

Retail Sector Council – 2 March 2022
Meeting Note

1. Attendees

Co-Chairs: Minister Paul Scully MP, Co-Chair
Richard Pennycook, Co-Chair

Attendees: Victoria Robertshaw (Keelham Farm Shop)
James Lowman (Association of Convenience Stores)
Paddy Lillis (USDAW)
Dave McCarthy (HSBC)
Sebastian James (Boots)
Andrew Goodacre (BIRA)
John Boumphrey (Amazon)
Nick Read (Post Office)
Ian Filby (IFF Solutions)
Nick Beighton
Alex Baldock (Currys)
Carl Creswell (BEIS)
Charles McCall (BEIS)

Apologies: Helen Dickinson (British Retail Consortium), John Rogers (WPP), Peter Jelkeby (Ikea), Diane Savory, Simon Roberts (Sainsburys), Paul Marchant (Primark), Ursula Lidbetter (Lincolnshire Co-op)

Guests: Neil O'Brien (Minister for Levelling Up, The Union and Constitution, DLUHC)

Officials: David Bickerton (Director General, Business Sectors Group, BEIS), Claire Gregory (Head of Domestic Retail, BEIS), Rachel Campbell (Deputy Director, Regeneration and Urban Policy, DLUHC), Jo Willson (Hospitality and Personal Care Lead, BEIS), Stephen Bethel (BRC), Tom Ironside (BRC)

2. Summary of actions

Action	Owner
Action: Sector Council members to feed any data or insight in relation to the impact of sanctions on their businesses.	Sector Council members
Action: Richard Pennycook to write to Sector Council members setting out the approach to developing a shared position on the Online Sales Tax.	RP
Action: BEIS to follow up with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office about how to ensure minimum friction in collecting and carrying aid to affected areas.	BEIS – complete
Action: BEIS to liaise with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to clarify whether further advice is in development.	BEIS
Action: Sector Council members to indicate if they have proposals for supporting the	Sector Council members

development of the Green Street project in the future.	
Action: Sector Council members to indicate issues for the Retail Strategy that should be added to the list to be considered and also what the priorities for action are.	Sector Council members
Action: Sector Council members to indicate if they would like to be involved in the Retail Strategy task and finish groups.	Sector Council members
Action: Dave McCarthy to contact Sector Council members to arrange 1-2-1s to discuss the project.	DM
Action: Sector Council members to indicate if they would like to become actively involved in the Skills and Lifelong Learning project.	Sector Council members
Action: BEIS to follow up with Home Office officials on the content of the Police, Crime and Sentencing Bill factsheets.	BEIS – complete

3. Note of Discussion

a) Welcome and Introductions

The Minister welcomed attendees to the meeting and outlined the key items on the agenda. He particularly noted the developing conflict in Ukraine and the commitment of the UK Government to build pressure through sanctions.

He also noted the Treasury has begun a consultation on the Online Sales Tax, which does not present a final position but seeks views on a range of technical and design questions.

David Bickerton, the Director General for Business Sectors, provided an overview of current areas of focus in his role.

Action: Sector Council members to feed any data or insight in relation to the impact of sanctions on their businesses.

Richard Pennycook added his welcome to the meeting and noted the apologies. He asked whether Sector Council members would be in favour of submitting a response to the Online Sector Tax consultation, building on previous engagement on this issue. Noting the associated difficulties, members indicated that it would be worth attempting to develop a shared position.

Action: Richard Pennycook to write to Sector Council members setting out the approach to developing a shared position on the Online Sales Tax.

Richard Pennycook welcomed the role officials are playing in supporting companies on issues relating to the Ukraine conflict. He noted that some retailers have asked if there might be a role for retailers to play in collection of aid and associated logistics. As a corollary, he highlighted the need for support from government to enable such activity to be undertaken in as effective a way as possible.

Action: BEIS to follow up with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office about how to ensure minimum friction in collecting and carrying aid to affected areas.

Beyond the sanctions regime, Stephen Bethel asked if government expected to give additional advice or support in relation to wider activity such as commercial boycotts or similar.

Action: BEIS to liaise with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to clarify whether further advice is in development.

b) Net Zero and the Circular Economy: Green Street Pilot Update

Victoria Robertshaw updated the meeting on the progress of the Green Street initiative. She particularly highlighted the work on the Green Street brand and the associated Bradford pilot. In the latter regard, new customer events and use of space have a key role to play. She also noted that working towards demonstrating that sustainable business models can support commercial vibrancy of a local area is a key objective.

Victoria provided an overview of the associated Green Street toolkit, funding and key elements of local interventions. She also updated on recent business and consumer research undertaken to inform the initiative. The interest of other cities, such as Newcastle, was noted.

The forward focus is on finding effective partnerships to support the future momentum of the project.

Action: Sector Council members to indicate if they have proposals for supporting the development of the Green Street project in the future.

c) Update on RSC Retail Strategy

Dave McCarthy set out the approach to developing the Retail Strategy, noting that producing a series of reports might be preferable to seeking to develop a single document. Task and Finish groups will then progress the resulting workstreams. The BEIS team support the Council in the development of the strategy.

Indicative suggested areas were set out to give an idea of the issues to be covered. These include consumer behaviour, the development of online, role of digital and data, green issues, health and safety, business taxation and a range of others.

It was also noted that significant changes had taken place to the ownership of some significant retail companies.

Action: Sector Council members to indicate issues for the Retail Strategy that should be added to the list to be considered and also what the priorities for action are.

Action: Sector Council members to indicate if they would like to be involved in the Retail Strategy task and finish groups.

Action: Dave McCarthy to contact Sector Council members to arrange 1-2-1s to discuss the project.

Consideration is also being given to a survey of the wider industry to get their input.

Sector Council members noted the importance of consulting more explicitly with younger people in the industry, both to get their perspectives and also to raise the profile of the work more generally. It was also noted that positioning is important and it can be unhelpful to make artificial distinctions between bricks and mortar and online retailers. The importance of

defining clear objectives is essential to achieve an effective outcome. Others emphasised the need to consider the future of high streets and physical properties.

d) Update on High Streets and the Levelling Up White Paper

Neil O'Brien, the Minister for Levelling Up, the Union and Constitution, provided an overview of the objectives of the Levelling Up White Paper and highlighted areas where the government is seeking particular input to shape the forward approach. The absolute importance of high streets and other commercial areas to this overall initiative was stressed.

The £1.8 Billion committed to support local regeneration initiatives and priorities was also outlined. The significant relevance of the skills agenda was also noted. The Minister indicated that government is keen to find effective ways to maximise the impact of the White Paper's initiatives.

Richard Pennycook noted the close inter-relationship between the digital world and the physical world. He noted the importance of property considerations and the potential role of development incentives to support redevelopment of key sites. He also noted the need for true local leadership delivered with the support of local business representatives.

James Lowman observed that business investment is a pre-requisite for successful levelling up.

e) Update on skills and lifelong learning

John Boumphrey provided an outline of the importance of retail in relation to skills and lifelong learning and noted the strong read across to government objectives. The associated challenges are well recognised, from educational attainment onwards.

In terms of approach, the earlier work of Doug Gurr was noted. The Government work already in place in this space was also highlighted, including the consideration being given to reviewing the effectiveness of the Apprenticeship Levy. The starting point for the project will be to consider the skills that will be needed by the industry in the future and what the legislative and non-legislative measures might be that could support the attainment of those skills objectives.

The intention is to consider this area in the light of the areas of focus set out in the Levelling Up White Paper.

Action: Sector Council members to indicate if they would like to become actively involved in this project.

f) AOB

Paddy Lillis highlighted his concern that factsheets relating to the Police, Crime and Sentencing Bill did not reference the retail relevant amendment. BEIS agreed to look into the issue.

Action: BEIS to follow up with Home Office officials on the content of the Police, Crime and Sentencing Bill factsheets.

Dates for forthcoming meetings – 2022:

- **31 May 2022** **10:30am – 12:00pm**
- **14 September 2022** **10:00am – 11:30am**
- **14 December 2022** **10:00am – 11:30am**