



Wes-Kaapse Provinsiale Parlement
Western Cape Provincial Parliament
IPalamente yePhondo leNtshona Koloni

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Report 9/ 2020

Ref: Health Update/'Adjusted' Alert Level 3 lockdown

Draft Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on COVID-19, in performing oversight over the work of the provincial executive authority as it responds to the COVID-19 pandemic, including oversight over any part of the provincial executive authority, any provincial department, any organ of state and any provincial entity involved in activities dealing with the pandemic, on the themes/meetings covered for December 2020, as follows:

The Ad Hoc Committee on COVID-19 consists of the following members:

Mr R Allen (DA)
Mr D America (DA)
Ms D Baartman (DA)
Mr G Bosman (DA)
Mr F Christians (ACDP)
Mr C Dugmore (ANC)
Mr B Herron (GOOD)
Ms P Lekker (ANC)
Mr P Marais (FFP)
Mr D Mitchell (DA)
Ms W Philander (DA)
Mr A van der Westhuizen (DA)
Ms M Wenger (DA)(Chairperson)
Ms R Windvogel (ANC)
Mr M Xego (EFF)

Alternative Members:

Ms L Botha (DA)
Mr R MacKenzie (DA)
Ms M Maseko (DA)
Ms N Nkondlo (ANC)
Mr K Sayed (ANC)
Mr D Smith (ANC)

Procedural Staff:

Ms L Cloete, Senior Procedural Officer
Mr M Sassman, Manager: Committees

1. Introduction and Background

The Ad Hoc Committee on COVID-19 (the Committee) was established by the Speaker of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament on 14 April 2020 in accordance with Standing Rule 119(1)(b) of the Standing Rules of Western Cape Provincial Parliament. The Committee was tasked with the responsibility to perform oversight over the work of the provincial executive authority as it responds to the COVID-19 pandemic, including oversight over any part of the provincial executive authority, any provincial department, any organ of state and any provincial entity involved in activities dealing with the pandemic.

The meetings have been held virtually, so as to comply with COVID-19 lockdown regulations issued by National Government, as well as a decision of the Programming Authority, to enforce social distancing rules.

2. Election of Chairperson, Adopted Themes and the Rules of Engagement

On 17 April 2020, Member M Wenger (DA) was elected to serve as the Chairperson of the Committee in accordance with Standing Rules 82(1) and 85. The Committee adopted 12 themes around which it would address the COVID-19 pandemic, also agreeing to hold two meetings per week, given the urgency of the matter. Each meeting would primarily focus on one theme. The 12 adopted themes were as follows:

1. Health Department Responses and Preparations
2. Policing, Security and Police Brutality
3. Food Security
4. Protection of the Vulnerable
5. Disaster Management and Local Government Oversight
6. Economic Recovery, Support and Livelihoods
7. Transport and Infrastructure
8. Schooling and Education
9. Human Settlements
10. Citizen Surveillance
11. Intergovernmental Relations and Community Cooperation
12. Government Finance and Budgets

Additionally, the Rules of Engagement during virtual meetings were indicated as follows:

1. All meetings would be open to members of the public and media via livestreaming;
2. All Members microphones must be muted at the beginning of the meeting to avoid background noise;
3. Members are to flag Points of Order in the Chat Function of Microsoft Teams (the application through which virtual meetings are held);
4. All videos and audio must be switched off to improve the quality of the connection; however, if a Member/Minister/HOD/Official is speaking, they may put on their audio and video;
5. Participants must switch off their microphones once they are finished speaking;
6. In terms of maintenance of order, in accordance with the "Directives for Sittings of the House and Meetings of Committees by Electronic Means", ATC'd on Friday, 17 April 2020, Section 8 states that "when a Member is considered to be out of order by the presiding officer, the presiding officer may mute the microphone of such a Member and call such a Member to order"; and
7. Section 10 of the Directives ATC'd on 17 April 2020 speaks to the application of Standing Rules. Section 10 states that "in instances where these directives are not clear or do not cover a particular eventuality in respect of sittings of the House or meetings of the committees by means of videoconferencing, the Standing Rules must apply as far as this is reasonably and practically

possible and, in instances where they cannot be applied, the ruling by the presiding officer must be final”.

Background - Resurgence/Second wave of the COVID-19 virus:

The WCPP was on recess during mid-late December when the province experienced a second surge/ wave in cases which were increasing daily. There were substantial increases in daily new cases, which were almost two and a half times higher than during the first wave, and hospitalisations and deaths continued to increase sharply. For this reason, the chairperson of the Committee, wrote to the Speaker of the WCPP on 23 December 2020 to request permission for the committee to meet during recess. The Speaker granted the request and members of the committee agreed to meet on 28 December 2020.

The themes/meetings covered in December 2020 included:

- An update by the Premier of the Western Cape and the Provincial Minister of Health on the COVID-19 pandemic, in light of the resurgence/second wave of the COVID-19 virus.
- An update by the Premier of the Western Cape and the Director-General of the Department of the Premier on the ‘adjusted’ Alert Level 3 lockdown
- An update by the Provincial Minister of Health and the Head of the Provincial Department of Health on the situational analysis of the pandemic in the Province, which focussed on the following:
 - The latest figures and expected peak;
 - Oxygen management;
 - Hospital capacity;
 - Fatality and mortuary management; and
 - Vaccine roll-out readiness.

3. THEMES: Health Update and ‘Adjusted’ Alert Level 3 lockdown

3.1 Overview and background

The Committee requested a briefing from the Premier, the Provincial Minister of Health and the Western Cape Department of Health for an update on the COVID-19 pandemic in the Western Cape, on 29 December 2020.

The purpose of the meeting was to receive information on the situational analysis of the pandemic in the Province in the light of the aggressive resurgence of the COVID-19 virus in the Western Cape Province, including information with respect to the progression of the pandemic, hospital capacity and staff capacity, projections for the next peak and preparedness, including staffing, oxygen supplies and communication with residents.

3.2 Observations and challenges

A. Background and statistical information:

- 3.2.1 The Premier, Mr Alan Winde, informed the Committee that the Province submitted a COVID-19 resurgence plan for the Western Cape to the President of South Africa on 4 December 2020, to enable the National Command Council to deliberate on the input of the Western Cape.

- 3.2.2 The President adopted a differentiated approach and declared the Garden Route a hotspot on 14 December 2020 and consequently closed all beaches and parks since an increase in infections was experienced in most municipalities in the Western Cape at the time. On 28 December 2020 the President declared the whole of the Western Cape a hotspot.
- 3.2.3 The Premier's Coordinating Forum (PCF) management system was established for the Province. The PCF's overall objective was for political and administrative leadership to engage in order to address matters of interest to the communities of the Western Cape.
- 3.2.4 The Department of the Premier continued to engage with Minister Mbombo, the entire health team as well as the advisors and epidemiologists to try to build a revised model since the Province was informed that a different strain of the COVID-19 virus had been detected. The teams then had to understand the implications of this new strain for the current model of the Province.
- 3.2.5 Regular meetings with Faith-based Organisations (FBOs) arranged by Ministers Meyer, Fernandez and Marais, continued to address the issues of reducing crowds and gatherings, which the FBOs agreed to. The Premier met with the agricultural sector as well to address the movement of seasonal workers, which poses a challenge as well to curb the movement of persons.
- 3.2.6 The Premier informed the Committee that as at Monday, 28 December 2020, the cumulative number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Western Cape was 196 474. The total number of COVID-19 related deaths was 6 332, and there were 151 261 recoveries. 1 005 085 tests had been completed and there were 3 064 hospitalisations with 363 of these cases in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) or high care.

B. Health Update:

- 3.2.7 Dr Cloete further briefed the Committee on the 5-point COVID Resurgence Strategy, which translated into the 5-point COVID Containment Strategy, focusing on the following:
- Changing community behaviour to prevent infection;
 - Surveillance and outbreak response;
 - Scaling up the health platform COVID capacity;
 - Maintaining comprehensive services; and
 - Safeguarding and protecting the well-being of health care workers.
- 3.2.8 The Province, as a whole, continued to see substantial increases in daily new cases, which were 2.4 times higher than in the peak during the first wave, despite limited testing due to public holidays and restricted testing criteria.
- 3.2.9 Hospitalisations and deaths continued to increase sharply. New hospital admissions were 50% higher and the number of deaths were 22% higher than the first wave.
- 3.2.10 With reference to the Resurgence in the different areas, the Metro continued to see steep increases in cases with nearly a double the amount of new daily cases compared to the first wave peak. Rural districts had nearly 2.5 times more cases in December 2020 than in the peak of the first wave. In respect of rural districts, the second wave peak had more than double the amount of cases than the Province had in the first wave peak, except for Central Karoo, which showed a 64% increase in cases compared with the first wave peak. The Garden Route continued to show a stabilising pattern but this was being monitored closely given the large numbers of visitors to the district.
- 3.2.11 At 29 December 2020, 3 131 COVID-19 patients were in acute Western Cape hospitals where 1 885 patients were in public hospitals and 1 246 patients were in private hospitals. Metro hospitals had an average occupancy of 103%, George hospitals were at 90% capacity, Paarl hospitals were at 101% capacity and Worcester was at 94% capacity.

- 3.2.12 The Primary Health Care (PHC) facilities were facing an increasing demand for COVID-19 testing and provided triaging for confirmed cases.
- 3.2.13 Hospital capacity at the time had 7 464 acute operational public sector beds, which excluded beds at psychiatric hospitals, Tuberculosis (TB) hospitals, Red Cross hospitals and Mowbray Maternity hospital, but was inclusive of 135 critical care public sector beds for COVID-19 patients.
- 3.2.14 613 Additional field hospital beds were made available in the Metro, 336 beds in Brackengate and 90 at Lentegeur, as well as an additional 187 intensive care beds at Lentegeur and 59 intermediate care beds at Sonstraal. Depending upon staff availability and if the needs existed, an additional 136 intermediate care beds would be made available across the metro and rural regions.
- 3.2.15 The Hospital of Hope (Brackengate), at the time, had 299 patients, and Sonstraal had 20 COVID-19 patients and 27 TB patients.
- 3.2.16 The mass fatality centre in the Metro has the capacity to hold 240 bodies. The mass fatality centre has admitted 106 bodies. The Province has a Mass Fatality Work Group that coordinates in respect of capacity across the Province.
- 3.2.17 Oxygen utilisation is running at 68.92% of the available daily capacity.
- 3.2.18 Temporary tents have been commissioned at Khayelitsha and Wesfleur Hospitals and would be ready for use from 30 December 2020 for admissions and discharges, which in turn will create additional capacity. Tents will be erected at Mitchells Plain Hospital and Brackengate by 31 December 2020, as well as at Eerste River, Helderberg and Karl Bremer hospitals, which will be ready by 8 January 2021.
- 3.2.19 The biggest challenge that remained was the impact of alcohol-related trauma on the health facilities, especially in emergency centres and in critical care units.
- 3.2.20 A daily oxygen need and oxygen utilisation dashboard has been established to monitor demand versus supply across all hospitals. The hospitals with the highest oxygen availability and utilisation pressures are Worcester, Mitchells Plain, Karl Bremer and Victoria hospitals.
- 3.2.21 AFROX is currently producing 65 tons of oxygen per day and the Province is currently using 52 tons of oxygen per day. AFROX agreed to make an additional 5 tons of oxygen per day available to hospitals.
- 3.2.22 The biggest challenge currently in the health sector is the increasing COVID-19 infection rate amongst health care workers and the impact on staff members in respect of isolation and quarantine. Additionally, the availability of additional staff members for contract work and via agencies poses a significant challenge. The number of persons volunteering their services has also decreased significantly.
- 3.2.23 At 29 December 2020, 926 Health Care Workers across 92 institutions were infected with COVID-19, which equates to 2.8% of the total staff complement of 33 062. A cumulative total of 7 215 staff members took COVID-19 related leave since March 2020.
- 3.2.24 There was sufficient Personal Protective Equipment Clothing (PPE) across all the health facilities, and in central storage, with additional orders being placed.
- 3.2.25 The Department has scaled up its system of on-site support for frontline staff in respect of mental health and well-being.
- 3.2.26 A pro-active strategy has been embarked upon to access the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) approved vaccines in the Western Cape and the National Minister of Health has been officially engaged on this matter. Technical experts will conduct a formal option appraisal of all available candidate vaccines in terms of efficacy, safety, affordability etc.
- 3.2.27 Prioritisation in the administering of the vaccine will be given to Health Care Workers and other essential workers, then vulnerable groups such as elderly persons and persons with co-morbidities.
- 3.2.28 The timelines provided and way forward regarding the vaccine includes SAHPRA approval and the sourcing and distribution strategy to provide vaccines in early 2021.

C. Governance arrangements, Law Enforcement, Communications response and Fatalities Management:

- 3.2.29 Dr Malila informed the Committee that the Premier convenes a weekly strategy meeting and the PCF meetings were held weekly over the holiday period.
- 3.2.30 The Provincial Disaster Management Committee (PDMC) remains activated for the COVID-19 pandemic and is monitoring the second wave. The PDMC Joint Operations Committee (JOC) briefing meetings take place every Tuesday.
- 3.2.31 Western Cape Provincial Traffic Services implemented a total of 274 integrated roadblocks, vehicle check points and speed control operations during the period 21 to 27 December 2020, and 22 685 vehicles were checked.
- 3.2.32 There have been 320 investigations into contraventions of the National Disaster Management Regulations since 27 March 2020. Of these 320 matters, 91 Section 71 matters were placed on the Liquor Licensing Tribunal case roll, of which 53 licenses were suspended.
- 3.2.33 The Western Cape Government has run extensive communication campaigns in all languages, using a variety of different media channels so that all communities were able to get the messages needed to stay safe. This was in addition to daily media statements, and the Premier's weekly DigiCons.
- 3.2.34 The City of Cape Town and all five districts revisited their Mass Fatality Plans and associated support plans with a view to ensure their readiness for implementation on short notice. All plans were shared with the District JOC and Joint District and Metro Approach (JDMA) structures.

5. Acknowledgements

The Chairperson thanked the Department of the Premier and the Provincial Department of Health for its hard work in the sector so far during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Chairperson also thanked the Members for their participation in the meetings held so far.



MS M WENGER (MPP)
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AD-HOC COMMITTEE ON COVID-19
DATE: