



## SME Advisory Group

Meeting 7 March 2022

By Video Conferencing  
Minutes

### Attendees:

Minister of State Ossian Smyth - Chair		Aidan Sweeney – IBEC
Caroline Sweeney – ITI	Ciarán McLoughlin – D/ETE	Helen Bruen – EPA
Jonathan Small - CCPC	Marina Donohoe – EI	Neil McDonnell – ISME
Paul Maguire – EI	Sean Downey – CIF	Shane Conneely – Chambers Ireland
Stephen Browne – SFA	Brendan Whelan - OGP	Fergal Grogan – OGP
Martin O’Gorman - OGP	OGP Secretariats	

### Apologies:

Grant Gilmore – ITI	Pauline Mulligan – D/ETE
Laura Byrne – D/ETE	Siona Ryan - CCPC

### 1. Previous Minutes and Actions Arising

Minutes of the previous meeting of 1 December were agreed and actions noted. The Minister of State welcomed new members who have joined the Group, including Marina Donohoe who has taken over from Tom Kelly of EI and Pauline Mulligan who has taken over from Declan Hughes of the D/ETE.

### 2. Presentation by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Helen Bruen provided an overview of the EPA’s role and responsibility with a discussion on GPP and support measures put in place for suppliers. Minister Smyth thanked the EPA for their presentation and a general discussion followed concerning Green Public Procurement (GPP) and the utilisation of early market engagement and incorporating GPP with particular regard to examples. The EPA highlighted that they will be focusing on case studies in the future and provided some examples to the Group. The EPA advised that they are happy to engage with the Group to facilitate a more focussed discussion.

**Action** – OGP to circulate EPA’s presentation to the Group.

### 3. Strategic Public Procurement

Minister Smyth highlighted that the OGP held its recent GO Green Conference. The Conference featured a variety of speakers who are experts in the area GPP, the presentations are available on the [OGP’s website](#).

### 4. Covid-19 & Brexit

Minister Smyth referenced changes in the areas of Covid-19 and the return to non-emergency procurement as was emphasised in the OGP’s updated Covid-19 Information Note published in



September and asked the Group to put forward any concerns they had in the areas of Covid-19 and any issues they were seeing as a result of Brexit.

IBEC highlighted the overall effect that Covid-19 had on the market place noting that companies may have reinvested themselves and the impact this may have upon future supply chains. IBEC flagged between the formation of the new Government, Covid and Brexit, noting that we do not know how market engagement will look in a normal landscape. The importance of this regarding the sequencing of the NDP in order to deliver sufficient competition was flagged. There was a general discussion on competitive competitions and the need to ensure viable supply chains.

EI noted the challenges that were brought on as a result of Brexit and how companies have adapted. It was noted that the UK is one of our largest export markets, with companies in the UK still looking to do business with Ireland and that companies are getting on with business as usual.

ISME made reference to importation. It was noted that companies could source materials internationally but as they are not buying the large quantities it is not worthwhile for them. There was a discussion on groupage and how this has been affected by Brexit.

Chambers Ireland noted that it was difficult to obtain technical goods from the UK at present and made reference to the capacity of the English exporters. The matter of bulk goods being a problem was advised upon alongside the issue of the increase in fuel costs which factored in additional costs which could threaten the viability of contracts which were already agreed to.

CIF made a proposal for the standing items of Covid-19 and Brexit to be replaced with “Macroeconomic Issues” so the market can provide the Minister with a wide range of feedback on such issues. This was agreed by the Group. CIF referenced their M&E taskforce on construction price inflation. CIF highlighted that inflation and logistical issues are coming to the forefront at present with the situation in Eastern Europe impacting upon the aforementioned issues. It was also pointed out that Brexit has not had as detrimental an impact as was expected due in part to the good information coming from multiple government departments.

IBEC passed on feedback - on behalf of its clients that provide Facilities Management services - that the slow return to the office was impacting on the performance of the contract. The question was raised as to what the hybrid working policy will mean for these contracts. IBEC flagged the potential role of the OGP in providing guidance in this area. IBEC also highlighted that certain categories of spend would have not been purchasing a large quantity of products over the last two years and noted that we may only be seeing the effects and how the market will operate in the coming months. With the issues on inflation and supply chain issues being exasperated due to the current situation at present there is a need to highlight the early market engagement piece and the need to ensure there is competitive competitions in the future.

CIF highlighted that they had engaged with ITI, EI in the past and noted the highly successful meet the buyer events. CIF noted that a benefit would be for the OGP to make aware of the schedule for future tenders alongside the need for more meet the buyer type events. The OGP highlighted that the engagement between the buyers and the market is pivotal and something that we will be working towards in the future. The Minister advised that he would be happy to engage in regional events. EI made reference to a number of events they have planned and highlighted the successfully PPE forum in which suppliers highlighted ideas/products to the contracting authorities. The approach to macroeconomic issues in America was also flagged. IBEC made reference to the Dublin Regional Enterprise Plan with an area of focus being on strategic events which then could be extended out to other regions.



The Minister of State acknowledged the points made, the Minister noted that the Government is aware of the situation regarding fuel which is currently being worked upon. The Minister noted the current situation in Ukraine at present.

**Action** - OGP to notify Sourcing on matters to ensure competitive competitions; OGP to update standing item of Covid-19 and Brexit to “Macroeconomic Issues”.

## **7. AOB**

The Minister proposed for the next meeting in June to be held in person and this was agreed by the Group.