

**Minutes of a meeting of the Council of Minister's  
– Emergency Advisory Group ("EAG") –  
Held on Monday 16 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, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs (Vice-Chair) (via MS Teams)  
Mr Steven Christian (via MS Teams)  
Mr Peter Davidson  
Mrs Jacqui Bridson  
Professor Peter Edge (via MS Teams)  
Ms Julie Hotchkiss (via MS Teams)  
Mr Jonathan Wild (via MS Teams)

**In Attendance:**

Miss S McCauley, Deputy Chief Executive, Department of Home Affairs  
Miss E Gaines, Cabinet Office, Secretariat  
Mr Mark Lewin, CEO DFE (via MS Teams)

**Apologies:** Dr Rachel Glover, Mr Rob Mercer MLC

**Minister Cregeen joined at the meeting in the Board Room at 4.11pm.**

**047/2021    Declarations of Interest or Conflict:**

None

**048/2021    Minutes of the meetings held on:**

**a)    Wednesday 04 August 2021:**

Minor amendment on Page 4 requested. Subject to that amendment the Minutes were approved for publication.

**(Sec)**

**Action:    Secretary to upload [per Publication Schedule]**

**Action:    Add MS Teams Link to agenda – for ease of access.**

**049/2021    Matters arising:**

**a)    New scheduling of papers agreed – minutes would be produced after the next meeting of CoMin.**

The Chair noted this had been adopted.

**b) Page 4 – feedback from CoMin – received written document before EAG meeting**

The Chair noted that feedback had been received shortly before the meeting and would be circulated.

**Action: Council feedback to Advice Notes to be circulated.**

**c) Page 5**

Refers to new strategy to be received by EAG. Chair advised this had been received and circulated to the group and was tabled as an agenda item.

**050/2021 Current Covid Strategy Document:**

**a) IOM COVID-19 Warwick Working Report – for information**

EAG noted the contents of the report but highlighted that the data was dated.

**b) Living in a world with COVID strategic approach – EAG draft**

The Chair advised CoMin have committed to a short-term strategy, and Mr Lewin will join the meeting, via MS Teams, to discuss feedback from EAG.

Mr Lewin thanked the EAG for their time and noted an email from the Chief Minister which also thanked the EAG for their contribution.

Mr Lewin opened with a situational update from recent Council of Minister discussions, which included:

- Current position on supply of lateral flow devices and testing approach.
- The recognition, and ongoing work on communication with businesses and individuals.
- The Chief Minister's request regarding a move to unrestricted borders from 31<sup>st</sup> August.

Mr Lewin introduced the strategy paper, noting that the document is not intended to set new policy but sets out current and short-term position of Council of Ministers. Mr Lewin noted the aims of the document and the desire for further feedback from EAG ahead of publication.

Mr Lewin noted difficulties regarding metrics and thresholds and advised of operational plans in place that sit under the strategy paper.

The Chair opened the discussion seeking views of the EAG on the document shared he asked Members to focus contributions on agreed topics: vaccines, mitigations, communications, metrics and border controls.

EAG noted the focus on personal choice, versus legal requirements within the document and highlighted the subject of schools where the legal requirement for children to attend overrides parental/personal choice.

EAG acknowledge that the document is a short-term strategy and that a new Government will be formed in the coming months, therefore a medium term approach to public health and mitigations should be considered.

EAG expressed the importance of metrics for front line services not just health and social cares. Mr Lewin noted that key services report daily on staffing levels and noted again the difficulties of thresholds.

EAG discussed the absence of references to education settings or the return of schools. The Chair noted that CoMin, in their response to EAG's advice notes, have provided updates on testing for school children.

EAG noted the continued need for refinement of data and Mr Lewin advised that Public Health are producing further data to assist.

EAG highlighted the mitigations available to businesses regarding monitoring CO2 in restaurants and public spaces. It was noted that guidance on limits on CO2 in these public spaces could be introduced, or mitigations such as the use of masks, or other measures, such as opening windows, where the CO2 is above a certain level.

Mr Lewin advised that whilst not desirable to impose more legal restrictions Government recognises that more guidance and messaging to businesses is needed on the quality of their environment and committed to include CO2.

EAG expressed that in relation to Border Controls clarity is needed on the need to take prompt action, which is useful for the public to be aware of in advance. The Chair linked this to the Chief Ministers point from his note; if a variant of concern emerges in the UK, the only protection we have is the borders if the vaccine becomes ineffective against the variant.

EAG noted that indications of when a decision of imposing restrictions has to be made is absent from the paper. Whilst, noting Mr Lewin's comments on metrics they highlighted that clearer signposting and refinement of metrics of how the hospital is coping would be useful.

EAG discussed further strengthening of the document regarding basic infection control and continued communications on low cost simple interventions such as strong advice to wear masks in public spaces, providing hand gels, wearing a mask until you get to your table in a restaurant. EAG noted that these do not need to be legal restrictions and should not impact the Island economically.

EAG advised that key to Personal choice is accessibility of information, so that the public can assess their own risk.

EAG sought clarity on the references to unrestricted travel within the British Isles by the 31<sup>st</sup> August. Mr Lewin provided clarity confirming that unrestricted travel means removing legal restrictions which stop non-residents coming to the Island. Testing and isolation may still be required. EAG highlighted the plateau in cases in the UK and the impact on cases in the IOM with further easing of border restrictions.

EAG noted that the term unrestricted travel raises too high expectations. There will still be border controls e.g. landing cards and health declarations. It is the categories of people that will no longer be controlled. Mr Lewin agreed that the language needed refining.

EAG discussed vaccinations asking Mr Lewin for clarity on when the booster vaccinations will begin. Mr Lewin informed EAG that boosters will be 6 months after 2<sup>nd</sup> dose and will begin in September and he will look to expand on that in the document.

EAG noted concerns regarding the number of deaths, and the current messaging when a death occurs which lacks compassion. Mr Lewin agreed to ensure this was feedback to Council of Ministers.

EAG advised that some language in the document lacked empathy regarding the impacts on individuals and the community. Mr Lewin agreed to ensure adjustments were made. .

EAG recognised that the issues regarding Long Covid needed to be further explored and addressed in a medium to long term strategy document.

In summary EAG advice on the strategy document shared:

- Broadly supportive of the strategy
- Concerns remain over the lack of mandatory mitigations
- Further changes to the border are accepted provided there are no variants of concern.
- The tracking of variants is important and messaging around how this might quickly impact on borders.
- Clearer communications required, specifically the additional mitigations businesses can introduce in public spaces.

- Beyond the capacity of the hospital, other metrics that could result in restrictions should be included.

The Chair informed the other members of EAG they were welcome to give their observations of the paper directly to Mr Lewin.

**051/2021 Chief Ministers Request for feedback on the easing of Border Restrictions on 31<sup>st</sup> August**

Mr Lewin highlighted that the EAG were clear on their view that border changes should have waited, but that CoMIN was seeking views on the anticipated further easing of restrictions at the end of August.

EAG confirmed their views given the level of infection of the ineffectiveness of reintroducing border restrictions.

EAG agreed that the 31<sup>st</sup> August should not be communicated as frictionless travel. Landing cards and health declarations will still be required, and variants of concern may lead to prompt action on Border restrictions from Government.

EAG advised that there were discrepancies between the UK's traffic light system, and application by Government particularly in testing requirements.

EAG noted that the terms 'Common Travel Area' and 'British Isles' and more consistency of chosen terms.

Mr Lewin noted these points and thanked the EAG for their feedback.

**Mr Lewin left the meeting at 17.08**

**052/2021 Standing Items [by exception]**

- a) Vaccine Supplies, Boosters and Preparation for Q4**
- b) Mitigation & Outbreak Management Plan**
- c) Communications**
- d) Community Support**
- e) Economic Impact**
- f) Covid-19 Long Term Strategy**
- g) Feedback from the Council of Ministers**

EAG noted that the above standing items were covered in the discussion of previous agenda items.

The Chair summarised to EAG that agreed areas of focus would be:

- Vaccination strategy
- Communications strategy

It was noted that Council was due to give further consideration to those issues, taking on boards points raised to date by EAG.

## **053/2021 Requests for Clarity ("RFCs")**

### **a) Request for Clarity Number 3**

EAG expressed that RFC No.3 was not clear. Further information on people testing positive still does not provide clarity. How many people arrived and how many people were tested needs to be clearer.

**Action: Feedback provided and further information sought from the Borders Team [RFC No.3]**

## **053/2021 Any other business**

### **a) Paper circulated prior to the meeting titled 'background material'.**

The paper was noted by the EAG and the need to revisit testing strategy following further feedback from Council.

### **b) Request for Director of Public Health to attend a meeting with EAG**

The Chair advised the feedback from Council of Ministers gave confirmation on the concerns regarding Public Health input.

EAG were satisfied with this confirmation and therefore agreed it was not necessary for the Director of Public Health to attend an EAG meeting.

### **c) Lateral flow devices**

EAG noted that the response to the advice note on lateral flow devices was included with the wider response from Council of Ministers and would be circulated after the meeting.

**d) Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September 4pm via MS Teams

**The meeting closed at 5.23pm**

Signed: .....

Date: .....