Good morning fellow Unionists. May I first welcome our new leader Robin Swann and congratulate him on his election….

A major aspect of the Vice Chairman’s role will be to help the Leader develop a new path for us, and to support him in his endeavours to craft a renaissance for the Ulster Unionist Party.

I am Jeff Dudgeon, a serving Belfast City Councillor for the Balmoral DEA where we are meeting, and chairman of the South Belfast Ulster Unionist Association.

The election in March was a huge wake up call for us. In order to succeed, we need to make significant changes in how we do business, beginning with a fresh vision, fresh ideas and fresh faces.

Communication of our message to the electorate needs to be improved and made more professional.

Our party structure requires strengthening. Increased involvement of associations is crucial to achieving this.

The party press team must not only be quick and nimble, but also proactive in achieving the best possible coverage of our statements and policies. We must also step up our game in the realm of social media and marketing.

How we work together as party members needs to change. As colleagues we have to be loyal and supportive to one another.

Party cohesion is lacking and weakens our efforts. Squabbling, perceived slights and historic grievances, along with excessive personal ambition, hamper many associations’ efforts when it comes to elections.

We must always remember the bigger goal and think as members of the party rather than as members of disparate groups.

Across the board, our Councillors, MLAs, and MPs must be willing, more than ever, to work together to deliver for the people of Northern Ireland.

By supporting and encouraging the Young Unionists we tap into an invaluable resource, recognising that they are the future of our party.

Modernisation will get us ahead of the curve with the electorate, engaging with younger voters, and reflecting the opinions of a post-conflict generation.

Also we need to recognise that if Unionism is to succeed electorally, we must have a standing arrangement with other Unionist parties; we should be open and transparent about this.

This is a time of danger and opportunity for Unionism, and as Vice Chairman of our party I will work tirelessly alongside my colleagues to ensure that we meet all challenges with vigour and wisdom. Thank you.