

Brexit Committee

Thursday, 20th September, 2018

MEETING OF BREXIT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Walsh (Chairperson);
Aldermen Kingston, McGimpsey and Spence;
Councillors Attwood, Beattie, Campbell, Canavan,
Carson, Dorrian, Dudgeon, Hutchinson, Lyons, McAllister,
McDonough-Brown, Nichol, O'Hara, Pankhurst and
Reynolds.

In attendance: Mr. N. Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City and
Neighbourhood Services;
Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;
Ms K. Walsh, Business, Research and Development
Manager,
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer, and
Ms C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were received.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 9th August were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd September.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Motion Brexit – The People's Vote

The Committee was reminded that the following motion regarding a People's Vote, which had been proposed by Councillor Nicholl and seconded by Councillor McAllister, was, in accordance with Standing Order 13(f), referred to the Committee by the Council at its meeting on 3rd September:

“This Council acknowledges the result of the EU Referendum of June 2016, but asserts that no one in Belfast voted for a bad deal, or no deal, that could wreck our economy or jeopardise our peace process.

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The Council agrees to write to the Secretary of State and to the Prime Minister expressing its support for the growing demand for a People's Vote on the final Brexit deal."

Councillor Nicholl, who had proposed the motion at the Council meeting, subsequently proposed that the Committee adopt the motion as the Council's position. It was seconded by Councillor McAllister.

The motion was thereupon put to the Committee, when three Members voted for and eleven against, and it was declared lost.

Brexit Committee - Port Health Study Visit

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 9th August, it was agreed that Members would undertake a study visit to the Port Health Unit and that a report be submitted on the potential impact of Brexit on the Port Health Unit.

The Members were informed that the study visit to the Port Health Unit facility had been organised for Friday 28th September at 12 noon.

Noted.

Workshops on the Potential Impact of Brexit

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 9th August, it was agreed that, in order to help identify the potential impact of Brexit on the Council, community organisations, the business and other sectors, to the holding of two workshops/events, with one event being internally focussed and the other to host the external sectors.

It was proposed that the following be undertaken:

External workshop: officers to arrange a workshop for business and community and voluntary sector stakeholders and invite them to an externally facilitated workshop in mid-October to explore and identify potential impacts of Brexit. A report of the workshop would be brought back to the Committee in November.

Internal engagement: that rather than one workshop, that officers use the various internal communications channels, including information sessions, Team Brief and Interlink to engage with staff around the potential impacts of Brexit. This engagement would be used for both information gathering and sharing with the activities tailored to what is required for various staff

As officers had proposed an engagement strategy for internal engagement rather than a workshop, as previously proposed at the meeting on 9th August, a Member requested that a report on the internal engagement outcomes be brought back to the Committee.

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services agreed to this course of action.

Noted.

Update on EU Settlement Scheme

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the EU Settlement Scheme

2.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to note the update provided.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

To allow EU citizens and their families to continue to live and work in the UK after 31 December 2020 (the end of the proposed transition period) the UK government reached an agreement with the EU in March 2018 called the EU Settlement Scheme. This includes all EU citizens who arrive in the UK before 31 December 2020. EU citizens will need to get ‘Settled’ or ‘pre-settled’ status to continue to live and work in the UK after December 2020. (As a general rule someone with a ‘pre-settled’ status can apply for ‘settled’ status once they have lived in the UK for 5 years.)

People with a ‘settled’ or ‘pre-settled’ status can live in the UK and:

- work in the UK
- use the NHS
- enrol in education or continue studying
- access public funds such as benefits and pensions, if eligible for them
- bring family members to the UK after 31 December 2020
- travel in and out of the UK

High level details of the scheme are currently available on the Home Office’s website <https://www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families> .

In summary:

- **The scheme applies to EU citizens and their family members in the UK (spouse, parents, children and dependent relatives).**
- **Only 3 conditions to be eligible:**
 - **Proof of ID**
 - **5 years residence in UK (if you are in the country before the end of 2020, you can have temporary status until you reach the 5 years and then you have to apply using this same process).**
 - **No serious convictions.**
- **Irish citizens are exempt from the scheme**
 - **Irish citizens enjoy a right of residence in the UK that is not reliant on the UK's membership of the EU. They will not be required to apply for status under the scheme (but may do so if they wish), and their eligible family members (who are not Irish citizens or British citizens) will be able to obtain status under the scheme without the Irish citizen doing so.**
- **The scheme will be fully open by the end of March 2019 and the deadline for applying will be 30 June 2021.**
- **An application will cost £65 for adults and £32.50 for children under £16. It will be free for those with valid documented permanent residence or valid indefinite leave to remain or enter and also for looked after children.**

The Home Office will be running campaigns advertising the scheme over the coming months and there are also proposing to run regular teleconferences with local authorities across the UK, updating them on how this scheme will be implemented. Members will be kept updated on the scheme as further information is made available.

Financial & Resource Implications

There are no implications relating to this report.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

There are no implications relating to this report.”

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A Member suggested that Council take action to undertake a responsibility to make EU citizens within Belfast aware of the December 2020 deadline, in order to limit the impact on families and the dependants of EU citizens resident in Belfast.

The City Solicitor stated that he would explore the suggestion and would bring a report back to a future Committee meeting.

Noted.

UK Government Technical Notices for 'no deal' Brexit scenario

The Committee noted the content of the report and that further updates would be provided to future meetings of the Committee.

Arising out of discussion, it was agreed that post Brexit access to EU funding be added to the agenda of a future meeting of the Committee.

Proposal

Arising out of discussion in the matter, it was

Moved by Councillor Carson
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

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.

On a vote by show of hands, nine Members voted for the proposal and seven against and it was declared carried.

The City Solicitor highlighted that the Committee did not have a budget and any expenditure agreed by this Committee would have to be approved by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. He explained that the proposal would have to be ratified by full Council and then passed to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to make a decision regarding finance.

Noted.

Chairperson