**DOVER BREXIT TASKFORCE**

**Dover District Council Offices, Thursday 28th February 2019, 10am to 12 noon**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

* Charlie Elphicke MP, Chair
* Cllr Keith Morris, Leader, Dover District Council
* Cllr Mark Dance, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Kent County Council
* Dafydd Pugh, Economic Development, Kent County Council
* M.Donato Giuliani, Hauts de France (observer)
* Chief Inspector Mark Weller, Kent Police
* Keith Fairbank, Office of the Kent Police & Crime Commissioner
* Tim Reardon, Head of EU Exit, Port of Dover
* Richard Christian, Head of Policy and Communications, Port of Dover
* Sophie Mew, Getlink (substitute for John Keefe, Director of Public Affairs)
* Graeme Bridgland, Kent County Council
* Nadeem Aziz, Chief Executive, Dover District Council

**OFFICERS:**

* Roger Walton, Strategic Director, Dover District Council
* Tim Ingleton, Head of Inward Investment, Dover District Council
* Phil Hayes, Senior Parliamentary Assistant / Office Manager, Office of Charlie Elphicke, MP for Dover and Deal
* Diane Croucher, Head of Regulatory Services, Dover District Council
* Lucy Manzano, Public Protection Manager, Dover District Council
* Caroline Hargreaves, Leadership Support Officer

**NOTES OF MEETING:**

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

* Noted

1. **Scene-setting**

* Cllr Morris noted that one of the main aims of the Taskforce has been to raise awareness of the issues and challenges that Brexit poses for the district and this has been successfully achieved with national and international coverage of our Brexit impact reports and subsequent interviews. He then briefly outlined the preparedness work that the Council is undertaking.

1. **Port Health Functions and Preparedness**

* Dover District Council (DDC) is the Port Health Authority (PHA) covering both the Port of Dover and Channel Tunnel. Diane Croucher and Lucy Manzano, leading the PHA team, gave an update covering the change in inspection regime at the border post-Brexit. It was acknowledged that there is still confusion around the requirements for different products being imported. There are several agencies involved (e.g. Defra and FSA) and DDC is part of the Border Delivery Group discussions, where our concerns have been raised.
* Under the current legal framework High Risk Foodstuffs Not of Animal Origin cannot be imported via the Channel Tunnel or via Ro-Ro traffic at Dover Port as neither are a Designated Port of Entry (DPE). As the situation stands, the PHA would have to detain, re-export or destroy any of these foodstuffs coming into the UK. Therefore, PHA work has been focussed on letting traders know as well as pushing for a common-sense approach from Government. There is a lack of information available on the volume of these foodstuffs as we have had free-trade up until now and these items are currently cleared at sites in the EU.
* EU legislation has been replicated into UK law; the FSA has interpreted the legislation to mean that any inspection has to be conducted within the Port area, however Tim Reardon commented that he did not believe this was an EU requirement and it would not workable at the Port or the Channel Tunnel as the scale of any facility required would be colossal.
* It was agreed that a work-around is needed (i.e. checks on goods to be conducted at a location removed from the channel crossing) to ensure fluidity of movement and no loss of trade through the Ports. This could follow the “Rotterdam model”, which is understood to have a Border Inspection Post that is away from the port.
* Information flow has been hampered by non-disclosure agreements and the PHA has been attending meetings where no minutes are taken. Diane and Lucy agreed to forward any correspondence they have to Charlie Elphicke to take the issues up with Parliamentary colleagues and Government officials including the Border Delivery Group.
* Diane Croucher commented that if circumstances change and full DPE status was awarded to the Port / Tunnel, additional Environmental Health Officers would need to be recruited – 16 extra staff based on current figures. Recruitment is not a quick process and is historically difficult in East Kent.
* Diane Croucher advised that the service has a Business Continuity Plan and various options are being explored to provide additional short-term capacity, for example mutual aid.
* Agreed that clarity is needed and that Cllr Morris and Charlie Elphicke should write to the Secretary of State with responsibility for this legislation, with a copy to the Brexit Secretary, calling for a more risk-based and sensible approach. Draft letter to be run past the PHA team, Port and Tunnel. It was also agreed that the letter should include reference to the CITES convention (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), and additional concerns raised at the meeting around how Defra has decided to apply this convention.
* With regards exports, the Dover PHA will only need to examine foodstuffs that have been produced in the district. These exports are part of the usual regime where they need to be inspected at the site where they are produced. Calais is prepared to deal with this, having built a Border Inspection Post at the Port and the Tunnel.
* Diane and Lucy were thanked for their hard-work and good working relationship with the Port and the Tunnel.

1. **Operation Brock: Concerns over use of Manston for Dover Traffic**

* Discussed on-going concerns regarding the Traffic Management Plan that has been prepared and submitted to the Secretary of State by the Kent Resilience Forum. The main concerns are around safety; resilience; non-compliance especially routing to Manston; management of tourist traffic through the town.
* Key partners around the table have voiced these concerns direct to Secretary of State but the Government is determined to go ahead. Cllr Mark Dance advised that Manston has now been signed-off and was presented to East Kent Leaders’ yesterday.
* There are still issues that need to be resolved. It was agreed that Cllr Morris and Charlie Elphick should write to the Secretary of State for Transport once more setting out the concerns around the unsuitability of Manston and seeking assurances around resilience plans to prevent communities being cut off. With regards additional lorry parks – realistically this will be 2-years plus. Additional resources will be needed from the Department for Transport.
* With regards passport control, in the Port of Dover’s opinion, if PAF decide to check every document, this would be sufficient to require Operation Brock be in place
* It was noted that Thanet District Council have also expressed concerns to the Secretary of State for Transport regarding the use of Manston.
* If Operation Brock does not successfully manage the traffic and safety is put at risk, then Kent Police will have to invoke an emergency and put Operation Stack into place.
* Agreed need to make our concerns more public.

1. **Roundtable Preparedness Updates**

* Tim Reardon advised that, now that all elements of the port control process have been defined, the Port has drafted guidance for freight, which will go out 2-3 weeks before Brexit date. It will then prepare guidance for tourist traffic so that they can prepare in advance for any changes. There are new compliance responsibilities all along the supply chain, which requires numerous organisations and individuals to comply.
* The Tunnel advised that it is also looking at similar guidance for freight and tourist traffic. The Port of Calais has also published guidance as well.
* Cllr Morris advised that an LGA Brexit Roundtable was being held on the 15th March, hosted by DDC and KCC. Local businesses invited to attend.
* Richard Christian noted the need to manage the media and provide proper facilities – approx. 300 to 700 journalists are expected to converge on the district on Brexit day. Looking to provide a media hub but will need central government funding. Also seeking funding for a big publicity campaign with Visit Kent, Locate in Kent and Produced in Kent. The Port is working on a plan with the Kent Resilience Forum, KCC and Comms to support this.
* Roger Walton advised that the Department of Transport has been in contact with the Council regarding providing facilities to help drivers arrive at the Port with the right documentation as there is insufficient capacity within the Port for this. The Tunnel commented that until recently it had the facility to issue International Driving Permits but this was removed.

1. **Agreed Actions:**
2. Cllr Morris and Charlie Elphicke, on behalf of the Dover Brexit Taskforce, to send a letter to the Secretary of State for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Michael Gove MP)
3. Cllr Morris and Charlie Elphicke, on behalf of the Dover Brexit Taskforce, to send a letter to the Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Grayling MP)
4. To continue to share information and speak with one voice
5. **Date of next meeting:** w/c 18th March 2019.