

Brexit Committee

Thursday, 11th March, 2021

MEETING OF BREXIT COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Flynn (Chairperson); and
Aldermen Haire, Rogers and Sandford; and
Councillors Baker, Brooks, Canavan,
de Faoite, Ferguson, Gormley, Hanvey, Kyle,
Magennis, McLaughlin, McMullan, Spratt and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Ms. K. Walsh, Business Research and Development
Manager;
Mrs. C Sullivan, Policy and Business Development Officer;
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were reported from Councillors Long, Newton and Whyte.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11th February were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st March.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Brooks declared an interest in respect of item 3 – Port Health Verbal Update, on the basis that he was employed by Gordon Lyons MLA, who at the time of the previous Brexit Committee meeting, had temporarily taken up the post of DAERA Minister, given Minister Poots' treatment for his illness, and he left the meeting whilst the item was being considered.

Presentation

NI Tourism Alliance - Dr J. Stuart OBE

The Chairperson welcomed Dr Stuart OBE, Chief Executive Officer of the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance (NITA), to the meeting.

Dr Stuart advised the Committee that the NITA was established in 2018 as a joined up voice for the tourism and travel industry in Northern Ireland, representing hotels, attractions, direct marketing organisations, tour guides and transport.

She highlighted that the tourism industry had been essentially closed since the end of transition period so many issues which might affect the tourism industry had not yet been uncovered. She added that tourism was a service with very little trading of goods and therefore not covered by the NI Protocol, however, supply chains in hospitality might be affected.

She advised that NITA was engaging with local and national government and gave the Committee an overview of the following four key areas it was focusing on:

1. Sharing of data;
2. Access to skills;
3. Reopening and rebuilding; and
4. Licenses and cabotage.

Dr. Stuart reported that these were the main focus areas for tourism, but that more issues would be identified as the sector reopened, and that NITA would be working closely with businesses to try and anticipate issues in advance.

In response to a question from a Member regarding domestic tourism, Dr. Stuart stated that the domestic tourism market was hugely important and that, in 2019, domestic tourism accounted for over 30 percent of the tourism business in Northern Ireland and, in 2020, it was shown to have been even more important as more local people holidayed at home.

She advised that Great Britain was the biggest market for Northern Ireland, followed by domestic tourism and tourism from the Republic of Ireland, and that in 2020, there had been a 200 percent increase in tourism from the Republic of Ireland, subsequently, feedback had suggested that Northern Ireland had far exceeded expectations. However, she reported that 2021 could be a challenging year due to the differences in the roll out of vaccination programmes.

The Chairperson thanked Dr. Stuart for her presentation and she retired from the meeting.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the discussion and presentation associated with the following 2 items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the Members of the Press and public from the Committee meeting during the presentation and discussion on the following item as, due to its nature, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust - Ms. J. Kennedy

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. J. Kennedy, Director of HR and Organisational Development at Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) to the meeting.

Ms. Kennedy provided the Committee with an overview of the implications of the NI Protocol on the delivery of services from the BHSCT.

Following discussion, the Committee thanked Ms. Kennedy for her presentation and she retired from the meeting.

Port Health Unit - Verbal Update

The City Solicitor and Director of City Services presented the Committee with an update on the Port Health Unit.

The Committee noted the update.

Chairperson