

KS

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY CELL

(32nd Meeting)

(Business conducted by electronic mail)3rd December 2020**PART A (Non-Exempt)**

All members were present.

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

Health advice on the continuation of physical schooling.

A1. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell ('the Cell'), received and noted a draft letter, dated 3rd December 2020, which had been prepared by the Chair of the Cell and was addressed to Senator T.A. Vallois, Minister for Education.

It was noted that the Chair had been asked to provide advice on whether there were any medical reasons, at the current point in the COVID-19 pandemic and mindful of the rising number of cases in the Island, why the schools should not remain open. The letter set out the views expressed by the Chair, colleagues within the Cell and Public Health, which was that there was no reason why the schools should shut early before the Christmas break, nor that learning should be moved online. The rationale was that there was limited effectiveness on the spread of the virus by closing the schools. Whilst there had been some transmission to children, this had largely been from adults, outside the school environment. Most jurisdictions, which had entered a second lockdown had kept schools and educational establishments open. Evidence demonstrated that the health impact of COVID-19 on children was very low, but there was increasing evidence of harm associated with keeping children out of school for longer periods, with the impact both on them and their families.

Members of the Cell accordingly endorsed the views contained within the letter and requested the Chair to send the same to the Minister for Education.