

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC HEFS 1 (14) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY MEETING

**NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES,
ARMAGH**

30 APRIL 2014

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The seventeenth North South Ministerial Council Health and Food Safety meeting was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh on 30 April 2014. The meeting was attended by James Reilly TD, Minister for Health, Edwin Poots MLA, Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, and Michelle O'Neill MLA, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. Minister Poots chaired the meeting.

SECTORAL PRIORITIES

2. Ministers had a discussion on various priorities and noted that these will be contained in a report to be considered at a future NSMC Institutional meeting as part of the ongoing review into sectoral priorities.

HEALTH AND CHILD PROTECTION

HEALTH PROMOTION

3. The Council received an update on a range of Health Promotion work which is ongoing across the island of Ireland. Ministers noted that the EU Tobacco Products Directive will come into force in May 2014 and that the All Island Tobacco Conference, which was held in Belfast in November 2013, had allowed for the sharing of innovative ideas to benefit the health of people from both jurisdictions.
4. The ongoing collaborative work between the Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland and the Foods Safety Authority of Ireland on the voluntary display of calorie information on menus in catering business was discussed. It was noted that an online 'calorie calculator' had been launched in Ireland on 9 April 2014 and that the calculator will also be made available in Northern Ireland.
5. Ministers also considered the issue of suicide and noted that All Island media guidelines for the reporting of suicide and self harm have now been issued. They also noted that a joint conference, hosted by the Irish Association of Suicidology and Contact NI, had taken place in October 2013 which showcased global and local best practice in tackling suicide.
6. The Council welcomed the initiative being taken forward in both jurisdictions to support mothers breastfeeding their children.

ALCOHOL AVAILABILITY

7. The Council welcomed a presentation on *Reducing alcohol-related harm by addressing availability – Maximising the benefits from North South co-operation* by the Institute of Public Health in Ireland. Ministers noted the key findings and recommendations from a report into this issue and agreed that officials from both jurisdictions should consider the relevant findings and take them forward as appropriate in line with their respective Alcohol Strategies. Ministers requested that an update on progress be provided at a future meeting.

CANCER AND HEALTH RESEARCH CO-OPERATION

8. The Council received an update on the Radiotherapy Centre at Altnagelvin and noted that the business planning process for the development of the unit continues to be progressed. Ministers were advised that officials from both jurisdictions are working to finalise a Memorandum of Understanding and Service Level Agreement for the operation of the unit and that this work is almost complete.
9. Ministers welcomed the continued progress of the Ireland – Northern Ireland – National Cancer Institute Cancer Consortium and noted that the fifth of its series of international conferences will take place in Belfast during May 2015.

10. Ministers also noted the continued success of the US-Ireland R&D Partnership and welcomed the approval of a further project which aims to develop a novel test for prostate cancer.

CHILD PROTECTION

11. Ministers noted that the Child Protection work programme, agreed at a previous meeting, continues to be progressed and that updates will be reported to future meetings. Ministers welcomed the development of an 'App' to allow access to the North South Child Protection Hub.

FOOD SAFETY PROMOTION BOARD (*safefood*)

12. The Council noted a progress report provided by the Chief Executive of *safefood*. Ministers were briefed on the continued development of the awareness campaign targeting childhood overweight and obesity and noted the success of the international food safety conference which was held in Queens University Belfast. Ministers also noted a range of reports and surveys completed by *safefood* in recent months.
13. Ministers took the opportunity to thank the outgoing Chief Executive of *safefood*, Martin Higgins, for his work in the Food Safety Promotion Board over the years and wished him well for his retirement.

SAFEFOOD CORPORATE PLAN 2014-2016 & BUSINESS PLAN 2014

14. The Council was advised that *safefood* has prepared a draft 2014-2016 Corporate Plan and 2014 Business Plan. These Plans are currently progressing through the approval process and will be submitted to NSMC for final approval in due course.

ENHANCED NUTRITIONAL SURVEILLANCE

15. The Council considered a report on nutrition surveillance on the island of Ireland which had been prepared by the *safefood* Scientific Advisory Committee. Ministers noted the recommendations from the report on taking an all-island approach to nutrition surveillance.

APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM CEO

16. Ministers noted the progress to date in recruiting a new Chief Executive for the Food Safety Promotion Board and approved the proposal to install an Acting Chief Executive, if required. They also approved the proposal to reduce the salary of the CEO subject to the agreement of the Finance Ministers.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

17. The Council agreed that the next NSMC Health and Food Safety meeting will be held in Autumn 2014.

Joint Secretariat
30 April 2014

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