

Standing Council Minutes of Meeting of 24 January 2017

Apologies were noted from: Lord Kerr, John Kay.

The First Minister's Standing Council met for their fourth plenary meeting, arranged in December, but in the end coincidentally on the same day as the culmination of the Article 50 Court Case.

The meeting was opened by the First Minister who took the opportunity to thank Council members for their input to the development of Scotland's Place in Europe (SPiE) and provided an update on recent interaction with UK Government, including within the JMC(EN).

The chair then introduced a discussion which was initially focussed on the Council's views of how the speech by the Prime Minister interacted with the proposals in SPiE. The consensus of the meeting was that whilst the first proposal within SPiE, to keep the UK as a whole in the Single Market, had been effectively ruled out by the PM's speech, the differential option remained viable but very challenging and should continue to be pursued in negotiation with UK Government. The Standing Council also reflected on an increasingly firm position in Brussels and some of the challenging reactions to the PM's speech in member states, in particular their surprise that the PM considered both the 'divorce' and 'new relationship' elements of Brexit could be complete within two years.

The Council also recognised that following the publication of SPiE their work had moved into another phase. They agreed to organised work going forwards around the following three areas:

- Engagement and influencing – supporting SG's influencing plan and leading events / engagement in their own right as required
- Technical analysis – acting as a reference group and source of further advice for policy and technical analysis undertaken by SG
- Support for negotiation – providing support in negotiations with UK Government and EU partners

The existing sub-groups were discussed. It was noted that the Economy and Social Protections groups would continue to feed directly into the three areas agreed as priorities. It was agreed that the remaining sub-groups could continue as needed, but that their further value was in supporting work being advanced by policy areas of the Scottish Government and the Secretariat would support making these connections as needed. To help build strong relations between these groups and respective policy areas support for these workstreams would be taken forwards by individual policy areas within the Scottish Government.

The Secretariat were tasked with developing more detailed proposals and a timeline for this work and the Council agreed to meet again ahead of the likely triggering of Article 50 in March.

Standing Council Secretariat