

Minutes of Meeting of the **Brexit Working Group** held in Committee Room 3, Council Headquarters, Inverness on Wednesday, 23 October 2019 at 2.00pm.

Present

Mr J Gray
Mr G Adam
Mr B Boyd

Mr G Cruickshank
Mrs T Robertson

Officials in attendance

Ms R Cleland, Corporate Communications and Resilience Manager, Chief Executive's Service

Mr A Denovan, Resilience Manager, Chief Executive's Service

Mr A MacLeod, Interim Brexit Co-ordinator

Miss J MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager, Chief Executive's Service

Mr J Gray in the Chair

BUSINESS

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr S Mackie, Mr R MacDonald, Mrs M Davidson and Mr R MacWilliam.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

There had been circulated the Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Tuesday, 1 October 2019 which were **APPROVED**.

4. Remit of the Working Group

There had been tabled Draft Remit for the Working Group which confirmed that preparations for Brexit could be divided into two main areas, namely resilience contingency planning (which was undertaken through the Council's existing Emergency Planning and Resilience Multi-Agency arrangements by Officers and led by the Chief Executive as Chair of the Highlands & Islands Local Resilience Partnership) and future planning (which related to domestic post-Brexit policy and would develop once the outcome and terms of Brexit were known).

In this regard, the proposed remit for the Working Group focused on Members receiving appropriate updates on the Council's resilience planning for Brexit, reviewing the Regional and Rural Policy position and recommending any changes to this to go to the full Council for approval, discussing and considering future policy to enable the Council, the Highland economy and communities to be in the best possible position to deal with and maximise opportunities in a post Brexit environment and monitoring progress with the Shared Prosperity Fund.

As such, it was anticipated that future items on agendas would include resilience updates (local, regional and national), activity undertaken by CoSLA on behalf of Local Authorities, Brexit support funding, the Shared Prosperity Fund, EU and post Brexit policy priorities and updates on Scottish Government policy (rural and regional).

It was further proposed that the remit and regularity of meetings could be reviewed once the direction of Brexit was clearer.

The Working Group otherwise **AGREED** the terms of the proposed remit as tabled.

It was also **AGREED** that Mr G Cruickshank should be added to the membership list.

5. Highland Council Statutory Obligations and Civil Contingencies responsibilities

There had been circulated Report from the Corporate Communications Manager which confirmed that the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 provided a legal framework which placed specific requirements on the Council and identified it as a first responder, along with the emergency services, in an emergency/major incident situation.

As such, Council Services were developing their existing Business Continuity Plans to mitigate any potential impact on statutory services in the event of a 'no deal' Brexit.

The Council, as a member of the Highlands & Islands Local Resilience Partnership, was also working with partners to mitigate and respond to significant disruption arising from a reasonable 'worst case' scenario EU exit.

During discussion, and in agreeing that further information was needed in relation to potential future scenarios across a range of services currently provided by the Council, it was **AGREED** that a Members' Seminar should be arranged once the Withdrawal Agreement had been fully agreed to allow consideration and discussion of all issues in this regard.

The Working Group otherwise **NOTED** the terms of the report as circulated.

6. Scottish Government – Overview – 'No Deal' Preparations

The Working Group **NOTED** the electronic link which had been provided in relation to the Scottish Government Website which highlighted the overview for 'No Deal' preparations.

7. Date of Next Meeting

It was **NOTED** that the date of the next meeting would be confirmed in due course.

The meeting ended at 2.40pm.