

EU Referendum Scrutiny Review

Submission from the UKIP Group to Co-operative Review to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of EU membership on Plymouth.

The scope of this review has been set out as a consideration of a number of issues which may include.

1. How leaving or remaining in the EU will impact on UK influence and security both in Europe and Globally;
2. The overall economic advantages and disadvantages of membership on the City of Plymouth;
3. The EU's regulation of products and markets;
4. The economic effects of the free movement of people on the economy, market and public finances;
5. The extent to which EU membership attracts and maintains inward investment into the UK, and how this might be affected by "Brexit".

We would argue the Review group may have set itself an almost impossible task, the reason being, so many of the issues under consideration are a matter of opinion, whether they are individuals or organisations/employers, will have a direct bearing on their opinion. Also, the actual quantification of the financial impact of the topics listed above would take months of work and possibly thousands of Freedom of Information requests of Plymouth City Council.

We would also argue that to demonstrate the impact EU legislation has on local authorities is far easier. It is important to understand almost everything is affected by European Law, and this includes the operations of our local Councils.

Most people are unaware of the extent to which Local Government officers spend their lives enacting legislation that comes from the EU Parliament.

To give a perspective of the volume of legislation that is involved, in the three year period between the 2010 election and 2013 Brussels handed down 3600 pieces of new regulation and directives affecting British businesses. See note 1.

A number of these laws are worth mentioning.

Firstly, the EU Procurement Rules which have several adverse effects. Public bodies now have to acquire tenders for goods and services not only from British companies but from member states across the entire European Union. This costs time, especially when there is the bickering of unsuccessful bidders to deal with. It also costs money, which has to be provided by the tax-payer.

Building new houses is affected by these rules as well and these, according to the National Housing Federation, cost £30 million annually, reducing the Association's financial ability to build new homes. The Procurement Rules are also considered both complex and costly by the Partnership for Schools who say they bring no obvious benefit. See note 2.

Transport may soon be affected further by EU legislation. At present there is a draft proposal to compel Britain, in the name of EU harmonisation, to accept lorries which are substantially longer and heavier than those at present onto our roads. Enlarged roads and the inevitable surface damage they cause will, of course, be paid for by our local Councils and so, ultimately by the taxpayers. The British Government may not want these huge lorries but if the law goes through the Brussels Parliament, they will have no choice in the matter.

It is EU legislation that has caused the closure of so many of our smaller post offices by opening up postal services to other EU countries, such as Deutsche Post which now undercuts our Post Office deliveries in such lucrative markets as business post. In rural areas these post offices often form part of the only shop in the village and are an essential of the community yet without the postal service these shops would not be viable. Knowing this, the Government has tried its best to keep them open by offering subsidies, but Brussels now insists that Britain must ask for permission before doing so. So, our Post Office is currently in a critical

financial state so that post office closures have become inevitable, to the benefit of other EU countries.

Population growth, due largely to the EU's basic right of 'Free Movement of Peoples' throughout the Union, has resulted in over 300,000 people per year for the last two years coming to the UK to live, work and claim benefits.

We know the Prime Minister has recently negotiated a separate set of rules for new migrant benefits, how much this will stem the flow of migration is again debateable, but neither central nor local government will be able to control the demand for services which will obviously follow.

Open door immigration is having a massive effect on local councils, on planning and house building and therefore on schools, hospitals and social services.

The extra population will inevitably cause extra waste, but EU Rules state that by 2020, half of our waste must be diverted from landfills, possibly to incinerators which are being built around the country. Because of this, householders are now seeing their council taxes go up while waste collections in many areas have gone down to once in two weeks.

EU Rules can have a farcical effect. In 2005 an EU Regulation on 'Working at Heights' came into effect which means that any work involving ladders is banned. To avoid litigation, some Councils now ban ladders across their estates' properties and have introduced the expensive alternative of scaffolding instead, more money for the taxpayer to find.

They can also have a disastrous effect, a Draft Efficiency Directive will compel Councils to refit local properties, both old and new-build, to the highest energy efficiency standards. This would, for instance, make Victorian Town Halls and other old buildings obsolete if the local authority did not have the required funding to meet the new efficiency standards.

And the Local Government Association estimates that applying this legislation would cost Councils £50 billion — at a time when they really don't need yet more financial pressure. See note 3.

There is also the “Membership Fee”, we pay to belong to the EU, currently estimated at 13 billion pounds per annum. We do, of course, receive subsidies in return but our net contribution to the EU is roughly 8.5 billion pounds per year. Could we use this money more effectively if we had control of it? We believe we could. See note 4.

Councils around this country are mainly full of people with a genuine desire to serve their community through Local Government who now find themselves powerless because all the big decisions are taken elsewhere in the EU.

Nationally and even locally, whether it is our post offices, our bin collections, the lorries which drive on our roads or how our homes are built — the European Union, of which Britain is merely a 28th part, rules on everything.

Now, returning to our argument that the demonstration of EU legislation on PCC is relatively easy, we do acknowledge what one person or organisation will consider an advantage, another may consider a disadvantage, so it follows that even if a piece of legislation has a financial impact on a Local Council some may consider that a price worth paying, ie good value for money, others not.

And so, all of the above could be considered our opinion, arguments or views on EU legislative impact on local authorities to a greater or lesser extent.

However, we in the UKIP Group, believe there are two undisputable Facts regarding the upcoming EU referendum if the UK votes to Leave.

1. We will make own laws in our own Parliament, and,
2. We will control the quantity and quality of those wishing to come here to live and work from wherever in the world.

So, in a world in which we are constantly being told is uncertain and unsafe we would conclude that the two certainties listed above would be the best mechanism by which the UK and therefore, PCC would best serve the citizens in their care.

Some legislative areas and EU rules that apply but by no means all.

Agriculture which together with Fisheries accounts for about 30% of all legislation.

Impact on food prices.

School meals, school milk, meals on wheels and food in care homes.

Public Contracts Directive 2004/18/EC and Public Procurement Remedies Directive 2007/66/EC

Cost of Council contracts

The Landfill Directive 99/31/EC

Direct Cost to Council

Agency Workers Directive COD 2002/0149

Working Time Directive 93/104/EC

Energy Efficiency Directive 2012/27/EU

Drivers Hours Directive 2006/561/EC

Environmental Impact Assessment Directive 85/337/EEC as amended by Directive 97/11/EC

Note 1. Source <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-35658731>

Note 2. Source <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/eu-tendering-costs-9000-homes-a-year/6513618.article>

Note 3. Source http://www.local.gov.uk/eu-policy-and-lobbying/-/journal_content/56/10180/2944145/ARTICLE

Note 4. Source <https://fullfact.org/europe/our-eu-membership-fee-55-million/>