

Meeting between the Chief Minister and Infrastructure Minister

Time: 5pm (approx.)

Date: Wednesday 29th March 2023

Context

The Chief Minister had made efforts through her Private Office to arrange a meeting with the Infrastructure Minister earlier in the day. This hadn't been possible, and the Chief Minister's Private Office had been advised that a meeting wouldn't be possible until Friday 31st March at the earliest.

At the time of this meeting, the Chief Minister was in her office, without any further diary commitments that day, and the Infrastructure Minister ("the Minister") who had been in the Broad Street office for much of the day, was in the open plan office next door. As the Minister was leaving the office, the Chief Minister asked if he could be invited to have a discussion with her. The Minister returned to the ministerial office and the meeting commenced.

Meeting note

- The discussion began outside the Chief Minister's office. The Chief Minister said that she thought it would be helpful to have a discussion following the events of recent days, and the Council of Minister's meeting on Tuesday 28th March in particular.
- The Minister said that he didn't have much to add to what he had already said, but would have a discussion if that was the Chief Minister's wish and she thought it would be helpful.
- There was a brief discussion as to whether it would be best to postpone the meeting and reconvene at a later date. The meeting continued.
- The Chief Minister said that she thought her and the Minister had had a positive discussion on Monday 27th March, and was therefore surprised with the Minister's conduct in the Council of Minister's meeting the following day.
- The Minister said that he came into the meeting on Tuesday in an anxious manner because the meeting hadn't been in his diary, and he was therefore late (the Chief Minister later acknowledged that there had been issues with the diary invitation, but that a political discussion prior to formal CoM meetings had been a standard practice for some time).
- The Minister felt that he had given a positive interview to ITV on Tuesday 28th March, but that he had come into a hostile environment in the Council of Ministers room. The Minister said that he doesn't want to work in this atmosphere and he doesn't like it.
- The Minister criticised the Chief Minister's leadership and said that he doesn't have confidence in her leadership. He would be taking time to have one-to-one meetings with colleagues.
- The Chief Minister said that she was surprised by the Minister's demeanour at the Council of Ministers meeting and that she didn't recognise the atmosphere that the Minister had described.

- The Chief Minister said that she had been positive about her meeting with the Minister on the Monday and had relayed the positive outcome of the meeting to a number of colleagues. Nevertheless, Ministers had some questions regarding the Minister's decision to speak to the media regarding the CEO's departure.
- The Chief Minister said it was important for the Ministers to work together as part of a team. The Minister said that he had many years of experience of working with teams and knew about the importance of teamwork.
- The Minister asked the Chief Minister what groundwork she had done to develop support for him after their meeting on Monday and his ITV interview. He explained that he didn't feel his concerns are listened to or acted upon (the Chief Minister had relayed that she had been positive about their discussion).
- The Minister re-stated that he didn't agree with the way in which the Chief Executive Officer's departure had been handled and said that he couldn't cope with the way in which the Chief Minister deals with things.
- The Minister did not think the discussion was achieving anything further and left the meeting.

Comment

The Chief Minister noted that the meeting was tense throughout and that the Minister had acted in an aggressive manner, both in language and actions. The Chief Minister also noted that she remained calm throughout the meeting.