

SOUTHWARK BREXIT PANEL

MINUTES of the Southwark Brexit Panel held on Tuesday 17 July 2018 at 4.00 pm at 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Victoria Mills (Chair)
Councillor James Coldwell
Councillor Maria Linforth-Hall
Councillor Margy Newens
Councillor David Noakes
Councillor Kieron Williams

OFFICER SUPPORT: Aine Gallagher, Principal Policy and Public Affairs Officer
Harjeet Sahota, Policy and Public Affairs Officer
Everton Roberts, Principal Constitutional Officer

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

3. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The panel noted the membership and terms of reference of the Southwark Brexit Panel.

4. SOUTHWARK COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO BREXIT (EVIDENCE GATHERING)

The chair of the panel, Councillor Victoria Mills, explained the process on how the panel would receive evidence and that the council were broadly considering inviting stakeholders from local health services, community groups, police, London South Bank University and further education

providers in Southwark, organisations involved in Regeneration schemes and possibly other individuals / organisations aswell. She also informed the meeting that the council was planning to hold a Local Government Association (LGA) regional sounding board meeting with the LGA and Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) on 30 October 2018.

She reported that the following invited guests were no longer able to come and give evidence at this meeting – Lorna Gavin, Southwark Business Forum, a representative from Southwark Trade Unions and Patria Roman, Latin Elephant.

The panel heard from Stephen Douglass – Director of Communities and Southwark Council Brexit Officer

Below is a summary of points made.

- Regulatory services are reliant on EU legislation
- Central government have issued no guidance to Southwark Council and need to give direction
- There are concerns for the Latin American Community in Southwark who are Spanish residents and here on EU passports.
- The Council intends to do impact assessments on reductions of EU funding
- Southwark Council do not collect the nationality of staff but there is internal staff uncertainty
- The Council have not yet looked at the possibility of a no deal Brexit
- There is a resource issue but Southwark Council has a track record of helping people with no recourse to public funds.
- Southwark Council have been looking at procurement issues and food hygiene standards post – Brexit.

Panel recommendations for future evidence sessions

Cllr Kieron Williams suggested that someone from the Law Centre come to give evidence and to explain what the process is to apply for settled status.

Cllr Maria Linforth-Hall – Clear guidance is needed from the Council for the Latin American community – her constituents are currently being exploited by individuals who claim to be able to guarantee their status.

RESOLVED:

1. That the process by which evidence will be gathered to inform the council's response to Brexit (paragraphs 7 – 10 of the report) be noted.
2. That the key areas the Communities and Local Government Committee is recommending local authorities consider (paragraph 11 of the report) be noted.
3. That any additional issues and topics to be covered be considered outside of this meeting due to lack of time.

5. EVIDENCE SESSION - THEME: BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT

The panel received evidence from the following expert witnesses representing business:

Richard Kalmar – Southwark Chamber of Commerce
Michael Spooner – Federation of Small Business
Nadia Broccardo – Team London Bridge
Nic Durston – South Bank BID
Laura Griffiths – South Bank Employers Group
Richard Brown – Centre for London

Below is a summary of the points made:

- The business community are very concerned and feel there is a lot of uncertainty in the process
- Access to markets needs to be clearer in the White paper – service exports integral to London's economy
- This will affect the hospitality and building sectors which have a large percentage of EU workers.
- In the wake of Brexit business deals have been delayed which has caused a delay in jobs.
- 66% of SME's would like to reverse Brexit
- Chamber of Commerce had a debate pre-Brexit and 72% of businesses they spoke to wanted to remain in the EU
- There is a lack of information particularly around the replacement of EU funding streams
- Apprenticeship levy has seen a slow uptake but is now being seen as an opportunity
- There is no office space available in London bridge

- The London Bridge Station redevelopment has been good for businesses
- Southwark has remained resilient in the face of high street declines
- The hospitality industry are increasingly using agency staff
- There are issues for recruiting around people who have been long term unemployed particularly in the hospitality sector as the work tends to be physically demanding.
- There is investment going on behind the scenes to avoid a slow drain of labour
- International companies with offices here are not relocating but are investing in their other EU offices
- This presents an opportunity with employment and skills for local people. There tends to be a disconnect between local economy/jobs v local people the contributions do not always overlap
- Destination marketing and collaboratively working with BID's increases tourism.
- Security is a concern post-Brexit with regards to information sharing and police resourcing
- The borough is diverse culturally and economically with a range of businesses and a variety of working styles, as a result this borough is in a better position than others to prepare for Brexit
- There should be a regional approach/city maker visas to ensure that London does not have a labour drain
- A system similar to the Australian system where under 30's have the opportunity to work and stay for 2 years
- Post study work visas should be granted to retain talent
- Unemployment is at a historic low but low paid jobs and precarious contracts have increased along with an increase in in-work poverty.

What can the Council do to support businesses?

- London remains number one in the world for culture and hospitality training and product development.
- The government should be looking at freedom of labour and people – the Council should lobby for this

- A scheme to encourage U.K. people to work in the hospitality sector
- Social media means there is more access than ever to a potential workforce and client base, we need to use this
- To work with London and Partners around tourism and promote Southwark as a top destination
- Do not add to the burden on the business community
- Make sure the public realm is maintained
- Increase skills and training
- Information/data sharing
- One simple interface with the council for businesses
- Clearer information regarding the Brexit process for businesses and residents
- BID's are small teams but champion security and have managed to find extra policing. The Council should look at social regeneration which is culture led
- To continue to focus on government policy and monitor announcements that will affect residents.
- Further collaboration with BIDs and businesses
- More innovation and skills
- Use s.106 to support cultural provision in regeneration projects
- There should be a move away from projects and contracts in culture and creative industries, it is a growing sector so it needs to be made sustainable and locals should be matched up with industry opportunities
- To encourage businesses to come to Southwark and to co-ordinate existing activity particularly within the creative industries.

How are we making Southwark an attractive place to live and play and work?

- More London Living Wage employers
- To tackle the lack of Affordable Housing
- Knife Crime Strategy/VAWG strategy to improve safety

- The borough's culture and tourism
- Robust responses against Hate Crime
- Tech, TV production and video skills are the main areas that the Council should be focused on.

The meeting ended at 6.06pm

CHAIR:

DATED: