

RESTRICTED –EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

EC(M)(00)2

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: TUESDAY
18 JANUARY 2000**

- Present:**
- First Minister**
 - Deputy First Minister**
 - Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development**
 - Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure**
 - Minister of Education**
 - Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment**
 - Minister of the Environment**
 - Minister of Finance and Personnel**
 - Minister of Further and Higher Education, Training and Employment**
 - Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety**
- In attendance:**
- Secretary to the Executive Committee**
 - Director, OFMDFM**
 - Legal Adviser, OFMDFM, for part of discussion of Item 2**

ITEM1: MINUTES AND MATTER ARISING

1.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 11 January 2000 were agreed subject to two amendments:

- Para 3.3 to read “The Executive Committee agreed the need to adjust the proposed reallocations to address the resource pressures facing the Health Service as a result of the recent increase in flu and flu-related illnesses”.
- Para 11.2 to read “The Minister of the Environment reported that anomalies in the figures for the financial support to District Councils had arisen because his Department had been provided with inaccurate data. These had been rectified”.

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Matters Arising

- 1.2 The Minister of Finance and Personnel reported that he would be meeting the Speaker the following day to discuss the issues referred to in **paragraphs 1.3 and 4.1** of the Minutes of the previous meeting. This would include consideration of a bespoke process to deal with Finance Bills to ensure adequate scrutiny within a short timescale.
- 1.2 The Executive Committee agreed the desirability of ensuring proper co-ordination of **media announcements** and management of good news items.
- 1.3 The Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development and other Ministers expressed concerns about a UUP proposal to the Prime Minister regarding financial assistance for the agriculture sector. The First Minister acknowledged that consultation had been unsatisfactory on this occasion. The Executive Committee agreed that members should take great care when raising publicly issues relating to its collective responsibility or the responsibilities of another Minister.

ITEM 2: MINISTERIAL CODE-SECTION 3 –EC(00)8

- 2.1 The Executive Committee considered questions raised in respect of the vires of the Code and took account of the legal advice that the Code was within the vires of the Executive Committee.
- 2.2 The Committee confirmed that the Departmental nominee attending the meeting of Ministerial representatives could be either a civil servant or a special adviser, depending on the issues to be considered.
- 2.3 The Executive Committee agreed the textual changes proposed to Section 3 of the Ministerial Code, including those circulated at the meeting, and confirmed that this Section should come into immediate effect.

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ITEM 3: LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME – EC(00)9

- 3.1 The Executive Committee agreed that the four Bills listed in EC(00)9 should be introduced into the Assembly as a matter of priority.
- 3.2 The Committee considered a further list of 9 Bills which might also be regarded as meriting high priority. It was agreed that Ministers should consider and give their views by Thursday 20 January on any changes or additions to the list of 9 Bills, in the light of their consideration of the full range of proposed legislation, with a view to an early announcement to the Assembly of firm plans for legislation.

ITEM 4: FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY – EC(00)10

- 4.1 The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety presented paper EC(00)10 which examined the practical aspects of the options, and costs, of establishing an NI Food Standards Agency or joining the UK-wide Agency which would come into operation in April 2000.
- 4.2 The Executive Committee noted that legislation would be required if it was decided to introduce an NI Agency. In order to avoid a hiatus after March 2000, it was decided to maintain existing plans to join the UK body. The Minister of Health would however seek the advice of the Assembly Committee on whether a separate NI Agency should subsequently be created. The Executive Committee would reconsider the matter at that stage.

ITEM 5: NORTH/SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

Chairpersons and Vice Chairpersons for Implementation Bodies – EC(00)5

- 5.1 The Executive Committee resumed its discussion of EC(00)5 which had first been considered at the previous meeting on 11 January.

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- 5.2 The Committee decided by 7 votes to 2 to endorse the nominations set out in EC(00)5.

Trade & Business Development Body (EC(00)11

- 5.3 The Committee noted the papers for the first meeting of the Trade and Business Development Body which would take place in Newry on 24 January.
- 5.4 It was agreed that a minor adjustment should be proposed to the CEO Person Specification to allow weight to be given to knowledge of trade and business development outside Ireland as well as to such knowledge on an all-Ireland basis.

Programme of Future Meetings – EC(00)12

- 5.5 The Committee noted the schedule of possible dates of future NSMC meetings.

ITEM 6: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 6.1 The Executive Committee agreed to meet on Tuesday 25 January at 10.00 am.

ITEM 7: DRAFT PRESS RELEASE

- 7.1 The draft press release circulated at the meeting was agreed for issue.

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