

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING: 11 FEBRUARY 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. Middleton)
Junior Minister, TEO (Mr. Kearney)

Interim Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service
Dr Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer
Dr Declan Bradley, Deputy Chief Scientific Adviser

INTRODUCTION

The deputy First Minister chaired agenda items 1 – 5.

AGENDA ITEM 1

Minutes of previous meetings

E (M) (21) 06 Minutes of the Executive Meeting of 18 January 2021

1. The Executive agreed the minutes of the Executive meeting of 18 January 2021.

E (M) (21) 10 Minutes of the Executive Meeting of 2 February 2021

2. The Executive agreed the minutes of the Executive meeting of 2 February 2021.

E (M) (21) 11 Minutes of the Executive Meeting of 4 February 2021

3. The Executive agreed the minutes of the Executive meeting of 4 February 2021.

E (M) (21) 12 Minutes of the Executive Meeting of 9 February 2021

4. The Executive agreed the minutes of the Executive meeting of 9 February 2021.

AGENDA ITEM 2

COVID-19 Update

5. The Minister of Health provided an update on, and the Executive discussed, matters relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, including numbers of hospital inpatients; numbers in ICU; the roll-out of the vaccine programme in care homes, through Trusts and GP practices, and moving to the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable cohort; prevalence of new variants; and the continuing need for social distancing and other mitigations,
6. The Deputy Chief Scientific Adviser gave a presentation on, and the Executive discussed, statistical data relating to the pandemic, including the 'R' number; incidence in local council areas; mobility trends; and the impact of behaviours on the rate of decline of the virus.

AGENDA ITEM 3

Actions from previous meetings

7. The deputy First Minister advised that the action log had been circulated.

Irrelevant & Sensitive

AGENDA ITEM 4

NI SitRep for CCG

- 10. The deputy First Minister advised that the CCG Sit Rep had been circulated.
- 11. The Minister of Health requested, and the Secretary to the Executive provided, clarification in relation to the development of the Pathway to Recovery.

AGENDA ITEM 5

COVID Management

E (21) 037 (C) Asymptomatic Testing

- 12. The Minister of Health introduced this paper.
- 13. The Minister for Communities advised that her department and officials would work closely as required with the Department of Health on rolling out the Asymptomatic testing programme at local council and community level.
- 14. The Executive noted the emerging proposals to introduce an expanded programme of asymptomatic testing.

E (21) 039 (C) Click and Collect

- 15. The Minister for the Economy introduced, and the Executive discussed, this paper.

16. The First Minister advised of her engagement with independent businesses; and her concern at increasing mental health issues among members of the sector.

17. Ministers expressed disappointment with the tone of recent public health messaging. The Minister of Health and the Chief Medical Officer advised of their concern that media focus on one aspect of their press briefing may detract from the need for continuing adherence to restrictions to ensure suppression of the virus.

18. The Executive agreed that a Taskforce update to be circulated for the next Executive meeting should draw together the threads of public health, societal and economic recovery and communications matters.

E (21) 038 (C) Executive COVID-19 Taskforce: Status Update and Forward Work Programme

19. The deputy First Minister introduced this paper, and emphasised the need to maintain the key principle of collective working of Ministers and departments within the Executive COVID Taskforce space as to develop a one-NICS/ one-Executive approach.

20. It was agreed that the work of the Taskforce should provide strategic and operational direction for the Executive, and that the Secretary to the Executive should in the first instance bring forward a presentation on a pathway to recovery in the following week, with a workshop on establishing recovery priorities also to be arranged.

21. It was agreed that TEO and Executive Information Service officials may attend Department of Health media briefings going forward.

E (21) 040 (C) International Travel - 2nd Executive COVID Taskforce (ECT) Update

22. The deputy First Minister introduced this paper.

23. The Executive:

- (i) noted the update on international travel from the ECT task and finish group;
- (ii) agreed that officials should explore in more detail making use of the UKG framework and contract, and return to the Executive with a firm proposal and costings; and
- (iii) agreed that officials should do so on the basis that any new red list countries should be capable of being added to our arrangements, and that other international travel could be brought within scope if that was needed for public health reasons.

The First Minister chaired the remaining items on the agenda

AGENDA ITEM 5

Other issues requiring Executive agreement

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Irrelevant & Sensitive

AGENDA ITEM 6

Any other business

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Date of next meeting

32. The next scheduled meeting of the Executive in COVID / departmental format would take place on Thursday 18 February.