

**Democratic Services Section
Legal and Civic Services Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**



**Belfast
City Council**

11th November, 2020

MEETING OF BREXIT COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet via Microsoft Teams on Thursday, 12th November, 2020 at 5.15 pm, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

SUZANNE WYLIE

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. **Routine Matters**

- (a) Apologies
- (b) Minutes
- (c) Declarations of Interest
- (d) Schedule of Meetings for 2021 (Pages 1 - 2)
- (e) Correspondence - Response from the Minister of State for Northern Ireland (Pages 3 - 6)

2. **Presentations**

- (a) Presentation from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions - Kevin Doherty (Union Services Officer NI)

3. **Update from Attendance at Committee of the Executive - Brexit Stakeholder Event (Pages 7 - 10)**

4. **Update on Brexit Preparedness (Pages 11 - 14)**



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| Subject: | Schedule of Meetings 2021 |
| Date: | 12th November, 2020 |
| Reporting Officer: | Carolyn Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer |
| Contact Officer: | Carolyn Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer |

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| Restricted Reports | |
| Is this report restricted? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted? | |
| After Committee Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| After Council Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Some time in the future | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Never | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| Call-in | |
| Is the decision eligible for Call-in? | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| 1.0 | Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues |
| | To advise the Committee of the dates and times of the meetings of the Brexit Committee between January and December, 2021. |
| 2.0 | Recommendations |
| | The Committee is requested to approve the schedule of meetings for the Brexit Committee as outlined. |
| 3.0 | Main report |
| | <u>Key Issues</u> |
| 3.1 | The monthly meeting of the Brexit Committee is normally held at 5.15p.m. on the 2nd Thursday of each month. |

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| 3.2 | Accordingly, the following dates have been identified for meetings of the Brexit Committee for the period from January to December, 2021. |
| 3.3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday, 14th January • Thursday, 11th February • Thursday, 11th March • Thursday, 15th April • Thursday, 13th May • Thursday, 10th June • Thursday, 12th August • Thursday, 9th September • Thursday, 14th October • Thursday, 11th November • Thursday, 9th December <p>(All meetings will commence at 5.15 p.m.)</p> |
| 3.5 | <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p> |
| 3.6 | <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p> |
| 4.0 | <p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p> <p>None associated with this report.</p> |



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| Subject: | Response from Minister of State for Northern Ireland |
| Date: | 12th November, 2020 |
| Reporting Officer: | Carolyn Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer |
| Contact Officer: | Carolyn Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer |

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| Restricted Reports | |
| Is this report restricted? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted? | |
| After Committee Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| After Council Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Some time in the future | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Never | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| Call-in | |
| Is the decision eligible for Call-in? | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| 1.0 | Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues |
| | Correspondence has been received from the Minister of State for Northern Ireland, Mr. Robin Walker MP, in response to the Brexit Committee's letter in relation to the UK Government's commitment to the NI Protocol. |
| 2.0 | Recommendations |
| | The Committee is asked to note the response received from the Cabinet Office. |
| 3.0 | Main report |
| 3.1 | The Committee is reminded that, at its meeting on 10th September, Members agreed to the following proposal which was ratified by Council at its meeting on 1st October: |

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| 3.2 | <p>“This Council notes with concern that provisions held within the recently published “Internal Market Bill” seek to undermine the agreed protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland. This protocol guarantees that, whatever the circumstances post the end of the transition period, that there will be no hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, it protects provisions held within the Good Friday Agreement, preserves North-South cooperation and maintains the all-island economy.</p> <p>This Council further notes with concern that comments made recently by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland outlines the Government’s ambition to break international law as set out within the Withdrawal Agreement.</p> |
| 3.3 | <p>This Council will write to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the EU Chief Negotiator Michel Barnier, and the Taoiseach Micheál Martin, to reiterate this Council’s support for the Irish protocol and furthermore express our concern and urge the British Government to honour its commitments to the people of Northern Ireland, and to the EU and to ensure the full implementation of the agreed protocol, and prioritise peace and stability on the Island of Ireland.</p> <p>Furthermore this Council will write to Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, Chair of the Ways and Means Committee, Representative Richard Neal, and US Representative Brendan Boyle to thank them on behalf of the citizens of Belfast on their public stance in relation to their intention to vote down any trade deal with the British Government if they break the terms of the Good Friday Agreement and to ask them to remain steadfast in their resolve to protect the rights of the citizens of this island and to continue to protect the Good Friday Agreement in all of its parts.”</p> <p>Democratic Services wrote to the aforementioned persons on 2nd October, 2020 to respond with any comments which they might wish to make in relation to the Council’s position.</p> <p>A response from the Northern Ireland Office is attached at Appendix 1.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> None</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None</p> |
| | <p>Appendices</p> |
| | <p>Appendix 1 – Response received from the Minister of State for Northern Ireland.</p> |



Northern
Ireland
Office

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Louise McLornan
Democratic Services Officer
Belfast City Council
Legal and Civic Services Department
City Hall
Belfast BT1 5GS

mclornanl@belfastcity.gov.uk

22nd October 2020

Dear Louise McLornan,

Thank you for your correspondence dated 2 October regarding the motion passed by Belfast City Council's Brexit Committee in September. I am responding on behalf of the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

I would first like to address the Committee's comments on the UK Internal Market Bill. It is an established principle of international law that a state is obliged to discharge its treaty obligations in good faith. This is, and will always remain, the key principle in informing the UK's approach to international relations. However, in these exceptional circumstances the UK Government has taken limited and reasonable steps in order to deliver the wider objectives recognised in the Ireland and Northern Ireland Protocol itself, which is to protect the Belfast ("Good Friday") Agreement and to maintain and strengthen the UK internal market. Our actions to secure unfettered access for Northern Ireland businesses trading with the rest of the UK reflect precisely those objectives, protecting key markets and supply chains on which so many businesses in Northern Ireland rely.

The Government will continue to work with the EU in the Joint Committee to resolve the issues with the Protocol – that is our overriding priority. However, as a

responsible Government, we cannot allow the gains of the peace process or the smooth functioning of the UK's internal market to inadvertently be compromised by unintended consequences of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

With regards to free trade agreements, we are continuing to engage constructively with the EU and other countries, including the US, so that the UK can seize the opportunities of its new status. Indeed, the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement was agreed in principle on 11 September, which will secure additional benefits beyond the EU-Japan trade deal and will give UK companies exporting to Japan a competitive advantage in a number of areas. It will help to create jobs and drive economic growth throughout the whole of the UK. Northern Ireland stands to benefit and build upon its strong agricultural exports to Japan, with Northern Ireland's agri-food sector benefiting from reduced tariffs on products such as beef. Last year, Northern Ireland meat and meat preparations exports to Japan were £3.6 million.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robin Walker', written in a cursive style.

ROBIN WALKER MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND



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| Subject: | Update on attendance at Committee for the Executive Office: Brexit stakeholder event |
| Date: | 12 November 2020 |
| Reporting Officer: | John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal and Civic Services |
| Contact Officer: | Claire Sullivan, Policy and Business Development Officer |

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| Restricted Reports | |
| Is this report restricted? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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| After Committee Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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| Some time in the future | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Never | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| Call-in | |
| Is the decision eligible for Call-in? | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| 1.0 | Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues |
| | The purpose of this report is to update Members on the appearance of the Chair and City Solicitor at the Committee for the Executive Office's Brexit stakeholder event on the 4 th November 2020. |
| 2.0 | Recommendations |
| | Members are asked to note the update provided. |
| 3.0 | Main report |
| | <u>Key Issues</u> |

Members are reminded that at its October meeting, they agreed that the Council accept the invitation from the Committee for the Executive Office, to attend its Brexit stakeholder event which was held on the 4th November. The purpose of the event was to provide local councils with an opportunity to brief Committee Members on any issues and concerns they might have as a result of the UK's exit from the European Union. It was agreed that the Chair of the Brexit Committee and the City Solicitor attend the event.

Members are advised that they can view a recording of the Committee for the Executive Office meeting at <https://niassembly.tv/committee-for-the-executive-office-meeting-wednesday-4-november-2020/>

Key issues that were raised by the Chair and City Solicitor during their presentation were:

- Key council services recently undertook a review of preparedness and potential issues have been identified around impact on supply chains and higher costs
- Potential issues at Belfast Port – uncertainty around what new checks will be required; the need to ensure sufficient funding to cover any additional staffing costs, and greater clarity is required on contingency arrangements to ensure trade is not adversely impacted and to avoid delays at the ports of entry
- Shared Prosperity Fund - Councils should have a role and work in partnership in co-designing the way in which SPF is allocated and managed and there is a need to ensure monies align with regional priorities such as employment opportunities, economy and tourism
- Potential for higher living costs for residents and the impact on vulnerable people – the need to build on the partnership work that was developed with DfC and the community sector as a response to Covid to ensure that any support required as a result of the end of the transition period is delivered
- There are potential impacts on the city's economy in particular on key sectors including services, finance and the fact that Belfast is predominantly a micro business economy
- Belfast is significantly reliant on the visitor economy and one key sub-sector is business tourism - the uncertainty around the future relationship has already had a negative impact on future bookings
- The challenges of preparing for Brexit have been made much more difficult by the current circumstances as a result of the pandemic
- A key thread running through the presentation was the need for the Executive to clarify future funding arrangements for local government to help them address any impacts arising from the ending of the transition period

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| | <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial or resource implications relating to this report.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no implications relating to this report.</p> |
| | <p>Appendices</p> |
| | <p>None</p> |

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| Subject: | Update on Brexit Preparedness |
| Date: | 12 November 2020 |
| Reporting Officer: | John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal and Civic Services |
| Contact Officer: | Claire Sullivan, Policy and Business Development Officer |
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| After Council Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Some time in the future | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Never | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| Call-in | |
| Is the decision eligible for Call-in? | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| 1.0 | Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues |
| | The purpose of this report is to update Members on the process to review the readiness of the council's critical and other key services for the end of the Brexit transition period on 31 st December 2020. |
| 2.0 | Recommendations |
| | Members are asked to note the contents of this report. |
| 3.0 | Main report |
| | <u>Key Issues</u> |

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| | <p>Members are reminded that a process to review the readiness of the council's critical and other key services for the end of the Brexit transition period on 31st December 2020 has been ongoing. The aim is to provide assurance to Committee and senior management that the Council's critical services will be ready for the end of the transition period and to identify any further actions that may need to be taken. The services were asked to review and update the readiness templates that they had produced previously (September 19) and an analysis of the returns is currently underway.</p> |
| | <p>Some of the key issues raised include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All of our critical services continue to seek assurances that from partners and suppliers that they have suitable contingency plans in place to deal with any negative impacts of Brexit.• Food Safety, Port Health and Waste & Fleet services remain the key critical services which are likely to experience the greatest impact as a result of a 'no free trade deal' Brexit. There remains uncertainty and lack of clarity around the checks that will be required for the movement of goods from GB to NI and vice versa and the potential costs involved.• Six of the fifteen critical services noted that there had been no change to their assessments since their last Brexit readiness review in September 2019.• There may be financial and other impacts upon council services in terms of availability and access to goods and components, supplier backlogs and costs passed on by suppliers to cover increased tariffs and resources required to carry out additional administrative duties.• It is possible that we could see an increase in lead times and costs of supplies for various services given the increased checks required for goods moving from GB to NI.• Emergency planning has noted that a no free trade deal Brexit will represent a concurrent emergency in addition to Covid-19 and Autumn / Winter adverse weather pressures. The service has implemented several resilience measures to manage this scenario.• It is possible that Brexit could affect staffing for EU nationals (particularly for Fleet) and for EU funded posts. Corporate HR has noted that departments are currently collating this information in order to assess any impact. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In summary, a wide range of worst case risks have been considered by all of the critical services. These ranged from delays in obtaining suppliers, staff not being able to get to work or access IT, and potential civil unrest. While some uncertainty remains, services are actively putting arrangements in place to mitigate or manage the risks identified through this process. <p>Officers from key services will be present at the Committee meeting to address Member queries.</p> |
| | <p>Officers are currently working with services to identify measures that are in place, or that can be implemented if needed, to support businesses and vulnerable people in the city. This is being undertaken in context of Covid 19 planning and an update will be brought to the December meeting of this Committee on this work.</p> |
| | <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial or resource implications relating to this report.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no implications relating to this report.</p> |
| 4.0 | Appendices |
| | Appendix 1: [RESTRICTED] Brexit Preparedness Presentation |

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