

RESTRICTED – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

EC(M)(00)4

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: TUESDAY 1
FEBRUARY 2000**

Present: First Minister
Deputy First Minister
Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure
Minister of Education
Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Minister of Finance and Higher Education,
Training and Employment
Minister of Health, Social Services and Public
Safety

In Attendance: Secretary to the Executive Committee
Director, OFMDFM

An apology for non-attendance was received from the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

ITEM 1: MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING – EC(M)(00)3

1.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 January were agreed.

Matters Arising

1.2 **Reference of issues to the Executive Committee:** The Committee discussed the recent announcement by the Minister of Health of her decision on the location of maternity services in Belfast.

1.3 The Committee clarified the categories of issues on which they would expect advance notification:

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- key decisions which may affect more than one Department or have significant financial implications or are likely to be controversial;
- major announcements which may affect more than one Department or have significant financial implications or are likely to be controversial;
- decisions/announcements which are location specific and where the Minister had a constituency interest.

1.4 **Equality Bill:** The note from the First Minister and deputy First Minister clarifying the financial implications of the Equality Bill would be issued shortly.

1.5 **New TSN:** The Chairmen reported that the extension of the consultation period on New TSN had been agreed.

ITEM 2: MINISTERIAL CODE (INCLUDING CONFLICT OF INTEREST) – EC(00)18

- 2.1 The Committee noted the legal advice on Conflict of Interest in relation to Ministers continuing to hold District Council membership. It was agreed in principle that Council membership should not be retained, but Ministers could retain membership until the present political uncertainties were resolved. It was agreed that there would be merit in a consistent approach but that the issue might require further consideration once the current political uncertainties were resolved.
- 2.2 The Executive Committee endorsed the remainder of the draft Ministerial Code, subject to review within six months.

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ITEM 3: LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME – EC(00)19

- 3.1 The First Minister confirmed that the legislative programme of Bills to be introduced before the Summer Recess had been announced in the Assembly on 31 January.

- 3.2 The Committee requested legal advice on aspects of the Planning Compensation Bill.

- 3.3 The Minister of Health reported her intention to advance the various stages of the Health and Personal Social Services Amendment Bill to achieve earlier completion.

ITEM 4: NORTH/SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

Food Safety and Health Co-operation

- 4.1 The Minister of Health confirmed that there were no papers for the forthcoming sectoral meeting apart from those seen by the Executive Committee at an earlier meeting.

- 4.2 The Committee agreed the need for papers to be produced for all sectoral meetings so that the Executive Committee as a whole, and accompanying Ministers in particular, could be aware of the issues involved and any decisions expected.

- 4.3 It was agreed that the Minister of Health would copy to the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, as accompanying Minister, the briefing papers prepared by her Department for the meeting.

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Nomination of Member to Food Safety Promotion Board

- 4.4 The deputy First Minister confirmed the nomination of Mr Michael Walker to fill the vacant place on the Food Safety Promotion Board.

Aquaculture and Marine Matters – EC(00)23

- 4.5 The Committee noted the papers for the sectoral meeting to be held on 9 February.

ITEM 5: DRUGS

- 5.1 The Chairmen explained that this item had been placed on the agenda because of the recent media coverage of the absence of a co-ordinating Minister for the NI Drugs Strategy. The Minister of Health had intended to bring forward a paper for the meeting on 8 February but, in view of the public interest in the matter, the Chairmen wished it to be given earlier consideration.
- 5.2 The Minister of Health proposed that separate arrangements should be established to co-ordinate action in the transferred field as distinct from action in the reserved field. The group in the transferred area would be re-constituted under her chairmanship, with the group in the reserved area chaired by NIO; appropriate liaison arrangements would exist between the two groups.
- 5.3 The Executive Committee decided that it was not in a position to determine the most appropriate future arrangements without having considered a paper setting out the options. A paper would be prepared by the Executive Committee Secretariat for the next meeting. In the meantime, the press release from the Committee would explain that the

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delay in a decision was not impeding progress in considering applications for funding for drugs measures, and that announcements on allocations would be made in February.

ITEM 6: STRUCTURAL FUNDS – EC(00)20 AND EC(00)24

6.1 The Minister of Finance & Personnel presented EC(00)20 and EC(00)24 which brought forward revised Structural Funds proposals, taking account of views received at, and after, the previous meeting. The paper contained proposed changes in some allocations, and gave a clearer picture of the balance between social inclusion and economic measures, and the extent to which activities spanned both areas. It placed a stronger emphasis on the cross-border nature of the new Programme. The paper would require further development but was presented to seek broad agreement from the Executive Committee.

6.2 After discussion, the Executive Committee members concluded that they were moving towards agreement, and that there was sufficient basis for the meeting with Commissioner Barnier. Continuing consultation and discussion would, however, be needed. This would be undertaken in bilaterals between the Minister of Finance and other Ministers.

ITEM 7: FLYING OF FLAGS – EC(00)21

7.1 Discussion of EC(00)21 was deferred.

ITEM 8: PROGRAMME OF GOVERNMENT – PROGRESS REPORT – EC(00)22

8.1 Consideration of EC(00)22 was deferred.

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ITEM 9: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 9.1 It was agreed that the next meeting of the Executive Committee would be held on Tuesday 8 February at 10.00 am.

ITEM 10: DRAFT PRESS RELEASE

- 10.1 A draft press release was circulated and agreed for issue.

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