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SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY CELL

(11th Meeting)

27th July 2020(Meeting held via Microsoft Teams)**PART A (Non-Exempt)**

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

Monitoring
Metrics.

A1. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell (the Cell), with reference to Minute No. A2 of its meeting of 20th July 2020, received and noted a paper, entitled 'PH Intelligence: COVID-19 Monitoring Metrics', dated 24th July 2020, which had been prepared by the Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance Health Informatics Team and heard from the Principal Officer, Public Health Intelligence, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance Department. The Cell was informed that whilst the paper identified that there were 2 active cases of COVID-19 in Jersey, there were now 4 cases – all asymptomatic - with 2 positive cases having arrived in the Island over the weekend of 25th and 26th July 2020.

It was noted that the last confirmed case of an individual with underlying medical conditions had been on 15th July 2020 and that in excess of 30,000 PCR tests had been undertaken. The calls that had been made to the COVID-19 helpline, since it had been launched, were split almost equally between people that had symptoms and those that did not. It was felt that it would be useful for the future for the Cell to be provided with the reasons why asymptomatic individuals had made their calls and to also receive a breakdown of the calls received over the previous week. It was noted that during the week commencing 20th July 2020 (up until the evening of 24th July), there had been 2,552 inbound journeys, the majority through the airport. The Cell indicated that it would be helpful for it to receive a breakdown of how many of the travellers were returning Islanders and how many were visitors.

The Cell noted that most PCR tests were still being undertaken off-Island and that the average turnaround time for the results was 29 hours. It was clarified that this did not include the time taken to inform individuals of their results. The Cell recalled that those people who tested positive for COVID-19 received a telephone call from the environmental health team, but those testing negative received an automated text message. It was noted that there had been some issues with the information technology recently and some people had not received the text message. In these cases, people would be encouraged to telephone the helpline on 445566, which could redirect their calls to the environmental health team.

The Cell noted changes to the classifications of various countries, in particular Spain, which had been upgraded to 'amber' over the weekend. It was suggested that one reason for the sudden increase in the number of cases in Spain was the re-opening of the nightclubs and the Cell agreed that if this was the case, it would be important to learn from it. Whilst Catalonia and the surrounding areas in Spain had high numbers of cases, the Balearic and Canary Islands had significantly lower numbers and had asked to be exempted from the blanket 14 day isolation that had been imposed by the United Kingdom. It was agreed that the issue of regional nuance would increase in importance and work was underway to adapt the pre-departure notification form to capture that information from inward travellers, but it was acknowledged that it could be quite

complex. It was suggested that where there were discrete islands, to which there were direct flights from Jersey, it would be easier to draw a distinction between them and the 'mainland' country, thereby permitting them to remain 'green', rather than 'amber'.

In respect of the issue around day trippers arriving from France and departing before the results of their PCR tests could be obtained, the Cell was informed that one of the carriers which brought tourists into the Island, Manche Iles Express, had temporarily ceased trading, so the impact would be mitigated to an extent.

The Cell received a weekly epidemiological report, dated 22nd July 2020, which had been prepared by the Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance Department and showed the volume of positive cases and calls to the COVID-19 helpline with a fever on a 7-day moving average since early March 2020. It was noted that since the borders had re-opened, there had been a slight increase in the number of positive cases for the virus.

The Cell noted the Jersey Opinions and Lifestyle Survey 2020, which, this year, was a truncated version of the survey and asked particular questions around the impact that COVID-19 had had on people, to include their work, household income, work-life balance, alcohol consumption and relationships.

The Cell noted the Business Tendency Survey, dated June 2020, which had been prepared by Statistics Jersey and which showed that the proportion of businesses showing an increase in activity was 62 percentage points lower than those reporting an increase, which was categorised as extremely negative. The overall picture was significantly more negative than in the last quarter, with 7 indicators decreasing significantly and one (input costs) improving significantly. The turnover and actively working indicators were both extremely negative and the outlook for future business activity over the next 3 months was negative. In respect of future employment, the expectations were for a decrease of 23 per cent across all sectors, but it was acknowledged that this was based on perception.

The Cell received the Economic Indicators for the week of 13th to 19th July 2020, which had been prepared by Statistics Jersey. It was noted that, as at 19th July, there had been 1,790 people registered as actively seeking work, which was 40 fewer than the previous week, but 910 higher than on a comparable week in 2019. On 19th July there had been 6,380 active Income Support claims, which was 30 lower than the previous week, but 760 more than on a comparable week in 2019. During 2020, 424 properties, which were eligible to be included in the Jersey House Price Index, had been sold, which was a reduction of 105 over the same number of Royal Court sittings in 2019. However, it was noted that the number of transactions appeared to be increasing. With respect to bus usage, the number of passengers in the week ending 19th July had been 2 per cent higher than in the previous week, but 69 per cent lower than on the comparable week in 2019.

The Cell received a footfall report for King Street, St. Helier for the week of 13th to 19th July 2020 and noted that the figures were slightly improved on the previous week, by 3.8 per cent, but overall were significantly down on 2019.

The Cell noted the position.

Update to
strategic public
health policy.

A2. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell, with reference to Minute No. A3 of its meeting of 20th July 2020, received and noted a paper, dated 24th July 2020, entitled 'Update on strategic public health measures', which had been prepared by the Group Director for Public Protection and Law Enforcement, Justice and Home Affairs Department and welcomed her to the meeting. The Group Director for Public Protection and Law Enforcement indicated that the paper contained a non-scientific

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assessment of the effectiveness and impacts of the current strategic public health measures that were in place around COVID-19, viz delay, contain and shield.

The paper was modelled on the reports previously prepared for meetings of the Emergencies Council and the Group Director for Public Protection and Law Enforcement indicated that she wished to ascertain what would be the most useful information for the Cell to receive at its weekly meetings. It was noted that the report provided an executive summary, an overview of the previous week's activities and actions taken and an update from partner agencies (such as the Honorary Police), together with a summary of queries raised on social media in respect of the virus.

The Group Director for Public Protection and Law Enforcement informed the Cell that the States of Jersey Police had reported that the weekend of 25th and 26th July had been busy, with many people in Town. Some concern had been expressed around all venues closing at the same time, with the resultant pressures on the taxis and buses and large numbers gathering and discussions would be held with Liberty Bus and the Taxi Drivers' Association in this regard. Agencies were working together to increase compliance with the requirements under Level 2, particularly in respect of the logging of personal details in venues, to enable contact tracing to be undertaken.

The Group Director for Public Protection and Law Enforcement indicated that data to inform these reports would be collected on a Friday morning and the papers compiled by the Friday afternoon, for inclusion in the Cell's agenda for the Monday morning. The Cell indicated that much of the information that it wished to receive was already included in the report, but emphasised that protective measures and guidance served no purpose if members of the public did not comply with them.

The Cell thanked the Group Director for Public Protection and Law Enforcement for attending.

Safe Exit
Framework:
monitoring of
move to Level
One.

A3. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell, with reference to Minute No. A3 of its meeting of 20th July 2020, heard from the Group Director for Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance Department, in connexion with the proposal to pause movement into Level One of the safe exit framework.

The Cell recalled that, following its meeting on 20th July 2020, the Chair had sent an Executive Memo of Advice, which had been considered at the meeting of the Emergencies Council on 23rd July 2020. In that memo it had been stated that the Cell had reviewed the epidemiological situation and its advice was that there should be a further delay in moving to Level One, in order to continue to monitor any impact on case numbers for an additional 2 weeks and that it would provide updated advice on 3rd August 2020. It had concluded that the Cell 'could see no reason why it would not advise moving in 2 weeks' time'. The Group Director for Policy asked whether the Cell remained of the view that a move to Level One would be likely after 3rd August and what concerns it had that could be addressed to facilitate the move. She also indicated that members of the Emergencies Council had suggested that measures to move into Level One could be phased.

Having discussed the foregoing, most members of the Cell did not believe that the step should be taken to enter Level One from 3rd August 2020. In particular, the upsurge in the number of cases in clusters in Europe were referenced and whilst it had been anticipated that there would be an increase in the number of people testing positive for COVID-19 when the borders had re-opened on 3rd July 2020, these figures had been greater than expected. The Consultant in Communicable Disease Control, reminded the Cell that since 3rd July 2020, there had been 10 positive cases for COVID-19. Of these, 7 were people who had provided a sample on arrival into the Island and one was a close contact of one of those individuals. Therefore, 80 per cent of positive cases

were as a direct consequence of travel. Moreover, the border testing could not be 100 per cent accurate and there would be people arriving in the Island, who were incubating the infection and, as a consequence, would provide a negative PCR test at the ports. He urged caution in moving too quickly into Level One. Emphasis should be placed on testing and tracking and once on-Island capability existed to undertake PCR test analysis, this would reduce the turnaround time for results and provide reassurance to the public that risks were being minimised.

The Cell also agreed that, as time went by, it was learning more in respect of the epidemiology of COVID-19 and whilst it had been anticipated that the instances of the virus would remain low in the Summer, due to the heat, this had not always appeared to be the case, as had been evidenced by an upturn in some areas of Europe.

The Group Director for Policy questioned whether there were certain activities, contained currently within Level One, which could be introduced at an earlier juncture, which would not adversely impact on the risk levels. She indicated that whilst the macro impact of remaining in Level 2 was not too significant, some specific businesses and livelihoods would continue to be adversely affected. As an example, beauticians who were unable to perform lucrative treatments, such as facials; gyms which were unable to offer High Impact Training and businesses which were eager to move away from the default position of home working for their employees. She indicated that there was broad consistency across the world around which activities posed low, medium and high risks and showed the Cell various models, which clarified this in pictorial form. It was noted that the risks identified were on the basis of the risk posed to the individual and that it was important to be mindful of the 'trade offs' in terms of socio and economic wellbeing associated with the risks. It was suggested that it would be helpful to develop a Jersey-specific version of the risk diagram.

It was agreed that a formal advice note for Ministers would be prepared by the Cell to indicate that it did not recommend moving into Level One in the following week.

Preliminary
Planning
Report:
COVID-19
immunisation.

A4. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell, with reference to Minute No. A5 of its meeting of 20th July 2020, received and noted a paper, entitled 'Preliminary Planning - COVID-19 Vaccine', dated 20th July 2020, which had been prepared by the Head of Policy (Shielding Workstream), who informed the Cell that she, the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control and the Associate Medical Director for Primary Prevention and Intervention had been working on a plan to rapidly and appropriately deploy a COVID-19 vaccine, when it became available, acknowledging that it would be operationally challenging to inoculate in excess of 100,000 people and that there remained a number of unknown factors in respect of the vaccine, including whether it would be single, or multiple, dose. Decisions would need to be taken in respect of a number of different factors, such as procurement, budget, communications, digital support, infrastructure facilities and workforce training. Key decisions would be brought to the Cell in due course, once these were further advanced.

It was noted that it was extremely likely that the vaccine would arrive in small batches, in a piecemeal fashion and that it was important that the infrastructure was put in place to enable it to be distributed as soon as it was received, in a prioritised way, with key frontline workers to receive the first inoculations. Mindful that significant numbers of employees from the Health and Social Services Department had already been seconded onto the testing and tracing team, it was questioned whether the Health team, or the General Practitioners ('GPs'), were best placed to deliver the vaccines.

It was envisaged that the flu vaccine would arrive in late September, with plans to inoculate primary and secondary school children during the weeks before and after the Autumn half term. The Cell was reminded by the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control that the Health and Social Services Department acquired the flu vaccine for

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school children and healthcare workers, but not for the general population. The GPs and pharmacies were responsible for the latter and on the basis that it was proposed to reduce the target age above which people should be vaccinated against the flu down from 65 years to 50 years, an additional 15,000 doses would be required, so early communications with the GPs and pharmacies would be necessary. It was also highlighted that they might require assistance to source the extra doses, on the basis that it appeared that the United Kingdom would also be reducing the lower limit of the target age down to 50 years.

In respect of the COVID-19 vaccine, once the frontline workers had been inoculated, the key risk factor for the virus was age, so it was proposed that the next phase of vaccinations could be for those aged over 80 years and then 70 years *et cetera*. Children were not severely impacted by the virus, so they could be the last to receive the vaccine.

It was agreed that the Communications Team would work on communications for the public to explain the prioritisation of the COVID-19 vaccine roll out, clarifying that it would arrive in a piecemeal fashion; to encourage relevant people to take the opportunity to be inoculated against the flu and to address any key questions.

The Cell thanked Head of Policy (Shielding Workstream) for the presentation and she left the meeting.

Safer Travel
Guidelines
Review:
Interim Report.
S.R. 2/2020

A5. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell received a copy of the Safer Travel Guidelines Review: Interim Report, which had been prepared by the Safer Travel Guidelines Review Panel ('the Review Panel'), which had been established as an urgent response to the approval by the States Assembly of the amended Proposition of Deputy J.H. Young of St. Brelade, entitled, 'Open Borders arrangements' (P.89/2020).

The Cell noted that it was referred to in a number of the key findings of the Review Panel and that one key recommendation was that consideration should be given to having a separate medical advisory body to that of the policy advisers, in order that their views could be separately recorded, rather than the Cell, as currently constituted. Members of the Cell disagreed strongly with this finding and opined that the current structure worked extremely well. It was suggested that there might be merit in inviting members of the Review Panel to attend an informal meeting of the Cell, in order to provide it with greater awareness of the way in which it functioned.

The Cell was reminded that, procedurally, it was now for the Minister for Health and Social Services to formally respond to the findings of the Review Panel and that it would be helpful for the Chair to have a discussion with the Minister in this regard.

Dentists.

A6. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell was informed that electronic mail correspondence had been sent on behalf of the dentists to various recipients, requesting that they should be permitted to return to 'near normal' activity. It was recalled that there was not currently a Chief Dental Officer ('CDO') in Jersey to provide views, so the Cell would take into account the guidance of the CDO for England, on the basis that there was an element of parity between the jurisdictions and both were currently categorised as 'green'.

It was agreed that, having reviewed the guidance issued by the CDO, a response should be prepared for the Chair to send to the dentists.

Minutes.

A7. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell, with reference to Minute No. A1 of its meeting of 20th July 2020, recalled that, following the approval by the States Assembly of the Proposition of Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour, entitled 'Enhanced COVID-19 Exit Strategy Communications' (P.88/2020), the Chief Minister was required to make available the Cell's membership, appointment processes, evidence

considered and minutes by 1st August 2020.

The Chair indicated that he had held discussions with the Director General, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance Department, in this regard and would be reviewing all the Minutes of the Cell, with a view to ensuring that no personal or commercially sensitive information was contained therein, mindful that they had previously been drafted as 'Exempt' under the Freedom of Information (Jersey) Law 2011.