

Brexit Committee

Thursday, 11th November, 2021

MEETING OF THE BREXIT COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Baker (Chairperson); and
Alderman Rodgers and Sandford; and
Councillors Brooks, de Faoite, Ferguson,
Flynn, Gormley, Hanvey, T. Kelly, Long,
Magennis, McKeown, Spratt and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Ms. N. Largey, Divisional Solicitor;
Mr. R. Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer;
Mr. D. Cuthbert, City Protection Manager;
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of The Deputy Lord Mayor, Alderman Haire, and Councillors Canavan, Kyle and McLaughlin.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 9th September were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th October.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Schedule of Meetings 2022

The Committee approved the schedule of meetings for the Brexit Committee as outlined below and agreed that all meetings would commence at 5.15 pm:

- Thursday, 13th January
- Thursday, 10th February
- Thursday, 10th March
- Thursday, 7th April
- Thursday, 12th May

- Thursday, 9th June
- Thursday, 11th August
- Thursday, 15th September
- Thursday, 13th October
- Thursday, 10th November
- Thursday, 8th December

Brexit: Impact on the Foodservice Supply Chain

Mr. C. Neill, Hospitality Ulster, attended in connection with this item and was welcomed by the Chairperson.

Mr. Neill provided the Committee with a presentation on the impact of the Brexit deal and the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol was having on the Foodservice Supply Chain.

He highlighted the potential negative implications for the Province should the post easement adjustments end on 1st January, 2022 and referred to specifically to the following:

- Reduced delivery frequency
- Increased Lead times
- Waste
- Increase costs to the consumer; and
- A reduction in product range and consumer choice.

Mr. Neill reported that staff recruitment and retention in respect of the hospitality industry had proved to be challenging and, in response to a question from a Member in regard to terms and conditions of employment within the hospitality, including staff pay, he stated that the hospitality industry had made significant progress recently in dealing with those specific issues. Mr. Neill stated that while the industry was investing in both staff training and development he recognised however that more needed to be done to attract staff and encourage investment within the hospitality sector.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Mr. Neill for his detailed and informative presentation and he departed 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.

**Future of the Brexit Committee: Reconfiguration
as Climate and City Resilience Committee**

The City Solicitor submitted a report for consideration by the Committee in regard to a draft Terms of Reference which would affect a realignment of the Brexit Committee within a post Brexit environment to a Climate and City Resilience Committee, with responsibility for the oversight of climate and resilience strategies for the city.

After detailed discussion, upon which a range of views were expressed on the most appropriate name for the Committee, the Committee agreed that the City Solicitor, having taken the Committee's views on board, refer the matter to the Party Group Leaders' Forum for further consideration.

The Committee was presented further with the following draft Terms of Reference:

- i. Political oversight of the Resilience Strategy for Belfast including Liaising with the Belfast Resilience and Sustainability Board;
- ii. Influencing and contributing to regional considerations of the implications of Climate Change on both the work of the Council and on the City;
- iii. Understanding the economic risks to the city associated with Climate Change, including how it might impact the ability of Belfast to contribute to attract and retain investment and grow the rate base;
- iv. Monitoring the particular implications of Climate Change for vulnerable and disadvantaged communities across the city and to actively plan with them under the principles of a Just Transition;
- v. To consider public campaigns/public education programmes which the Council may wish to deliver to change behaviour among residents and businesses;
- vi. To take account of the Council's statutory responsibilities on sustainable development and relevant Programme for Government commitments; and to hear evidence from other parties;
- vii. To consider good practice from other cities and local authorities from the UK, Ireland and internationally;
- viii. The continuous monitoring of progress and announcements around Brexit;
- ix. Influencing and contributing to regional considerations of the implications of Brexit on both the work of the Council and on the district;

- x. To foster and maintain positive relations and cultural links with the EU post Brexit
- xi. Identifying any actions the Council may take to mitigate any adverse impacts arising and capitalising on any opportunities as a result of Brexit;
- xii. Establishing links and collaborating with relevant authorities and organisations on a North/South and East/West basis and connections with Europe;
- xiii. To work collaboratively with the Shared Island Unit to avail of funding opportunities and deal with strategic issues and challenges to the benefit of our citizens.

The Committee agreed the Terms of Reference as presented, however, as a Member had raised concerns in respect of item 13, the Committee agreed that the remit of the Committee in respect of that item be taken back for further consideration.

The Committee agreed further that, in addition to endorsing the amended Brexit Terms of Reference, its remit be extended to:

1. Review each Council Department's carbon footprint and set realistic climate targets, for each department, to enable the Council to become net zero;
2. Provide oversight of the Council's environmental initiatives;
3. Build in inclusive growth elements from other Committees and wider economic issues and incorporate the work of the Working Group on the Climate Crisis;
4. Secure increased funding and staff resources to take account of the additional responsibilities undertaken by the Committee; and
5. Include a workshop being held for Members to consider, in greater detail, the work of the Committee moving forward, including the development of a workplan.

Update on Port Health

The Committee noted the contents of a report providing an update on the Council's Port Health operations and delivery of imported food controls in the context of the continuing UK government/EU discussions in relation to implementation of the NI protocol.

Subsidy Control Bill

The Committee adopted the recommendation of the City Solicitor to defer the Subsidy Control Bill to a future meeting.

Date of Next Meeting

The Committee agreed that its next meeting be held on Thursday, 9th December at 5.15 p.m.

Chairperson