

## **County Council**

**20 July 2018**

### **Agenda Item 16 – Notice of Motion by Dr Walsh**

#### **The EU - Briefing Note**

##### **Timeline**

In a referendum held on 23 June 2016, the majority of the UK electorate voted to leave the European Union (51.9% of the vote versus 48.1% voting to remain).

On 29 March 2017, in writing to European Council President Donald Tusk, the Prime Minister formally triggered Article 50 and began the two-year countdown to the UK formally leaving the EU (commonly known as 'Brexit').

##### **Where are we now with the Brexit negotiations?**

The European Council adopted guidelines for phase two of the Brexit negotiations in December 2017 and new negotiating directives in January 2018. Phase two of the negotiations - on a transition/implementation period which will start the day after the UK leave the EU and end in December 2020 - started in February 2018. During the transition period the UK will not be a Member State but will continue to apply EU law.

New guidelines were adopted in March 2018 on the framework for the UK's future relations with the EU. These are intended to be adopted as a 'political declaration' attached to the Withdrawal Agreement. Detailed provisions on the future EU-UK relationship will be set out in a separate agreement (or agreements) which will take effect after the UK has left the EU.

Talks between the EU and UK negotiators resumed on 18 April 2018. A solution to the problem of how to avoid a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland remains an outstanding issue for this phase of the negotiations.

After the June 2018 summit the European Council issued a statement outlining its views on progress and next steps. The European Council welcomed progress made on parts of the legal text of the Withdrawal Agreement, but called for further progress to be made on agreeing a backstop solution for Ireland/ Northern Ireland and on a political declaration including the framework for the future relationship between the EU and the UK. Full details of the statement can be found here: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/35966/29-euco-art50-conclusions-en.pdf>.

The UK Cabinet met at Chequers on 6 July 2018 and agreed the UK Government's ambition for the future partnership with the EU. Full details of the Government's statement can be found here: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/723460/CHEQUERS\\_STATEMENT\\_-\\_FINAL.PDF](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/723460/CHEQUERS_STATEMENT_-_FINAL.PDF)

A White Paper formally setting out the negotiating position is expected to be published during the week commencing 9 July 2018.

## **Where are we with the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill?**

The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill completed its Parliamentary passage on 20 June 2018 and received Royal Assent on 26 June 2018.

## **What happened in other Local Authorities mentioned in the motion?**

### **Bristol**

A notice of motion went to full council on 20 March 2018, put forward by the Liberal Democrats. The notice of motion was very similarly worded to the County Council version.

There was not time to discuss the motion at the meeting. A vote was taken on whether to extend the allocated time in order to consider the motion – 15 members voted in favour, 43 against and two abstentions, so the motion was not considered. Further details can be found here:

<https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MIId=2706>.

### **Brighton and Hove**

A notice of motion went to full council in December 2017, put forward by the Green Party. It had three recommendations, including that the Chief Executive write to Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government expressing the Council's strong desire for a referendum on the final terms of a Brexit deal, including the option to maintain full EU membership. Other elements related to writing to President of Eurocities Network to express Council's desire to continue working with sister cities and requesting that Hilary Benn MP share the full Brexit Impact Assessment. The motion was carried by 26 votes to 25. Further details can be found here: <https://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=64492>.

### **Hammersmith and Fulham**

Hammersmith and Fulham Council passed a motion in January 2018 asking the Government to "abandon any plans for hard Brexit and give the British people a vote on whatever deal they end up getting". The notice of motion also asked for a new referendum. The motion was backed by all 21 Labour councillors with the Council's 16 Conservatives abstaining. Further details can be found here:

<http://democracy.lbhf.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=54272>.

### **Lee Harris**

Executive Director Economy, Infrastructure and Environment