

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE: ECONOMIC ADVISORY GROUP**

### **ROLE OF ECONOMIC ADVISORY GROUP**

1. The role of the Economic Advisory Group shall be to provide independent advice, to the Minister for the Economy, aimed at challenging and developing public policy and strategic thinking on the Northern Ireland and UK economy.
2. The EAG will also provide advice on the refinement and implementation of actions to be taken for medium and long-term regional economic recovery, following the COVID-19 outbreak, aimed at underpinning and supporting a longer term economic strategy. This will include considering how to drive the growth of high-value sectors, high-growth firms, productivity and competitiveness, digitalisation automation and future skills.
3. All of this activity will need to happen alongside the context and out-workings of the new UK/EU economic partnership and new trading relationship that result from the negotiations.

### **KEY OBJECTIVES**

4. Key objectives for this group will include:-
  - Providing leadership and vision as we work through the impact of COVID-19. Identifying business priorities to allow the Department, in conjunction with its partners and stakeholders, to effectively develop a revised long term economic strategy for Northern Ireland. This work will include identifying those sectors that are critical to growing the NI economy.
  - Communicating the needs of businesses and identifying critical policy levers necessary to regrow our economy.
  - Considering how best NI businesses might build resilience into their operations and supply chains (to include consideration as to how digitalisation, automation and Artificial Intelligence become enabling solutions at the core of business and operating models).
  - Assessing future skills, re-skilling and upskilling needs (to be considered in the context of the proposed new DfE Skills Strategy).
  - Advising on how those groups of individuals most severely impacted through the crisis can be re-deployed/ re-employed.
  - Considering trade development support needs (taking into account the potential impacts of an increased focus on local supply chains).
  - Assessing the long-term critical support infrastructure needed for the economy.

### **FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

5. In seeking to achieve the above objectives, the EAG work programme should be structured around two key strands.
6. Shaping Public Policy Through Business Feedback: The first strand is role of an Advisory Group on Public Policy, providing business orientated feedback to Government around considering the above objectives in the context of shaping key strategic priorities and policies including potentially;
  - The Economic Strategy
  - Energy Strategy
  - City Deals Design
  - Skills Strategy and Skills recovery package
7. Shaping How Business Can Contribution to Public Policy: The second strand of the EAG work programme should provide a Business Challenge Function. This primarily involves advising government on how business and the private sector can be more effective in contributing to the delivery of new or existing public policy priorities?  
Questions for consideration could include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - What might business and industry be challenged to do respond to the labour market fallout associated with the Covid-19 Pandemic?
  - How might business and industry increase its take up of Apprenticeships, or increase the level of in work training or upskilling?
  - What might business and industry be challenged to do in order to support carbon reduction and / or the growth of the green economy?

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- What can business and industry do to support and drive the successful implementation, and operation, of city deals across the different parts of NI?

### **OPERATING PRINCIPLES**

8. The EAG should abide by the following operating principles that will guide its work over what is a critical period for the NI economy.
  - All business will be conducted on the basis of mutual trust, shared understanding and an absolute commitment to our core purpose;
  - Shared responsibility to achieve decisions/recommendations on a consensus basis;
  - An absolute commitment to confidentiality; and
  - Public representation on the work of the EAG is the responsibility of the Chair; in their absence they will nominate a deputy. It is also the Chair's responsibility to notify the Department in advance of any representation that is likely to attract significant attention.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

9. Members of the EAG have been appointed on the basis of their knowledge, experience and expertise, and will be expected to act and advise on the wider Northern Ireland economy interests.

### **MEETINGS OF THE GROUP**

10. When the Chair is unable to attend, the meetings will be chaired by a nominated deputy. Meetings will be held regularly, as agreed by Members. The Group may also hold ad hoc meetings to discuss issues that may arise and which require discussion with the Group and /or an agreed quorum. The agenda for plenary meetings will be drafted following consultation with EAG Members, and approved by the Chair.

### **EQUALITY**

11. The EAG is committed to assisting the Minister achieve her Department's vision of a "globally competitive economy that works for everyone." In these unprecedented times, policymakers may need to make quick and often challenging policy decisions. It is important to recognise that such decisions may have impacts on different groups of people and as such EAG recognise that the duties set out in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 continue to apply to the Department's activity, even when implementing Covid-19 related policies.

### **OTHER GROUPS**

12. The EAG have been appointed based on their individual, extensive experience in Business. The group will provide advice on this basis but recognises the role and existence of other engagement groups such as the NI Engagement Forum and the Tourism Recovery Steering Group. The EAG will seek to ensure that their advice does not cut across the work of these bodies and will engage with these as appropriate.

### **MEMBERS' EXPENSES**

13. Members of the EAG shall be entitled to claim travel expenses for attending meetings. These will be determined by DFE in line with NICS policy.

### **SECRETARIAT / PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT**

14. DFE will provide secretariat and professional support to the EAG.

### **REVIEW**

15. The Economic Advisory Group will operate for around an initial twelve months period, extending beyond as circumstances dictate. At this stage the Minister and DfE will review its effectiveness and future role.