

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

1 JUNE 2000

Those 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 Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment
Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

In Attendance:

Secretary to the Executive Committee
Mr Loughran
Director, OFMDFM

Introduction

1. The Chairman welcomed Ministers to the first Executive Committee meeting following restoration. He welcomed Mr Gerry Loughran, the incoming Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.
2. The First Minister and Deputy First Minister noted the absence of the Minister for Regional Development and the Minister for Social Development. The Executive Committee confirmed that it was determined to ensure that public services were not disadvantaged by any action which might be taken by DUP Ministers. The First Minister and Deputy First Minister had written to the Minister for Regional Development and the Minister for Social Development seeking a meeting to clarify their intentions.

Minutes

3. The Executive Committee agreed the minutes of 9 February 2000 and the revised minutes of 1 February 2000.
4. The Chairman proposed that at future meetings of the Executive Committee, consideration of the minutes of the previous meeting might be taken at the end of the Agenda. The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety disagreed. It was agreed to try this approach and review it in light of experience.

AGENDA ITEM 2: LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME

EC (00) 46: Ground Rents Bill

5. The Executive Committee endorsed the proposal to introduce the Ground Rents Bill.

EC (00) 46A: Dogs Bill

6. The Executive Committee endorsed the proposal to introduce the Dogs Bill.

EC (00) 46B: Weights and Measures Bill

7. The Executive Committee endorsed the proposal to introduce the Weights and Measures Bill.

EC (00) 47: Street Trading Bill

8. The Executive Committee gave its approval to the Minister for Social Development to proceed to draft a Street Trading Bill. The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety expressed concern that the proposed power to seize goods was too punitive.

EC (00) 48: Update on Legislative Programme

9. The Executive Committee noted the progress on legislation during suspension, the current position on legislation to come before the Assembly and the position on subordinate legislation.

Trustee (Amendment) Bill

10. The Executive Committee noted the decision by the Minister of Finance and Personnel to withdraw this Bill from the legislative programme.

The Committee noted that, at the forthcoming sectoral NSMC meeting on the Special

June, the issue of a common approach, North and

EC (00) 49: Financial Issues

11. The Executive Committee agreed that the Minister for Finance and Personnel should seek the leave of the Assembly for the use of an accelerated passage for the Appropriation Bill.

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety asked for additional

12. The Executive Committee endorsed the allocation of £53m for Health and £14.7m for schools for 2000/01.

13. The Executive Committee noted that decisions on the allocation of the £18m remaining from the Chancellor's Budget and an additional sum available from end year flexibility would need to be made by the Committee later in June. It was agreed that this would be done in two stages. Ministers would make bids at an Executive Committee meeting. The Executive Committee would then decide the final allocation at a subsequent meeting.

16. The Committee noted the proposed programme of sectoral North South Ministerial Council meetings and agreed that meetings of those sectors which had not been held

EC (00) 50: EU Community Support Framework

14. The Committee discussed:

- the consultation exercise on the Community Support Framework (CSF) which had been taken forward during suspension;

- the principles specifying the distinction between Peace II and the Transitional Objective I programme;

- the North/South dimension of the CSF;

- the principles which would apply to the CSF; and

- the need for the more detailed CSF proposals, which would be brought forward in the autumn, to address cross-cutting themes, including social inclusion, women,

children etc, and the delivery mechanisms for the programme.

The Committee noted that, at the forthcoming sectoral NSMC meeting on the Special EU Programmes Body in mid-June, the issue of a common approach, North and South, (of having North/South co-operation as both vertical and horizontal priorities) would be further pursued.

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety asked for additional information on the consultation exercise.

15. It was noted that the First Minister, Deputy First Minister and the Minister of Finance and Personnel will meet Commissioner Barnier on 21 June in Brussels to sign of the CSF. The Executive Committee noted that it would, therefore, be necessary to reach agreement on this matter at next week's meeting.

EC (00) 51: Update on North/South and British-Irish Matters

16. The Committee noted the proposed programme of sectoral North South Ministerial Council meetings and agreed that meetings of those sectors which had not been held before suspension should take place as soon as possible. The First Minister asked the Secretariat to provide further information about plans for sectoral British-Irish Council meetings.

EC (00) 51A: Report on Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission NSMC Sectoral Meeting

17. The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development reported to the Committee on the Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission NSMC sectoral meeting on behalf of herself and Mr Nesbitt and provided members with copies of the statement to the Assembly which will be made next week.

EC (00) 52: Programme for Government

18. The Executive Committee noted progress to date on the Programme for Government and that a more detailed paper would be brought forward for discussion at next week's meeting on the structure and organisation of the Programme for Government. The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety expressed concern about the

scope to involve the social partners in consultation on the Programme for Government within the timescale envisaged.

EC (00) 53: Civic Forum

19. The Committee noted the current position on the Civic Forum. The First Minister and Deputy First Minister agreed to keep Executive Committee informed about the process for the appointment of a Chairperson to the Civic Forum.

EC (00) 54: Memorandum of Understanding and Concordats

20. The Executive Committee agreed that the First Minister and Deputy First Minister should table a motion asking the Assembly to take note of the Memorandum of Understanding and the supplementary agreements, which have now been agreed between the Executive Committee and the UK Government. The Committee noted that the debate would take place on 5 June. The Executive Committee noted that the bilateral concordat between the Northern Ireland Office and the Executive Committee had not yet been agreed. The Committee agreed that other bilateral concordats between Northern Ireland Departments and their UK counterparts would be notified to the Assembly by means of Written Answers, with copies placed in the Library.

EC (00) 55: Corporate Identity

21. The Executive Committee agreed that the tender process to engage a design company to develop the corporate identity for the Executive Committee and its Departments should be cancelled. The Committee agreed that the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment, in conjunction with the Executive Information Service, should consider how a project to develop a Corporate Identity might be taken forward on the basis of a competition involving schools, Colleges of Further Education and the College of Art.

EC (00) 56: Freedom of Information

22. The Executive Committee noted the position on the Freedom of Information legislation currently going through Westminster. The Committee also noted that a draft consultative paper on the desirability of separate Northern Ireland Freedom of

Information legislation would be brought forward in September for consideration by the Committee.

New TSN

23. The acting Head of the Equality Directorate in OFMDFM gave a short presentation to the Committee on New TSN. The Executive Committee agreed that members should report to the Committee at the next meeting on progress in their Departments on New TSN action plans.

EC (00) 57: Executive Committee Business in the Assembly

24. The Executive Committee noted the expected programme of Executive Committee business in the Assembly over the next 2 weeks.

Oral Reports by Ministers

25. The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure reported that his Department is facing a major issues on Safety at Sports Grounds. The Minister of Education reported that his Department is considering a Report from an independent expert group on mobile phones, and in particular the dangers of siting masts near schools. The Deputy First Minister asked Ministers to notify colleagues of other major issues in writing.

EC (00) 58: Flags

26. The Executive Committee discussed the issue of flying the Union flag at Government buildings. It was agreed that the matter would be monitored in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 5 of the Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity section of the Agreement and discussed at a future Executive Committee meeting.

Joint Ministerial Council

27. The Executive Committee noted that the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety would attend the forthcoming Joint Ministerial Council meeting on Health, together with the First Minister.

Press Release

28. The Committee agreed a press release for issue after the meeting.