



Subject:	European Week of Regions & Cities 7-10th October 2019
Date:	22 August 2019
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director City & Neighbourhood Services John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal and Civic Services
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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"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
	<p>At the September 2018 meeting of this Committee it was agreed that an all-Party delegation from the Council would undertake a visit to Brussels to engage with EU officials. Consequently, Members undertook a visit to Brussels from 28th to 30th January 2019. An update on the outcomes of that trip was provided to Committee on 14th Feb 2019. The delegation consisted of the Lord Mayor, Councillors Walsh and Lyons and two officers. The budget for the last visit was approximately £3,300.</p> <p>Members have since voiced their interest in arranging a further visit in light of ongoing Brexit developments. The upcoming European Week of Regions & Cities 7-10th October</p>

	<p>2019 has been identified as a potential opportunity for a second visit of the Brexit Committee to Brussels.</p> <p>As the Brexit Committee has no allocated budget, the Strategic Policy and Resources committee would need to approve any budget for a second visit.</p>
2.0	Recommendations
	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree whether a visit to Brussels should be arranged and whether it should coincide with the European Week of Regions & Cities 7-10th October 2019. <p>If a visit is agreed Committee are asked to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree who should undertake the visit eg an all-party group (possibly 8 Members) or representatives such as the Chair and Deputy Chair plus officer support. • Agree to officers asking the SP&R committee for a suitable budget.
3.0	Main report
	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>At the September 2018 meeting of this Committee it was agreed that an all-Party delegation from the Council would undertake a visit to Brussels to engage with EU officials. After the Belfast City Council's Commissioner for Resilience met with the Head of the NI Executive Office whilst attending the EU Week of Regions in Cities in 2018, an outline agenda for a Members' visit to Brussels was proposed.</p> <p>The visit took place in January 2019. During the visit, members met with a range of officials and politicians including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew Elliot, Head of Office, NI Executive Office in Brussels; • Nina Obermaier, Adviser to Taskforce 50 • Hermione Gough, Director for UK-EU Partnership at the UK's Permanent Representation to the European Union • Mr. Dieter Cavalleri Minister in charge of Parliamentary Affairs and Brexit at the Mission of Switzerland to the EU • Micheal Ó Conchuir, Secretary General European Alliance Group – European Committee of the Regions • David Brück & Amal Kaoua Deputy Directors Brexit Unit, Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU • The 3 Northern Ireland MEPs - Diane Dodds MEP, Martina Anderson MEP and Jim Nicholson MEP

- Mairead McGuinness MEP, Vice President of the European Parliament and an Irish MEP from Midlands-North-West Constituency
- Matt Carthy MEP, Irish MEP from Midlands-North-West Constituency
- Gabriele Zimmer MEP who sits on the European Parliament's Brexit Steering Group

A key theme within all the discussions was that it was important that views from all the different perspectives in Belfast and the wider region were presented in Brussels and that ongoing engagement would be welcomed.

Members have since voiced their interest in undertaking a follow up visit to Brussels. During a meeting with Officers, Mr Neal Gartland, the new Deputy Director for Europe and International Hub of the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive Brussels, mentioned the upcoming European Week of Regions & Cities 7-10th October 2019. During this, the NI office, in conjunction with other devolved administrations, would be holding an Open Week event. It was suggested that this might be a suitable time for a further visit of the Brexit Committee.

Andrew Elliott, the European Division Director and Head of the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels, is due to present to Committee in September and this provides an opportunity to discuss more detail about a potential trip.

Although MEPs have no official duties during the EU Week of Regions and Cities, and hence may not be in attendance, elected members and officers of city and regional councils from across the EU, plus the EU Commission and Regional offices will all be present. As such, the event provides an opportunity to network and see how other regions are managing Brexit, and to discuss future relationships and opportunities within Europe.

Financial & Resource Implications

The previous visit proposed a budget of £1000 per delegate based on return flights plus two nights' accommodation and cost of meals and transport. The final cost for three members and two officers was approximately £3,300. Due to increased demand for flights and accommodation during the EU Week of Regions and Cities, it is likely that costs will be slightly higher than this.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None

4.0	Appendices
	Appendix 1 - Introduction to the European Week of Regions & Cities 7-10th October 2019