

OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE

RESTRICTED HANDLING

SCN(21)27th Conclusions

SCOTTISH CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD BY VIDEO-CONFERENCE AT 9.30 AM
ON TUESDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2021

Present:	Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP	First Minister
	John Swinney MSP	Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery
	Keith Brown MSP	Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans
	Kate Forbes MSP	Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy
	Mairi Gougeon MSP	Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands
	Michael Matheson MSP	Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport
	Rt Hon Angus Robertson MSP	Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture
In Attendance:	Shona Robison MSP	Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government
	Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP	Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
	Humza Yousaf MSP	Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care
	Leslie Evans	Permanent Secretary
	LPP	
	George Adam MSP	Minister for Parliamentary Business
	Dr Gregor Smith	Chief Medical Officer
	Ken Thomson	DG Constitution and External Affairs
	Penelope Cooper	Director of Culture, Major Events and Covid Co-ordination
	James Hynd	Director for Cabinet
	Jason Leitch	National Clinical Director
	Shirley Rogers	Director, Organisational Readiness
	LPP	
	Alan Johnston	Deputy Director, Covid Co-ordination
	Amanda Gordon	Deputy Director, Outbreak Management
	Lisa McGuinness	Permanent Secretary's Principal Private Secretary
	Michelle Rennie	First Minister's Principal Private Secretary
	Jeanette Campbell	Special Adviser
	Kate Higgins	Special Adviser
	David Livey	Special Adviser
	Liz Lloyd	Special Adviser
	Colin McAllister	Special Adviser
	Stuart Nicolson	Special Adviser
	Chris Mackie	First Minister's Official Spokesperson
	Julie Grant	Assistant Head of News
		FM Covid Briefing Unit
		First Minister's Policy and Delivery Unit
		PS/First Minister
		Cabinet Secretariat

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limit to the financial assistance the Scottish Government could offer to businesses without additional support or consequential funding from the UK Government.

23. In discussion the following points were made:

(a) To build on current momentum, the new Regulations proposed in the paper should come into force on Friday, 17 December;

(b) Speeding up the administration of the booster programme was the top priority and the Scottish Government and the health boards would need to focus relentlessly on this, reviewing progress on a daily basis over the coming weeks;

(c) With one health board in Scotland already on the highest level of escalation and a further three boards on the cusp of moving to this level, the pressure on Scotland's health service could be very significant indeed. The Scottish Government would do everything it could to ensure capacity at hospitals was freed up by making appropriate arrangements to discharge those patients who did not need to be in hospital, including through the use of emergency powers if required;

(d) The decision to close Edinburgh's largest vaccination centre at the Royal Highland Centre for a week to allow a house and techno music rave at the venue's Lowland Hall on Saturday, 18 December was completely unacceptable given the current crisis. Ministers should make every effort to ensure that this decision was reversed, if necessary by compensating the venue for cancelling the music event;

(e) The measures outlined in the paper would be in themselves unlikely to go far enough to bring Omicron's R rate down to a manageable level. It was likely that there would be a need to go further in introducing protective measures aimed at mitigating the risk to public health posed by the Omicron variant but, at this stage, this option was not available given the Scottish Government's lack of financial powers. If the Scottish Government was to shut down large parts of the economy it must also be able to compensate businesses and employees for the economic losses they would suffer as a result. It also needed to take steps to limit the wider health and socio-economic harms caused by restrictions. Financial support from the UK Government would be required to allow the Scottish Government to go significantly further than what was currently proposed.

(f) Rapid work was under way across portfolios to see what resources could be freed up for the response to the Omicron variant. It was possible that reprioritisation within the Health and Social Care budget could deliver an additional £100 million beyond the figure already identified in the paper;

(g) Such a sum would not be sufficient to compensate the hospitality sector for introducing more stringent restrictions but an urgent analysis should be undertaken to consider how such money could be used to address the