

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

8 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 advised the Committee that the Minister for Regional Development and the Minister for Social Development had refused a request from the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to meet with them to discuss recent public comments by the DUP concerning their position as Ministers. The Executive Committee endorsed the proposal by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to write again to the two Ministers setting out the following course of action:-
 - the First Minister and Deputy First Minister would assume responsibility for representing the Executive Committee on transport matters at the British-Irish Council in place of the Minister for Regional Development;
 - the Minister for Social Development and the Minister for Regional Development would not be nominated to attend meetings of the Joint Ministerial Committee;

- pending the receipt of satisfactory assurances from DUP Ministers regarding the confidentiality and integrity of Executive Committee business, the Minister for Social Development and Minister for Regional Development would not receive Executive Committee papers as of right; and
- the First Minister and Deputy First Minister would seek briefing, as appropriate, from officials in the Department for Regional Development and Department for Social Development.

If the DUP carried out their threat to change the holders of the two Ministerial offices on a frequent basis, the Executive Committee would consider other action as appropriate.

CURRENT POSITION ON LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME: EC(00)59

2. The Executive Committee noted the current position on the Legislative Programme.

CHILD SUPPORT, PENSIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY BILL: EC(00)60

3. The Executive Committee agreed to ask the Minister for Social Development to consider whether the Bill could be introduced before the Summer Recess and progressed through to Committee Stage in the Assembly. The Committee agreed the proposal to seek the leave of the Assembly to the accelerated passage procedure if such early introduction was not possible.

EU STRUCTURAL FUNDS: EC(00)50

4. The Executive Committee agreed, by 8 votes to 2, Annex E of this paper. The Committee also agreed, by 8 votes to 2, the Common Text for the Community Support Framework at Annex B in the paper.

ORAL REPORTS FROM MINISTERS ON PROGRESS AGAINST NEW TSN TIMETABLE

5. The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety advised the Executive Committee that the end of July deadline for submission of her Department's New TSN Action Plan to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister should be achievable. Other Ministers, present at the meeting confirmed, that their Departments would meet the agreed timetable.

2000 SPENDING REVIEW: EC(00)61

6. The Executive Committee agreed the proposal in the paper that the First Minister and Deputy First Minister should write to the Chief Secretary of the Treasury to seek additional resources beyond the "Barnett" Formula. The Committee noted that a stronger case for additional resources might be made in the future once the Programme for Government had been agreed and an improved and updated needs assessment carried out.

NSMC SECTORAL MEETINGS: EC(00)62

7. The Executive Committee noted the schedule of sectoral NSMC meetings set out in the paper. The Committee noted that the First Minister and Deputy First Minister would nominate the Minister of Finance and Personnel and the Minister of the Environment to attend the sectoral meeting on the EU Special Programmes Body on 16 June and that the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development would be nominated to attend the forthcoming sectoral meetings on Languages and Waterways in addition to the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure.
8. In response to a query from the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the First Minister and Deputy First Minister confirmed that the same accompanying Minister would not necessarily always be nominated to attend meetings in any particular NSMC sector.

PAPERS FOR NSMC SECTORAL MEETINGS

9. The Executive Committee noted the papers for the NSMC sectoral meetings on EU Special Programmes (EC(00)63), Waterways (EC(00)64) and Language (EC(00)65).
10. The Minister of Education asked for clarification about sending NSMC papers to Departmental Committees. The Secretariat was asked to bring forward advice on this matter.

AGENDA FOR GOVERNMENT

11. The Chairman thanked Ministers for responding promptly to the request for input to the Agenda for Government. The Executive Committee agreed that the Agenda for Government would be taken forward by the Economic Policy Unit in OFMDFM in discussion with Departmental officials. The EPU would examine, with the Department of Finance and Personnel, the budgetary implications, and report back at the Executive Committee on 15 June.

PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT: EC(00)66

12. The Executive Committee endorsed the proposals on the nature and structure of the Programme for Government and the processes for taking it forward. It was agreed that the series of bilateral meetings should not continue at this time.

ALLOWANCES AND LOANS FOR PART-TIME STUDENTS AND INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND: EC(00)67

13. The Executive Committee agreed that the Learning Skills Bill currently going through Westminster should extend to Northern Ireland.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BUSINESS IN THE ASSEMBLY: EC(00)68

14. The Committee noted the Executive Committee business which would be taken in the Assembly on 12/13 June.
15. The Secretary was asked to consult the Speaker of the Assembly about Statements made by Ministers, in order to clarify the position in relation to questions which strayed beyond the content of the Statement and the number of questions which could be asked by any one Member.

MINUTE OF LAST MEETING: EC(M)(00)6

16. The Executive Committee agreed the minutes of the last meeting.

MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

17. The Executive Committee noted that financial bids for the current year had been made in writing to the Department of Finance and Personnel. A paper would be brought forward to a future meeting of the Executive for decision on the final allocations.
18. The Executive Committee noted that a take note debate had been held in the Assembly on the Memorandum of Understanding on 5 June.
19. The First Minister and the Minister of Health, Social Service and Public Safety reported to the Executive Committee on the Joint Ministerial Council meeting on Health which they had attended on 5 June. The British Government will publish a National Plan for the National Health Service in England during the second half of July. It was agreed that the basis for Executive Committee consideration of the Northern Ireland response to the Plan would be taken forward by officials in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.
20. The Executive Committee agreed that a sub-group of the Committee, comprising one representative of each party attending the Committee meetings, should consider the

current situation on flags and proposals to resolve the situation, and report back to the next meeting of the Committee.

PRESS RELEASE

21. The Executive Committee agreed a press release to issue after the meeting.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

22. The Deputy First Minister advised the Executive Committee that he would be required to attend the Committee Stage of the Police Bill at Westminster on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the next two weeks.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

23. The Chairman noted that final decisions had not yet been taken on the day and frequency for Executive Committee meetings.