

**Minutes of a meeting of the Council of Minister's
– Emergency Advisory Group ("EAG") –
Held on Wednesday 01 September 2021 at 4.00pm**

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

Present:

Mr John Spellman (Chair)
Mr Steven Christian (via MS Teams)
Mr Peter Davidson
Mrs Jacqui Bridson (via MS Teams)
Professor Peter Edge (via MS Teams)
Ms Julie Hotchkiss (via MS Teams)
Mr Jonathan Wild (via MS Teams)
Mr Robert Mercer MLC (via MS Teams)

In Attendance:

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

Apologies:

Hon G Cregeen, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs (Vice-Chair)

054/2021 Declarations of Interest or Conflict:

None.

055/2021 Minutes of the meetings held on:

a) Monday 16 August 2021

EAG approved the minutes for publication, after routine distribution.

Action: Secretary to upload [per Publication Schedule]

056/2021 Matters arising:

a) P2 – Actions closed

The Chair noted a closed action in respect of received feedback from Council.

b) P4 – Borders Unrestricted Travel

The Chair noted that Council had deferred its decision [regarding the 31 August 2021] review date.

c) P5 – Long Covid Strategy

EAG noted the need for a strategy to address Long Covid. EAG further noted that DHSC were understood to have bid for a full-time consultant in ME and “longer term” conditions (Long Covid) – this was understood to be presently in-train subject to allocation of resource.

Action: Long Covid strategy update requested.

057/2021 Current Covid Strategy Assessment:

a) Summary of Vaccination Booster Approach (DHSC):

EAG noted the importance of the booster programme and the need for a comprehensive plan covering the logistics of delivery.

It was noted that Manx Care would lead, and that delivery was primarily an operational matter for which clarification could be sought – with the Isle of Man (“the IOM”) likely to mirror JCVI guidance.

EAG recalled their view that the Q4 Booster Programme remained integral to the Island’s ongoing pandemic effort.

The Chair noted the current approach was reliant on the majority of the adult population being vaccinated, hence the need to proceed at pace with boosters.

As the IOM moved forward with mitigation, EAG recommended continued prudent planning for Q4.

It was noted that the IOM had vaccinated more residents sooner, in the first instance, however parallels to the increased viral situation in Israel were noted.

Capacity issues and seconded resources were flagged as considerations.

EAG noted that the gain from a third vaccine might not outweigh any loss of other health services, if staff were diverted.

In summary, EAG:

- 1.** Welcomed Manx Care’s rollout plan for a booster programme, noting that a detailed rollout schedule was to follow.
- 2.** Recommended the rollout be attached to the seasonal flu vaccination programme.
- 3.** Queried whether there was scope to accelerate the rollout further.

Action: EAG welcomed future sight of Manx Care/DHSC’s Booster Programme Plan – and extended an invite for a representative to attend for dialogue.

b) Council Paper – Return to Schools Approach (DESC):

[Mr Graham Kinrade, CEO, Department of Education, Sport and Culture in attendance via MS Teams for this item]

Mr Kinrade summarised the operational model of Island secondary schools, with autonomy for local contexts, advising some challenge remained for clinically vulnerable students and Special Educational Needs Units.

EAG queried the alignment between press announcements and rollout of plans and recommended a joined-up approach.

EAG concurred that bringing students back to a safe environment was key, with an increased emphasis on wellbeing and anxiety reduction – mirroring society in mitigation.

EAG queried, and were advised, that LFDs were not considered for distribution on school sites – with the home delivery approach favoured; alongside extensive press and social media communications.

EAG queried if schools were potentially a higher risk zone – and recommended that DESC accurately calibrate CO2 monitoring devices in school settings – with reference to baseline levels.

Enquiry was made as to arrangements for clinically vulnerable staff, for which Mr Kinrade advised that extensive mitigation preparations had been made – with reasonable adjustments applied to each case.

Suggestion was made that DESC might liaise with the Island's private schools for consistency, and sharing of best practice.

Mr Kinrade noted EAG's points, and undertook to raise these in future meetings with Headteachers.

Action: Mr Mercer MLC to monitor developments on calibration of CO2 devices.

c) CV19 Testing Group Paper – LDF Screening in Schools:

The Chair noted this was for information and received.

058/2021 Standing Items –

a) Vaccine Supplies, Boosters and Preparation for Q4:

Professor Edge queried if IOMG might wish to revisit the legal definition of "fully vaccinated" cognisant of whether such might be time limited.

b) Mitigation & Outbreak Management Plan:

Mr Wild and Mr Christian volunteered to undertake a "lessons learnt" summary piece at an appropriate juncture – complimenting Government's own exercise.

c) Economic Impact:

(i) PWC Domestic Economy Review (Hospitality) June 2021:

EAG noted the circulated document, and queried whether an "Economic Impact Assessment" could assist with the transition to normality.

d) Covid-19 Long Term Strategy:

Covered at Minute: 056/2021.

e) Feedback from the Council of Ministers:

EAG noted the feedback received from the Council of Ministers in respect of the latest EAG Advice Note(s) and welcomed the format.

Discussion followed in respect of the degree of testing undertaken for new variants on-Island. Known variants were in circulation by the time of identification.

EAG queried if the latest Council of Ministers' Strategy would be available online.

Action: EAG invited more consideration on actively identifying new variants of concern.

059/2021 Requests for Clarity ("RFCs")

Requests for Clarity (RFCs)	Response	Dept.
1. Further information [on the number of people who tested positive at the border] as a percentage of the people who were tested, rather than the percentage of the total arrivals.	Stats from w/c 28 th June to 2 nd August were circulated. More info sought (per minute on 16 August). Chased 24/08, 31/08	Travel Notification Service

060/2021 Any other business:

a) Questions to EAG from Tynwald Members:

EAG noted questions received inviting the view of EAG for which Mr Mercer MLC undertook to revert with a reply.

b) Communications Strategy:

The Chair invited a communications representative to the next meeting – for an update and to check-in on initiatives – particularly in respect of aligning with Winter Care messaging.

Action: Secretary to invite Communications representative to the next EAG meeting for an update on latest CV-19 messaging pre-Winter.

c) Date of next meeting

To be held after the Isle of Man General Election 2021:

Thursday 30 September 2021 via MS Teams at 4.00pm

The meeting closed at 5:10pm

Signed:

Date: