**DOVER BREXIT TASKFORCE**

**Dover District Council Offices, Thursday 22nd March 2019, 10am to 12 noon**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

* Charlie Elphicke MP, Chair
* Cllr Michael Conolly, Deputy Leader, Dover District Council (rep for Cllr Morris)
* Philippe Mignonet, Deputy Mayor of Calais
* Inspector Stuart Norris, Kent Police (rep for Chief Inspector Mark Weller)
* Keith Fairbank, Office of the Kent Police & Crime Commissioner
* Nadeem Aziz, Chief Executive, Dover District Council (DDC)
* Madeline Homer, Chief Executive, Thanet District Council (TDC)
* Cllr Bob Bayford, Leader, Thanet District Council (TDC)

**OFFICERS:**

* Roger Walton, Strategic Director, Dover District Council (DDC)
* Diane Croucher, Head of Regulatory Services, Dover District Council (DDC)
* Lucy Manzano, Public Protection Manager, Dover District Council (DDC)
* Caroline Hargreaves, Leadership Support Officer, Dover District Council (DDC)

**NOTES OF MEETING:**

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

* Noted

1. **Parliamentary Update**

* Charlie Elphicke gave a summary of the events happening in Parliament. There is still a lot of uncertainty and different options being considered. He thought it was unlikely that there will be a ‘no deal’ scenario on 29th March but there could still be on 12th April, which we need to be prepared for. If an agreement is reached, the UK will leave the UK on 22nd May. Understands that changing dates for leaving the EU makes it difficult for agencies to plan staff rotas etc. Expects there will be a debate in Parliament on Monday, a vote on Tuesday and for the Government to table a Statutory Instrument on Wednesday to officially change the exit date (removing 29th March) from the statute book. This is an easy process and just need to be passed by the House of Commons and House of Lords; Parliament has already voted to say that it opposes a no deal.

1. **Calais Update**

Philippe Mignonet advised that Calais has made preparation plans and that more customs officers have been employed. However, they share our concerns over the fluidity of traffic. They are currently experiencing problems with customs unions over staffing levels and this has been causing queues of lorries on motorways and lorry drivers trying to avoid this by driving through the town. Ministers have met with the unions to try to resolve but one union is demanding more. Not worried about PAF control but customs is a potential concern. Security is an issue as the queuing traffic is attracting increasing numbers of illegal migrants. The Mayor of Calais has made representations to Paris and is pushing national government to understand the problems for the region but so far these have not been heard. He hoped that a solution would be rapidly found. French police are also currently very busy dealing with ‘gilets jeune’ protests.

In answer to a question, Phillipe said that he did not think that every passport would be checked, although there will be more checks than currently.

It was noted that Dover and Calais have a good relationship, and we want to continue working together.

1. **Port Health Update**

* Diane Croucher advised that there has been a change of circumstance since the last meeting. Following a request by Motis, the Freight Clearance Centre at the Western Docks, our Port Health officers visited the facilities (existing DPI) with representatives from Food Standards Agency (FSA) with a view to them applying for DPE status. The FSA have agreed to grant DPE status for the RoRo terminal (DP 02) on the condition that certain works are undertaken and, in addition, the DPE will be limited to only accepting certain food products i.e. existing trade. Motis can request this last condition be reviewed once the UK leaves the EU if trade patterns start to change. Motis is a private company and operates separately from the Port of Dover and has the capacity for 320 vehicles. It is anticipated that the works required will be complete before the UK leaves the EU.
* Eurotunnel does not have a DPE and have no plans to apply for one. If they did decide to apply, then Food Standards Agency would need to process it in consultation with Dover Port Health Authority.
* In terms of workload relating to High Risk Food Not of Animal Origin, we do not anticipate a significant change from the current situation, regardless of whether we leave with a deal or not. Workloads relating to Organic Products and Fish products however may alter. We have already recruited 1 EHO and 2 admin staff and are confident that the correct resources are in place to respond to these changes but will be keeping this under review.
* With regards to the ‘Rotterdam model’ referred to at the February Taskforce meeting, Lucy Manzano advised that her team had researched this and, although goods are being transported approx. 25 miles before inspection, this is still within the confines of the Port, which covers an area of 125 sq. km. Therefore, the FSA is applying the EU legislation consistently.
* In answer to a question regarding a BIP proposal from a logistics firm, Lucy advised that this would need to come from the Port.

1. **Round Table Preparedness Updates**

* Nadeem Aziz confirmed that the letter to the Secretary of State for the Transport, agreed at the last Taskforce meeting had been sent.
* Stuart Norris advised that Kent Police are now prepared, including national mobilisation into Kent.
* Roger Walton gave an update on Op Fennel. The issue with Op Stack having to be implemented for the first-time in 3-years recently, once again highlighted the high volumes of trade through Dover (Brock was not ready to be tested). Tap 20 is also needing to be used a lot more frequently, which could be a combination of bad weather, customs issues and a pre-Brexit surge in goods. Understood that bookings for the Port and Tunnel are particularly heavy this weekend. Freight access to the Port and Tunnel is not being very well communicated. We still have concerns over how the traffic plan will operate in practice and the risk of congestion in the area. We also have concerns around plans for dealing with tourist traffic that still need resolving.
* Madeline Homer advised that, similar to DDC, Thanet does not support the traffic management plan (Brock / Manston) and are tracking strategic meetings. Manston is not simply a matter of putting concrete down to hold the lorries, there are huge welfare issues with potentially 6-8,000 individuals to be looked after. TDC are working with MHCLG to get assurance that plans will be in place. Government communication has been ad-hoc, therefore TDC are working on a local communication plan.
* Charlie Elphicke advised that he is raising concerns with Jessie Norman, Transport Minister, that Sandwich, Deal and Dover are at risk of being cut off and raised public safety, security and welfare issues. Kent Police / Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) had received a political steer to avoid implementing Op Stack and that was why the new Op Brock was devised. This is despite Op Stack being tried and tested and understood by the agencies involved and freight industry. From a Kent Police resource perspective, Op Stack is also easier to manage. Manston policing is not just directing traffic, also security etc.
* Madeline Homer also advised that HMRC has recently announced, without any consultation with TDC, that it intends to set up an office of departure at Manston, which will be in place regardless of whether Op Brock is in place. Concerned that the ‘temporary’ solution would become permanent. Nadeem Aziz commented that he understood HMRC wants to set up a similar facility at the Western Docks.
* It was commented that HMRC should be doing more – why not have facilities in place outside of Kent to ensure that all freight travelling through the county has the right documentation e.g. Clackett Lane, around the M25 etc.
* Nadeem Aziz commented that the community impact of Op Stack would be much less than Op Brock/Manston. Partners would need to continue monitoring and highlight any risk of harm to Kent Police / KRF that would mean reverting to using Op Stack.
* With regards to tourist traffic, the KRF still intends to route down Whitfield Hill and through the town, despite our concerns that this is unsuitable (multiple traffic lights, one-way system, four schools on the route etc.)
* Charlie Elphicke advised that the MOD is on stand-by to provide welfare support to Kent Police.
* Stuart Norris advised that they are aware of a planned climate change protest on Saturday 30th March by ‘Extinction Rebellion’, which intends to march through the town and blockade the Port. Do not know how many people will be involved. Charlie Elphicke asked about Police powers to re-route the march away from the town to keep traffic flowing – Stuart Norris will take this back.
* Nadeem Aziz commented that there is also talk on social media of lorry blockades and protests; Kent Police will be monitoring this.

1. **Date of next meeting:** To be agreed