cases of the Delta variant in Wales, making it the most dominant. Of the cases detected, 48.7% were unvaccinated, 33.6% had received one dose and 17.6% had received two doses, however this data might include vaccinations that had not been given the 14-21 days required to provide maximum protection. Nevertheless, the vaccination coverage in the over 40s was high, and this had appeared to have altered the relationship between community transmission and harms.
- 4.5 The CMO's advice indicated that the current epidemiological picture changed the balance between direct and indirect harms and made it increasingly difficult to justify the stringent use of public health powers to continue restricting economic, social and cultural activities.
- 4.6 Ministers were reminded that the restrictions relating to COVID-19 within the Coronavirus Control Plan were for the purpose of preventing, protecting against, controlling or providing a public health response to the incidence, spread of infection or contamination. There must be a threat to public health and the restrictions had to be proportionate in what they were intending to achieve.
- 4.7 Cabinet had already discussed, the previous day, some of the proposals within the paper and it was noted that these decisions would now need to be confirmed.
- 4.8 It was agreed that the Regulations should be amended to provide, from 17th July, for the rule of six to be applied to private dwellings and visitor accommodation. Ice rinks would be allowed to re-open and indoor events would be allowed to restart.
- 4.9 The Regulations would allow for up to 1,000 people at indoor seated events and there would be a limit of up to 200 at standing only venues. As with all events, there would be a requirement to undertake a full risk assessment and it was noted that Local Authority enforcement officers had the powers to respond to events not being organised within the requirements.
- 4.10 Furthermore, the restrictions requiring food and drink to be consumed while seated for events would be removed.
- 4.11 In addition, children would be allowed to attend supervised residential activity centres from 17th July and guidance would be updated to ensure that organisers informed parents or guardians of the increased risk of mixing and staying overnight.

OFFICIAL – SENSITIVE - CABINET

Cabinet will wish to note that these minutes, except those items in italics, will be published in week commencing 23rd August 2021

- 4.12 In terms of night clubs and adult entertainment venues, Cabinet agreed with the advice from public health officials to delay the re-opening until the move to Alert Level 0. *It was recognised that officials would need to review the requirements of all the Alert Levels to ensure they reflected the recent decisions of Ministers in advance of any potential move to re-instate restrictions.*
- 4.13 *Ministers agreed that there should not be any changes to the rules in relation to students gathering in shared facilities in halls of residence, but it should be signalled this would change when Alert Level 0 was introduced.*
- 4.14 In terms of any relaxations under Alert Level 0 that could be introduced alongside moving to Alert Level 1, it was agreed that caps on the number of people who could gather outside in all settings should be removed. In addition, the reasonable measures regime for outdoors should be adjusted so that physical distancing was no longer an absolute requirement. However this would remain one of a package of measures that organisers should consider. Furthermore, all the outdoor elements of Alert Level 0 would be brought forward to 17th July.
- 4.15 It was also agreed the First Minister should signal later that week that Wales would move to Alert Level 0 from 7th August, providing the public health situation remained favourable.
- 4.16 Cabinet approved the paper *and agreed that officials should take into account comments made by Ministers.*

Officials to take into account comments made by Ministers

- 4.17 Ministers turned to the paper on the revised Coronavirus Control Plan and the remaining issues that needed to be resolved in firming up arrangements for Alert Level 0.
- 4.18 Cabinet discussed proposals to lift requirements for the use of face coverings and concluded that the restrictions should remain in place for all indoor settings, to ensure the safety of the most vulnerable. The only exception to this would be in hospitality settings, where venues would need to continue to set out the risks and mitigations so customers could take informed choices. It was expected that the exemption could be extended to other settings in response to how people behaved. *Some thought could be given to relaxing rules within places of worship to allow congregational singing.* It was noted that schools and colleges would be governed by the framework that had been announced by the Education Minister. The rationale for this decision would need to be clearly communicated.