

Brexit Committee

Thursday, 6th December, 2018

MEETING OF BREXIT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Walsh (Chairperson);
Aldermen Kingston, McGimpsey and Spence;
Councillors, Beattie, Campbell, Canavan,
Carson, Dudgeon, Hutchinson, Lyons, McAteer, Nichol,
O'Hara 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
Miss C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Attwood, McAllister and Pankhurst.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th November 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 December.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Intertrade Ireland Support Update

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 InterTrade Ireland Voucher Scheme.

2.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to note the update provided and to indicate if they wish to receive a presentation from InterTrade Ireland.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

Members are reminded that at its meeting in November, the Brexit Committee requested that a report be brought back regarding the InterTrade Ireland Voucher Scheme.

Details of InterTrade Ireland's support for SMEs is available on their website <https://intertradeireland.com/brexit>. Among the support available for SMEs is financial support up to £2,000 towards professional advice in relation to Brexit matters. This support is available to companies based on the island of Ireland. The eligibility criteria for applying for the support is:

- Applications must be from an SME (250 employees or less) and Turnover < €40M (£ equivalent);
- The business must have a satisfactory trading record (we reserve the right to request submission of Financial Accounts for the business);
- The assistance requested must relate to a Brexit issue;
- Companies based in Ireland must submit a valid tax clearance access number along with this application form.

A copy of the application form that companies need to complete is attached as appendix 1.

InterTrade Ireland has indicated that they are willing to come to speak to the Brexit Committee, if they would like to obtain more information on the work they are doing. They have also indicated that they are willing to present at any events that the Council may organise for businesses and officers will liaise them to identify any potential opportunities.

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.”

The Committee noted the report and agreed to extend an invite to InterTrade Ireland to make a presentation at a future meeting.

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Youth Forum Engagement

The Members were reminded that, at its meeting in November, the Brexit Committee had requested that a report be brought back regarding potential engagement with the Youth Forum regarding Brexit.

The Business, Research and Development Manager informed the Committee that the Youth Forum, at its November meeting, considered the options around engaging with the Brexit Committee and it welcomed the opportunity to engage with Members. The Youth Forum had proposed that they attend a meeting of the Brexit Committee in the New Year.

The Members were informed that the Youth Forum was also working with other organisations in relation to Brexit and had suggested that representatives from NI Youth Forum, the Children's Commissioner's Youth Panel and Children's Law Centre's Youth Panel also attend the Committee meeting.

The Committee noted the content of the report and agreed to receive representation from the Youth Forum, NI Youth Forum, the Children's Commissioner's Youth Panel and the Children's Law Centre's Youth Panel.

Proposal

Arising out of discussion in the matter, it was

Moved by Councillor Lyons
Seconded by Councillor Nicholl,

That representatives from the student campaign group, 'Our Future, Our Choice' be also invited to engage with the Brexit Committee.

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

Delegation to Strasbourg Update

The Members were reminded that, at the meeting of Council on 3rd December, the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd November, under the heading "Visit to Brussels", was amended to provide that the visit take place to Brussels, as originally planned, but that it be postponed until the New Year.

The Business, Research and Development Manager informed Members that it was hoped that the delegation would take place during the week commencing 28th January, 2019 for a period of one to two days.

The Committee was advised that the Members who had been nominated by the Party Group Leaders to visit Brussels would be kept abreast of preparations for the delegation and that an update report would be presented at its January meeting.

Noted

Update on the 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

Members are reminded that a report was brought to the September meeting of this Committee providing information on the EU Settlement Scheme. Since this last update the Home Office has issued further information and Officers participated in a teleconference in relation to the Scheme on 4th December. A representative of the Home Office also attended the meeting of the Migrant Forum on 3rd December and provided an update on the Scheme.

In summary the background to the Scheme is:

- In December 2017 the UK government reached an agreement with the European Union on citizens' rights. In March this was extended to cover those arriving during the implementation period (to 31 December 2020).
- The agreement protects the rights of EU citizens after the UK leaves the EU and enables them to continue to live their lives as now. It also covers their family members.
- EU citizens in the UK and their family members will need to apply to secure their rights through a simple digital system to get settled or pre-settled status
- The Home Office has said that the application process will be as quick and user-friendly as possible and they will use existing government data to reduce the amount of evidence applicants will need to provide.
- The settlement scheme will be phased in until it is fully open by the end of March 2019. EU citizens do not need to do anything now.
- The scheme will remain open until 2021 so there will be no need to rush to apply.

A briefing document on the EU Settlement Scheme is attached as appendix 1 which includes information on the difference between settled and pre-settled status.

Recently published information

In the period since the last update was brought to Committee there have been several developments in relation to this Scheme including:

Employer's toolkit

A toolkit has been published to assist employers, this includes briefing information on what EU citizens need to know and do. This information is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-settlement-scheme-employer-toolkit>

Local authorities/community leader's toolkit

The Home Office have developed a toolkit for local authorities and community leaders to provide them with sufficient information and tools to support EU citizens and at-risk local communities in their networks. This toolkit was published on 3rd December and is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-settlement-scheme-community-leaders-toolkit>

Availability of a grant scheme for Community & Voluntary sector organisations to support this work

The Home Office has up to £9 million funding for voluntary and community organisations to provide support to vulnerable EU citizens and their family members with making EU Settlement Scheme applications. The funding scheme opened on 30 November and will close on 1st February 2019. There are 2 categories of funding available:

- Projects between £5,000 up to £39,999 (aimed at small locally based organisations)
- Projects between £40,000 up to £750,000 (aimed at large, nationally based organisations)

Information on the funding is available at:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/dcc90ff7-c416-465a-ad92-9dd7f15bcce7>

Officers will disseminate this information to businesses and community and voluntary organisations through existing networks. We will also continue to participate in the Home Office teleconferences in relation to the Scheme and update Members as appropriate.

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.”

After discussion, the Committee agreed to send a letter to Mr David Sterling, Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service to consider the provision of an advice service to support EU citizens and their family members resident in Northern Ireland, with making EU Settlement Scheme applications.

It was further agreed that Belfast City Council would facilitate an information day in the City Hall to provide advice and guidance on the EU Settlement Scheme to EU citizens who reside in Belfast, and that officers would work with the Migrant Forum to support communication with those affected by the scheme.

Chairperson