

## **Standing Council on Europe Minutes of Meeting of 11 September 2017**

**Apologies:** First Minister, Vasco Cal, John Kay, David Martin, Alyn Smith, Grahame Smith

### **1. Welcome and Introduction**

The meeting opened with a welcome from the Chair to all attending, and particularly to Mark Drakeford, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, Welsh Government.

### **2. Update from Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe and Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs**

Mr Russell and Ms Hyslop provided an update on Scottish Government activity since the last meeting, which included Programme for Government 2017-18, the EU (Withdrawal) Bill, work to continue to articulate the impact of leaving the Single Market and the Customs Union, and engagement with Member States.

### **3. Reflections from Wales**

Mr Drakeford provided an overview of the current work of the Welsh Government. A key priority for the Welsh Government is to safeguard the economy and jobs, and as such continued access to the single market is fundamental. Three main publications set out the Welsh position, the most recent on migration. It was noted that Wales and Scotland have many areas of commonality, particularly in respect of the EU (Withdrawal) Bill, and inter-government relations.

This was followed by an open discussion which reflected on the changing public mood, the lack of progress in the negotiations and the current EU and UK positions. Members reflected that while the UK has published papers, they do not provide a coherent consistent position, and the EU, having a more certain position, is moving on from Brexit. Moreover, businesses continue to face uncertainty because of the lack of clarity on what the future relationship with the EU would be, made all the more difficult as planning horizon for businesses reaches exit. There is also evidence that being outside the Single Market and EU Customs Union will have adverse effects on investment and jobs.

### **4. Scotland's Place in Europe – Update and Discussion**

Members received an update on Scotland's Place in Europe, which noted that the position set out in the paper published last December still stands.

It was suggested that a clear narrative is needed to help influence, and the audience for this should be much wider than Scotland. Any narrative should clearly and simply explain the risks and what it means for people. The on-going role of Standing Council members in engagement and influence was recognised.

### **5. European Union (Withdrawal) Bill**

The Standing Council was provided with a brief update on the EU (Withdrawal) Bill. Mr Russell noted that the Scottish Government has fundamental concerns about the Bill and, without significant changes to it, will not recommend that the Scottish Parliament gives its consent. It was clear that Wales and Scotland have a similar position and would be working together on this.