

Extract of Minutes of Meeting of Brexit Committee 11th October, 2018

Update on Proposed Programme for All-Party Delegation to Brussels

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 20th September, it was agreed that an all-Party delegation from the Council undertake a visit to Brussels to engage with EU officials to represent the views of the Council in relation to Special Designated Status, remaining in the single market and the Council's position on the Backstop, and to engage with EU funding bodies about our future participation in EU funding programmes.

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

The purpose of this report is to outline for Members the proposed objectives and logistics for a delegation to visit Brussels.

2.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to consider the proposals for the visit, as outlined in this report, and recommend it to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for agreement.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

Members are reminded that at the September meeting of this Committee it was agreed:

‘That an all-Party delegation from the Council undertake a visit to Brussels to engage with EU officials to represent the views of the council in relation to Special Designated Status, remaining in the single market and the Council’s position on the Backstop; and to engage with EU Funding Bodies about our future participation in EU Funding Programmes.’

Following on from this agreement the Council’s Commissioner for Resilience met with the Head of NI Executive Office in Brussels, while in the city for the EU Week of Regions and Cities, and discussed a proposed approach for the visit.

Objectives of a Delegation to Brussels

The following objective are proposed for the visit:

- To receive an update on negotiations on UK withdrawal for EU – meeting with the UK representation on the negotiations.**

- To gain an understanding - from an EU perspective - on the options for a future relationship with the UK, following withdrawal.
- To discuss in detail the particular issues concerning the withdrawal agreement for Northern Ireland, and for Belfast in particular.
- To meet members from EFTA countries and the EEA and discuss management of the relationship with the EU e.g. Canton delegation in Switzerland, embedded in the mission from Switzerland.
- To meet senior staff from the EU Committee of the Regions.
- To meet lead staff from other UK cities with a permanent presence in Brussels, regarding preparation for Brexit at city level.

Logistics

- It is proposed that the delegation travel in early December - at this point it is expected that negotiations will have passed a critical milestone. The visit will be well timed irrespective of the outcome of negotiations - if the EU and UK have agreed terms, it will allow the delegation the opportunity to consider the detail of those terms and what it might mean for city planning. If terms have not been agreed, members will be in a position to discuss potential implications for the UK and for the city of Belfast.
- It is hoped that the NI Executive Office in Brussels will help to host meetings and arrange introductions at agency level. During this period we will also seek to meet NI MEPs who we hope will also host relevant introductions and meetings.
- It is expected that the delegation will take place across three working days, with two nights spent in Brussels.
- Flights and accommodation will be arranged to facilitate maximum opportunity for meetings to take place.

It is proposed that the all-party delegation will be made up of the Chair and Deputy Chair, or their nominees, and a representative from each of the other four parties. The delegation will be accompanied by two officers.

Financial & Resource Implications

It is expected that return flights plus two nights' accommodation and cost of meals and transport will be approximately £1000 per delegate. Formal approval will be sought from Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

There are no implications relating to this report.”

Arising out of discussion in the matter, it was

Moved by Councillor Carson,
Seconded by Councillor O'Hara,

That the Committee approves the proposed objectives and logistics for the all-Party delegation visit to Brussels, subject to point six being amended to include Irish cities as well as UK cities and to the Lord Mayor or Deputy Lord Mayor accompanying the delegation.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor McAllister,
Seconded by Councillor Nicholl,

That the Committee agreed to the proposed objectives and logistics for the all-Party delegation visit to Brussels, as set out in the report.

On a vote by show of hands, four Members voted for the proposal and ten members against and it was declared lost.

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor Carson and seconded by Councillor O'Hara was put to the meeting when, on a vote by show of hands, nine Members voted for the proposal and five against, and it was declared carried.