

**Minutes of a meeting of the Council of Minister's
– Emergency Advisory Group ("EAG") –
Held on Wednesday 04 August 2021 at 4.00pm**

In the Department of Home Affairs Board Room and via MS Teams

Present:

Mr John Spellman (Chair)
Hon G Cregeen MHK, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs (Vice-Chair) (via MS Teams)
Mr R Mercer MLC, Tynwald Representative (via MS Teams)
Dr Rachel Glover (via MS Teams)
Mr Steven Christian (via MS Teams)
Mr Peter Davidson
Professor Peter Edge (via MS Teams)
Ms Julie Hotchkiss (via MS Teams)

In Attendance:

Mr D Davies, Chief Executive, Department of Home Affairs
Mr C Phillips, Cabinet Office, Secretariat (via MS Teams)

Apologies: Mrs Jacqui Bridson, Mr Jonathan Wild.

Action

040/2021 Declarations of Interest or Conflict:

Mr Christian declared he was married to the Hon Member for Douglas South; further declared an interest in a Lateral Flow Testing entity which had entered discussions around LFT supply to the Isle of Man Government – undertaking to absent himself for that discussion.

041/2021 Minutes of the meetings held on:

a) Wednesday 28 July 2021

Approved for publication.

Action: Secretary to upload to website.

(Sec)

042/2021 Matters arising:

a) Chair's meetings with Isle of Man Government ("IOMG")

Minute 036(b)/2021 refers

- The Chair advised he had met with Mr Mark Lewin [Chief Executive Officer, Department of Enterprise] and relevant officer(s) – for which there followed a robust and productive exchange of views and learnings.
- The Chair advised that EAG's collective view in respect of communications, key messaging improvements and effective targeting had been conveyed.

b) Strategic Direction – Next Steps:

The Chair summarised:

- It was conveyed that Government’s existing strategy document(s) appeared time expired and that an interim strategy document was needed to transition into the next administration.
- Parties discussed streamlining EAG’s interaction with Council by affording Council early sight of Advice Notes and Minutes – prior to publication – caveating that in no way did this encroach EAG independence, nor did this afford Council the opportunity to amend or revise EAG’s own output.
- EAG were content to consider correcting factual errors and omissions alone.
- EAG were further content for the Chair to agree the scheduling of advice to Council – subject to the above assurances.
- Parties discussed the taking forward of an interim CV-19 strategy between now and the new administration, including:
 - Clarity on plans for booster vaccinations
 - Any envisaged modifications to testing regime
 - Health service capacity resilience
 - A readily available suite of policy options and measures
- The Chair advised it was conveyed that the EAG would welcome the opportunity of sighting any draft strategy with an opportunity afforded to comment.

Action: New scheduling to be adopted – for the submission and early sight of Advice Notes and Minutes to Council.

c) Mitigations:

- The Chair advised that the EAG’s view had been provided in respect of appropriate mitigations – and that it was consequently for the Council of Ministers to consider a response to such.
- EAG further noted, and welcomed, the reported instigation of regular Isle of Man Chamber of Commerce and business forum engagement in respect of living with Covid-19 and championing responsible employee/employer best practices.

d) Forthcoming Strategy Document – Suggestions:

- In respect of any forthcoming strategy document, EAG noted the ongoing need to accurately cascade revised advice to businesses, individuals, and third parties, on accurate and prudent lateral flow device usage.
- EAG recognised that any strategy ought not be rigid, but afford a degree of flex, and in doing so be capable of responding to any evolving circumstance in respect of CV-19.
- EAG acknowledged the political pressures arising from the pandemic response, however cautioned against not maintaining a 'state of readiness' for the Island – through a documented, reviewed and fit-for-purpose strategy document.
- EAG considered it appropriate to afford officers the opportunity to finalise and share their work on completion.
- The Vice-Chair [Minister for Justice and Home Affairs] concurred with the need for a strategy and advised the matter would be raised at the Council of Ministers meeting [05 August 2021].

e) Communications – Feedback:

- EAG was advised that Government's communication leads were presently reviewing the communications undertaken to date, and considering other channels for public engagement.
- EAG's view in respect of amending the Manx Entry Landing Card – to align with the present viral situation – had been conveyed.
- EAG considered that all communication campaigns ought to align with any incoming revised CV-19 strategy.
- EAG reiterated their willingness to review and offer comment on any strategic document.
- EAG suggested the undertaking of a pulse survey to assess public satisfaction levels, effectiveness of communications, and business feedback in respect of the present CV-19 situation.
- EAG recalled the existing work in this space undertaken by the Isle of Man Chamber of Commerce.
- EAG noted that should Council be minded – an EAG Member could be invited to a Council meeting – to expand on any Advice Note or item in which an independent view was sought.

043/2021 Current Covid Strategy Assessment:

a) Submission of Three Advice Notes

EAG noted the submission and publication of their three most recent Council of Ministers Advice Notes, comprising:

- 2021 07 29 – EAG Advice Note – General Advice
- 2021 07 29 – EAG Advice Note – LDF & PCR Tests
- 2021 07 29 – EAG Advice Note – Public Health Regulations No. 17

EAG further noted that these items were before the Council of Ministers on 05 August 2021.

- Re LDF's it was noted further thought was likely to be given to LFD distribution and improvements to such.
- EAG's views on the supply chain, availability for blue light services, and the management [of LFD supply] for essential sectors had been raised.
- EAG reaffirmed that PCR would always be the first choice if possible, only reverting to LFDs were there was a prevalence of cases.
- The Chair conveyed to EAG that it had been advised further thought was being given to LFD distribution.
- EAG's views on the supply chain, availability for blue light services, and the management of supply for essential sectors had been raised and subject to review.
- EAG expressed their desire for constructive feedback from the Council of Ministers on their Advice Notes.
- EAG suggested one of its members might be invited to a future Council meeting to expand on any Advice Note if desired.

Action: Feedback awaited from the Council of Ministers Meeting of 05 August 2021.

044/2021 Standing Items [by exception]

a) Vaccine Supplies, Boosters and Preparation for Q4

- The Chair noted the UK's announcement for CV-19 "booster" vaccinations for September – and queried the Isle of Man's position.
- EAG was advised a booster programme would be advanced in line with the existing Phase 1 vulnerable cohort, and the IOM would align with the UK programme in this respect.

- EAG queried whether existing and future vaccine capacity factored 16-17 year olds into planning – which could be clarified.

b) Mitigation & Outbreak Management Plan

- EAG noted an expectation that a new strategy document would be prepared and circulated for sight, comment, or review.
- EAG requested that such be placed in the public domain at the soonest opportunity.

Action: Any new strategy/plan requested to be shared with EAG for review.

045/2021 Information Papers

a) Travel Data

EAG noted the travel data provided – but expressed difficulty in extrapolating relevant figures. Calculation methodology queried.

b) Economic Overview – General & Hospitality

EAG welcomed the submission of economic summaries [forwarded by the Department for Enterprise] but considered that any future information should be timely, factual, and of benefit.

046/2021 Any other business

a) Synopsis of CV-19 period ahead

EAG requested a “synopsis of the period ahead” if Council, or officers, were able to provide such, as this would affect the nature of advice.

EAG noted any proposed strategy, might contain a level of data already – but if not, more might be requested.

b) Financial Support

EAG noted that Council might wish to consider financial support for those living with Covid-19 in their plans.

c) Date of next meeting

Monday 16 August 2021 – 4.00pm via MS Teams.

The meeting closed at 05:40pm

Signed:

Date: