



<b>Subject:</b>	Motion : Irish Unity Referendum – Response from Governments
<b>Date:</b>	21st February, 2020
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Walsh, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To consider responses from the British and Irish Governments to a motion on an Irish Unity Referendum which was passed by the Council at its meeting on 2nd December.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	The Committee is requested to <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consider the responses and take such action thereon as may be determined.</li></ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	At the Council meeting on 2nd December, the following motion was proposed by former Councillor Hargey and seconded by Councillor McLaughlin:  “This Council notes with deep concern the hugely damaging, toxic and chaotic politics currently being administered by the Conservative British Government regarding Brexit.

This City has an ever-growing population of young people who will ultimately have to live with the long term consequences of this British Government's damaging policy of attempting to drag citizens out of the European Union against the wishes of the majority of citizens in Belfast who voted to remain.

As a Council, we have a duty to protect all our citizens, young and old, against the policies and hardship that this British government and its allies will bring by dragging them out of the European Union. There is no Brexit that is a good Brexit for the citizens of Belfast or elsewhere in Ireland.

This Council must, therefore, investigate alternative solutions to Brexit that seek to protect its citizens from the damaging effects which Brexit will ultimately bring.

In seeking alternative solutions to protect Belfast citizens, a referendum on Irish Unity, as enshrined within the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, must be legitimately considered. This is a solution that would protect our citizens from Brexit and is supported by categorical statements from the European Council where, in the event of Irish Unity, the citizens in the north would be returned back into the European Union.

The Council calls for the establishment of a New Ireland Forum for the 21st Century, alongside a series of comprehensive Citizens' Assemblies, to examine the practical, social and economic aspects of a New Ireland.

The Council believes that winning people to the idea of a unified state will require a vision of a different kind of Ireland, which sees an end to the low tax haven and soaring rents in the South, the complete separation of church and state, an all-island NHS and an end to sectarianism and racism and the communal carve up of resources in the North, where those who live here are welcome here, no matter where they are born, and where the rights of women and the LBGTQ+ communities are respected.

The Council agrees to write directly to the Taoiseach and to the British Secretary of State requesting that they clearly specify what would satisfy the requirement, as provided for under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, to facilitate an Irish Unity referendum.”

3.2

Responses have now been received on behalf of the Secretary of State and the Tánaiste addressing in detail the issues raised within the motion in relation to a unity referendum and Brexit. Copies of the responses are attached.

3.3	<b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b> None associated with this report.
3.4	<b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b> None
4.0	<b>Appendices - Documents Attached</b>
	Appendix 1 - Responses from the Secretary of State's and the Tánaiste's office