

RESTRICTED - EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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EC(M)(00)3

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: TUESDAY 25
JANUARY 2000

DEPARTMENT OF
TRADE & INVESTMENT
28 JAN 2000
RECEIVED
SECRETARY'S OFFICE

Present:

- First Minister
- Deputy First Minister
- Minister of Education
- Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
- 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 5)

Apologies for non-attendance were received from the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure.

ITEM 1: MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

- 1.1 The Committee confirmed that it was content that votes taken at meetings should be recorded in the way set out in paragraph 5.2 of the minutes.
- 1.2 The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January were agreed.

Matters Arising

- 1.3 The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Minister of Further and Higher Education, Training and Employment reported to the Executive Committee on the NSMC Sectoral meeting of the Trade and Business Development Body which had taken place in Newry on 24 January.

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- 1.4 The meeting had agreed the list of Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the Implementation Bodies and the appointment of Mr Don Anderson to the Food Safety Promotion Board.
- 1.5 The meeting had covered the agenda items as set out in the paper seen by the Executive Committee. The Chief Executive would be appointed by the NSMC through an open competition. A progress report had been received from the interim Chief Executive. A draft programme for 2000 was considered by the Board at the afternoon session. Dates for future meetings were agreed. A full report on the meeting would be made to the Assembly.
- 1.6 The Executive Committee noted the report and the fact that a statement would be made to the Assembly.
- 1.7 **Divorce Law Reform:** The Chairman referred to the publication of the Consultation Document by DFP on Tuesday 18 January which had not been notified to the Executive Committee in advance.
- 1.8 The Minister of Finance and Personnel stated that OLR had issued the document, on the basis of research findings. The document was issued on the day the relevant part of the Ministerial Code was agreed, and the Code was not specific on the timing of involving the Executive Committee. The results of the consultation would be brought to the Committee.
- 1.9 It was agreed that a note should be issued by the Secretary to officials to spell out the requirements of the Code in relation to issues to be referred to the Executive Committee.

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ITEM 2: LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME - EC(00)13

- 2.1 The Chairman referred to the detail of EC(00)13 which showed that Departments did not appear to be in a position to introduce any high priority legislation in the Assembly before the end of February.
- 2.2 After discussion of the position on a number of Bills, it was agreed that the Secretariat should bring forward a further paper as soon as possible setting out in detail the state of readiness of each Bill and the timetable for progressing them. The list of Bills to form the first tranche of the legislative programme would be announced to the Assembly on 31 January.
- 2.3 A memorandum on each Bill would be required by the Executive Committee, on the lines of EC(00)14 on the Equality Bill, and in line with paragraphs 3.13 and 3.14 of the Ministerial Code, to secure agreement to for the Bill to proceed to the Assembly.
- 2.4 The Executive Committee noted the proposal from the Minister for Regional Development for a Transport Bill. As with other proposed Bills, a Memorandum would be required on this proposal, for consideration by the Committee, to spell out the proposed content in detail, covering the changes in policy envisaged and the financial implications.

ITEM 3: EQUALITY (DISABILITY ETC) BILL - EC(00)14

- 3.1 The Executive Committee noted the paper EC(00)14 which set out the main provisions of the Equality (Disability etc) Bill which had been introduced in the Assembly on 24 January.

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- 3.2 The First Minister and Deputy First Minister agreed to circulate a note clarifying the costs involved, including the additional staff requirement referred to in the paper.

ITEM 4: NSMC SECTORAL MEETING - EDUCATION - EC(00)15

- 4.1 The Minister of Education reported that it was likely that the meeting of the Education Sectoral body would be postponed because of the possible reshuffle of the Irish Government Cabinet.
- 4.2 The Minister of Further and Higher Education, Training and Employment and the Minister of Education agreed to meet to discuss areas of mutual interest in the work of the sectoral body.
- 4.3 The Minister of Health was asked to bring forward to the Executive Committee any papers for the postponed meeting of the sectoral meeting now arranged for 4 February.
- 4.4 It was noted that a member of the Food Safety Promotion Board had withdrawn on health reasons. His replacement would be agreed at the next meeting of the Committee.

ITEM 5: CONFLICT OF INTEREST - EC(00)16

- 5.1 The Executive Committee considered the legal advice on possible and perceived conflicts of interest for Ministers. EC(00)16 dealt with the question of conflict of interest in general, but with particular focus on the conflicts which could arise, or be perceived to exist, for Ministers who were also members of District Councils.
- 5.2 The Committee asked for a further paper to address issues raised relating to Ministers continuing to hold District Council membership for a further period.

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This would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee when the remainder of the draft Ministerial Code was being discussed.

ITEM 6: STRUCTURAL FUNDS - EC(00)17

- 6.1 The Minister of Finance and Personnel presented EC(00)17 which was a preliminary paper setting out the issues to be addressed in deciding the scope and shape of the future programme. Consultation had taken place with Departments and with several of the social partners, and this was reflected in the "Work in Progress" paper. The Committee would have a full discussion at its next meeting so that an agreed line could be reached before the visit of Commissioner Barnier on 3 / 4 February.
- 6.2 The Committee discussed the balance between economic and social inclusion provision in the proposals, having regard to the need to ensure that the balance could be regarded as appropriate. It was agreed that DFP should reassess the proposals to give a more accurate quantification of the economic and social inclusion elements, given that the two often overlapped. DFP would also provide information on the nature of the programmes and on changes between Peace I and Peace II.
- 6.3 The Committee considered the question of delivery mechanisms and, while expressing broad support for locally based arrangements, sought more information about Peace I in terms of impact and coverage.
- 6.4 It was also agreed that DFP should put forward information about the unallocated monies from the Transitional Objective 1 Programme.

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Other Issues

- 7.1 The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment referred to recent publicity concerning **TransTec** and reported that an internal investigation had been initiated by DETI as a precautionary measure because TransTec had received IDB funding.
- 7.2 The Minister of Further and Higher Education, Training and Employment reported that, on foot of the expected decision of the Scottish Executive to make changes to the system of **student financial support**, DFHETE was initiating a review of the situation in NI.
- 7.3 The Minister of Health proposed that the consultation period on **new TSN** should be extended. The First Minister and deputy First Minister agreed to consider the Minister of Health's request.
- 7.4 The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment noted that the **Tourism** meeting shown in the schedule of NSMC Sectoral Meetings had not been arranged for March but was expected to take place in April.

ITEM 8: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 8.1 It was agreed that the next meeting of the Executive Committee would take place on Tuesday 1 February at 10.00am.

ITEM 9: DRAFT PRESS RELEASE

- 9.1 A draft press release was circulated and agreed.

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