

DoF PRIVATE OFFICE - NOTE OF MEETING

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KN REF:	INV- 2102-2022		
TITLE/ORGANISATION:	EBSS Ministerial Taskforce		
DATE AND TIME:	26 August 2022 – 10.00 am		
VENUE:	<input type="checkbox"/> PB	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clare House	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
ATTENDEES: Chancellor of the Exchequer – Nadhim Zahawi MP SoS for BEIS – Kwasi Kwarteng MP Economy Minister – Gordon Lyons MLA Mike Brennan (DfE) John French (NIAUR) S 40(2)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SpAd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PS	<input type="checkbox"/> APS <input type="checkbox"/> Office Manager
OFFICIALS / OTHER	Barry Armstrong Thomas Byrne		
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED: <u>SoS for BEIS</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following engagement with NI Departments it is clear that delivery by October 2022 is not going to be achievable, and we may be looking at February 2023 for this to be delivered. <u>Chancellor</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmed that UKG can get the legal cover to deliver the scheme for households in Northern Ireland UKG is content to accept the risks involved in doing this, provided he has political commitment of support from NI Ministers. He is content to accept the risks involved in foregoing the 90 day consultation in order to bring forward the timescale for delivery. <u>SoS for BEIS</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmed support for foregoing the 90 day consultation. Content that risk is minimal in Northern Ireland as only six suppliers involved. 			

Chancellor

- Confirmed that he is content to hold this risk, and if necessary he will issue a Ministerial Direction to do so if required.

Minister Lyons

- Confirmed political agreement for UKG to deliver the scheme on that basis.
- Priority is for money to be provided to people in NI as soon as possible.

Mike Brennan

- Legal advice has been shared with BEIS.
- DSO and UKG lawyers have met and concluded that there is no legally available option for the delivery of the scheme by NI Departments.

John French

- Two main groups of customers in NI:
- Those with pre-paid meters which make up 45% of customers. These can be addressed relatively quickly, with a 4 to 5 week period to deliver a solution.
- Those with direct debit, or direct billing accounts will require a more complex IT solution and will take longer – potentially 2-3 months; however this will be made easier if a single £400 payment can be made, rather than the six monthly payments being used in GB.

Chancellor

- Confirmed content to go with whatever solution would make the technology work most quickly, and happy for it to be a single £400 payment.

Minister Murphy

- Legal advice has confirmed that the absence of an Executive means it cannot be delivered locally here.
- Expressed dismay that there will be a delay in it being delivered here.
- Every effort must be made to bring the delivery forward into the 2022 calendar year.
- While the £400 support is welcome, it is clear that the continuing increases to energy costs means that further intervention is needed by Westminster to support people here.

BEIS SoS

- It is anticipated that once the new PM is confirmed, that they will make announcement regarding further support measures.

Chancellor

- Confirmed that UKG will do everything to bring the delivery of this scheme in NI forward to before Christmas.

Minister Lyons

- Thanked Chancellor and SoS for BEIS for taking a pragmatic approach.

Minister Murphy

- Priority is to get the scheme delivered as quickly as possible to help people.
- DoF will provide any assistance it can to speed the process.

ACTION POINTS / ISSUES AGREED & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE

No actions for DoF

NOTE WRITTEN BY:

Barry Armstrong

DATE:

26 August 2022