

KDC

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY CELL

(10th Meeting)

20th July 2020**PART A (Non-Exempt)**

Note: The Minutes of this meeting comprise Part A only.

Minutes.

A1. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell (the Cell), with reference to its Minute No. A1 of 29th June 2020 noted that the minutes for its meeting on 13th July 2020 had been circulated to all members. The Chair invited comments to be provided on the draft by email.

The Cell noted that its meeting minutes would be made publicly available following the States Assembly's approval of P. 88/2020 which, *inter alia*, approved that the Cell's membership, minutes, copies of the evidence it considered, and the data and reports it produced be made publicly available on gov.je and to Scrutiny Panels.

The Cell was mindful that its minutes had initially been drafted as confidential documents and that certain meeting records would contain information that should not be publicly shared, due to the risk it could lead to the identification of individuals (for example, where specific cases had been discussed), or release commercially sensitive information (for example, where testing had been discussed). It was requested that the Cell's minutes be reviewed and that sensitive information, as described above, be redacted before publication.

It was further noted that it would be unsuitable to share policy under development until a certain time period had lapsed. It was requested that timing for release of the Cell's minutes and related documentation was also considered in this context.

Monitoring Metrics.

A2. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell, with reference to its Minute No. A1 of its meeting of 13th July 2020, received and noted a paper, entitled 'PH Intelligence – Exit Monitoring Metrics', dated 16th July 2020, which had been prepared by the Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance Health Informatics Team. The Cell also received a verbal update from the Director of Strategic Planning and Performance who explained that since the dashboard had last been updated, the number of active cases of Covid-19 had reduced from 7 to 3. The Cell was also pleased to note that the individual with Covid-19 symptoms who had been admitted to hospital the previous week had now returned home.

The Cell noted that the dashboard presented in the paper would also become part of the information available in the public domain (Minute No. A1 of this meeting refers) and suggested that a few clarifications were added to the document before it was shared to ensure that it was easily understandable by a wider audience.

The Cell noted that there was travel data available, but that a further summary would be compiled and shared at a later date. The Director of Strategic Planning and Performance explained that out of approximately 7,000 inward travellers since 3rd July, 5 positive cases of Covid-19 had been detected. The Consultant in Communicable Disease Control highlighted that 3 of the positive cases identified had been from 'green' rated countries, and that this was a higher rate than initially anticipated. The Cell considered whether the profile of the travellers was also

different to that which had been initially anticipated; namely the initial rush of those who had been unable to travel under the previous essential or emergency rules. It was confirmed that the data would be monitored over the course of the next week and a further report presented to the Cell at its meeting on 27th July 2020.

In response to queries posed by members of the Cell, the Director of Strategy and Innovation, provided an update on the process and progress for pre-departure screening. It was explained that the process was currently 'clunky' and that many travellers were opting to wait and get a free test on arrival, rather than undertaking personal expense and inconvenience to arrange a test before their departure. It was confirmed that the future policy for pre-departure screening would be discussed with the Health Minister.

The Cell considered how the impact of freedom of movement in other countries affected their red / amber / green (RAG) rating and discussed this in the context of the reported rise of Covid-19 cases in Brittany, France and the possible associated risk posed by day trips to Jersey undertaken by individuals on the ferry from St. Malo. The Cell considered this element of the travel policy and queried why it was considered economically beneficial to permit day trips (either for leisure or business) when the travel advice suggested that 'short-term' visitors (less than 24 hours) were asked to limit their social contact whilst in Jersey. It was suggested that asking day trip travellers to have fewer (or no) interactions would mean that they would not be spending money in the local economy and it was queried what the economic benefit was, in comparison to the risk that was posed.

The Director of Strategy and Innovation confirmed that a more detailed update on short-term visitors, including data regarding the retail impact, would also be presented to the Cell at its meeting on 27th July 2020. The Medical Officer of Health, noted her apologies for the next meeting when this matter would be discussed further, but wished to place on record her concerns that the inclusion of 'short-term' visits in the travel policy was an element that could threaten the policy as a whole, which, she opined, should position Islanders and their wellbeing as the priority.

The Cell also received and noted a copy of a paper entitled 'Economic Indicators: Week 28, 2020' prepared by Statistics Jersey (the economic report). The Director of Strategic Planning and Performance highlighted that the economic report had indicated that the number of individuals registered as unemployed and actively seeking work was currently 1,830 people. Whilst this was noted to be 80 fewer than the previous week, the Cell noted that it was 980 higher than the comparable week in 2019. The Cell acknowledged that the report indicated that there was significant pressure on the economy and that this would be monitored over the course of the Summer.

Safe Exit
Framework:
Level One
Policy: revisit
to timescale.

A3. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell, with reference to Minute No. A3 of its meeting of 6th July 2020, received a report entitled 'Covid-19: Considerations for the decision to move to Level One of the Safe Exit Framework', together with draft 0.4 the paper entitled 'COVID-19 Safe Exit Framework: Level 1 Policy'. The Cell was also provided with a briefing in connexion of the same by the Group Director for Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance Department.

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The Cell considered the current epidemiological position and the critical success factors that would be required a move from Level Two to Level One of the Safe Exit Framework. It was acknowledged that the 'contain' strategy would be fundamental in Level One and a part of this would be an increase in the capacity of on-Island testing. It was reported that business compliance with public health guidelines was being considered as a challenge for Level One and, as an example, the Group Director for Policy advised that the Health and Safety Inspectorate had reported an increase in enquiries querying whether or not guidelines were enforceable. It was also noted that the request for pubs and bars to collect customers' contact details had not become 'the norm'. The Cell was advised that a week-long communications initiative was planned for August to educate businesses and the public about contact tracing and it was hoped that this initiative would positively affect compliance.

On a related matter, the Cell requested an update on the status of a proposed contract tracing app and considered whether details of this should be included as a critical factor for Level One. The Director of Strategy and Innovation, confirmed that development of a smartphone app was still being pursued and that an update paper had recently been presented to the Competent Authorities Ministers for consideration. As an update to the Cell, he advised that more discussion was needed and that, if the proposal and funding was approved, a period of approximately 6 weeks would then be required before the app could be deployed, realistically, in the Autumn of 2020.

The Cell was also advised that work was underway to update the standard methodology for assigning the red / amber / green (RAG) rating of countries (including regional variation) that was used to assess an individual's travel history. This included the capability to reassess each country and region on a weekly basis. The Cell was mindful that global trends had seen many countries drift towards the red category, however, the majority of arrivals in Jersey entered through the United Kingdom and, therefore, this was captured as their risk rating (even if their journey originated elsewhere). It was confirmed that the standard methodology used for rating would be brought to the Cell for its review.

The Director of Strategic Planning and Performance suggested including a brief reference to the border screening and proactive workforce screening testing regimes in place in the Level One policy document to provide reassurance that pro-active testing was continuing and part of the Level One measures.

The Chair referenced the work being undertaken to increase the Island's testing capacity and he queried if the same approach was underway for tracing. The Director of Strategy and Innovation, responded to confirm that the tracing capacity was working to affirm its resourcing and people, but that it was currently less fluid as a practice in comparison to the testing programme. He advised that IT improvements continued to be made for tracing purposes and the current text message arrangements would also continue. The Cell was also advised that the monitoring and enforcement programme had seen great improvement. The Cell noted that these measures all formed part of the 'contain' approach and needed to be working well for Level One, but that the next stage would focus on the 'supress' strategy. It was suggested that this information be emphasised in any public communications for clarity.

The Cell considered a suitable recommended approach to large scale gatherings in Level One. The Cell recalled its previous discussion (Minute No. A3 of 6th July 2020 refers) and was advised that the public health policy team had continued to consult the events sector, the Bailiff's Panel and States of Jersey Police contacts to refine draft events guidelines to cover a range of scenarios. For large (non-public) gatherings (such as weddings) it was proposed that events would be limited to 100 people indoors and 150 people outdoors in order to limit risks. These events would have to comply with public health guidelines. It was noted that places of worship and performing arts venues (such as theatres and cinemas), which had seated audiences would also have to follow the guidelines. Private social gatherings would continue to be limited to 40 people and the guidelines would remain unchanged from Level Two of the Safe Exit Framework.

The Cell recalled that public events required the permission of the Bailiff's Panel (the Panel). The Cell's previous recommendation had been that there should be no number limit placed on events, but that other contextual factors should be taken into account before approval was provided and the event organiser would need to demonstrate to the Panel how the public health guidelines would be achieved. The Group Director for Policy explained that the representatives from the Panel had requested that the Cell provided an upper number limit for guidance purposes in relation to large scale public events. The Cell considered providing a 'recommended' upper number limit of 500 people, but noted that if an event that could potentially (or informally) attract over 500 people was still proposed, the Panel could consider the application first and then bring it to the Cell and present how it could be run safely, for further consideration. The Cell was also mindful that the situation could change in the latter months of 2020 when the weather became colder and all events would be more likely to take place indoors. Whilst the situation and advice on large events was considered reasonable at this time, it was clarified that the advice could change for the latter half of 2020 and would need to be reviewed.

On a related matter the Cell received and noted a letter, dated 19th July 2020, which had been sent to the Chair by Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier in relation to the 2020 Jersey International Air Display. After discussion and consideration, the Cell agreed that it should not provide direct advice to individual event organisers. A response would be sent to Deputy Higgins to advise that, in accordance with the appropriate procedure, he should contact the Panel for consideration and that the Cell would liaise with the Panel to provide advice accordingly. The Chair undertook to send a written response to Deputy Higgins.

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The Cell considered what would be the appropriate timescale for Level One measures to be put in place and was advised that, whilst a number of Ministers were keen to progress to Level One of the Safe Exit Framework as soon as possible, there was no specific date proposed at present. The Cell acknowledged that there had been an upward movement in the number of cases during the previous week, however, this had subsequently reduced and there were therefore no concerning trends in respect of the data. It was suggested that there was not a large risk difference between Level One and Level Two, however, some members opined that the public were able to enjoy the summer during Level Two of the safe exit strategy and that retaining an element of caution, rather than the further loosening of restrictions, could be a sensible approach. The Consultant in Communicable Disease Control suggested that there had been a number of changes to the variable factors in recent weeks, especially at the borders and, as a result of this, opined that a cautious route should be taken, with more time to review the emerging data. Other members highlighted that the total number of travellers had been greater than the initial projections and, therefore noted a preference to monitor the situation before providing a recommendation for change. The Senior Statistician opined that, due to the number of inward travellers, the number of positive tests recorded was not unexpected.

In response to queries, the Group Director for Policy advised that the main risks of delaying a move to Level One of the Safe Exit Framework was the economic harm and fiscal impact on small scale events, the leisure industry and businesses that required close physical contact for certain services, such as beauticians. The Medical Officer of Health opined that this should not be considered as a major risk factor when balanced against the need to retain public confidence and safety. The Cell also noted that if there was any change to the situation at the borders, it would have to recommend the tightening of restrictions again.

The Cell heard an anecdotal report that the weekend night-time economy in Town was very busy and the Group Director suggested that, if this was causing a concern, the Cell could request conversations with the Director General, Justice and Home Affairs and the Group Director for Public Protection and Law Enforcement. It was confirmed that a weekly report compiled by the States of Jersey Police would be tabled to the Cell on a weekly basis in the future to form part of their considerations, but that it had not been tabled to date as it contained 'imperfect' data that was under review. It was suggested that the Police report was also accompanied by an activity report for the Town which could illustrate footfall (or similar) to illustrate whether activity was increasing, or remaining stable. It was explained that the data could help the Cell assess the impact of certain activities in the future.

The Cell also received and noted draft 0.5 of a paper entitled 'Draft Public Health guidance Level 1: Live music, singing and entertainment', dated 17th July 2020. The recommendation for singing, or performances with brass or wind instruments, was noted to be restricted to an aggregate of 30 minutes. The 30-minute timescale had been accepted by consulted faith communities, however, the Cell was advised that the recommendation had not been tested with live music venues and it was anticipated that they would want a longer period of time. The Cell queried the methodology behind the 30-minute time limit and noted the positive social and wellbeing aspects of live music and singing for the local community. The Consultant in Communicable Disease Control advised that the 30-minute timescale was a 'blue-sky' number, and therefore the Cell considered that this time period could be flexible if certain mitigations were in place, for example, physical distancing and, potentially, the use of visors. The final draft of the guidance relating to 'live music, singing and entertainment' would be signed off by The Consultant in Communicable Disease Control, rather than returning to the Cell.

The Group Director for Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance Department advised the Cell that the paper entitled 'COVID-19 Safe Exit Framework: Level 1 Policy' could be released as a draft document to various sectors in order for them to make preparations for any movement to Level One. It was confirmed that any decision to release the information would be made by Ministers.

Mandatory use
of face
coverings.

A4. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell received a report entitled 'Compulsory Face-Coverings in the Community' the content of which was duly noted and, also, received an update from the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control in connexion therewith.

The Cell was advised that there was no new evidence regarding the impact of face coverings on transmission risk, however, the available data had recently been re-presented in a number of articles. The Cell noted that the United Kingdom had taken the decision to make wearing face masks mandatory and, as a related request, the Minister for Health and Social Services had asked for further information and for the Cell to consider whether it would be advising the use of compulsory face coverings in Jersey.

The Group Director for Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance Department explained that Liberty Bus was keen to mandate the wearing of face coverings for bus travel, so that it could increase its passenger capacity. The Cell noted that airline passengers were expected to wear face masks on planes, but this was mandated through the providers rather than law.

The Consultant in Communicable Disease Control explained that, in his opinion, face coverings in public places should be encouraged at the current time, and he felt that it might be suitable to change the guidance to a mandatory requirement as Winter approached. The Cell reflected that a movement to mandatory face coverings in public spaces could act as a 'tool in the armoury' if infections did start to increase in the future. The Cell considered that there was an argument to introduce the requirement for face coverings before cases of Covid-19 started to increase, however, were mindful that this approach had to be balanced with a possible lack of public compliance if a risk was not perceived.

The Cell considered that it was difficult to make wearing face coverings mandatory from an enforcement perspective and discussed the differing approach taken by other jurisdictions, for example monetary fines were imposed by the United Kingdom (£100 for not wearing a mask on public transport, in shops or supermarkets) and Spain (up to €1,000 in indoor and outdoor public spaces where physical distancing could not be maintained).

The Group Director for Policy advised that there were other routes, as alternatives to legislation, that could encourage a public behaviour change in respect of wearing masks in public, such as communications messaging and public figures could set an example. However, she asked the Cell to consider and provide direction in advance if it felt that legislation for the use of masks would be an appropriate course of action in the Autumn or Winter of 2020. She explained that a recommendation should be provided at the earliest opportunity so that suitable preparations could be taken over the Summer period.

Preliminary
Planning
Report: Covid-
19 Vaccine.

A5. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell (the Cell) agreed to defer consideration of a draft paper entitled 'Preliminary Planning Report Covid-19 Vaccine' until its next meeting on 27th July 2020.