

4 February, 2020

EU Exit Preparedness

Ward(s): ALL

Portfolios: ALL

1. Aim

Since the referendum a number of attempts to secure a deal to leave the EU have been made but at the time of writing it looks likely we will leave by 31st January 2020 with a deal and a transition period.

To support preparation and to manage the risks identified, a local European Union Exit Planning Team was formed to ensure that the Authority is in the best possible position to respond to the challenges of the EU Exit (Brexit). The group have been meeting since January 2019 and includes officers from all directorates of the authority.

2. Recommendations

That the Committee review the work to date, discussing any areas of risk, mitigating actions and preparations and advise on any further action that they feel will be necessary to ensure the Council are able to prepare and respond effectively to deliver a smooth exit from the European Union for the communities of Walsall.

3. Report detail – know

At time of writing, the UK is due to leave the EU on 31st January 2020, the form this will take is still unknown, which limits the Council's ability to fully assess and mitigate against all risks. However, led by the Executive Director for Economy and Environment, the Council has monitored and maintained a comprehensive plan and risk monitor to mitigate against any negative consequences.

The Department for Exiting the European Union (DExxEU) identified key issues that are likely to impact on Local Authorities during the Exit of Europe. These include:

- Citizens' Rights-eligibility changes could lead to increased demand for Local Authority (LA) services
- Workforce-Potential skills shortages, particular in Adult Social Care
- Trading Standards- Port and in-country services

- Economy-potential economic changes. Analysis is available on the departments website, published on 28 November
- Regulatory Reform-potential changes.

To support preparation and to manage the risks identified, a cross-directorate EU Exit Planning Group was formed to ensure that the Authority is in the best possible position to respond to the challenges of the Brexit, and working to mitigate against any potential impacts on residents and businesses within the borough of Walsall.. The group have been meeting since January 2019 and includes key staff within all areas, meeting on a regular basis and reporting into Corporate Management Team.

Lianne Deathridge, the Council's Resilience Manager, has been identified as the Councils EU Exit Lead Officer and will continue to coordinate all information in relation to Brexit and its impact for the council, supported by the EU Exit Planning Group.

The Council has been liaising with a range of external partners to coordinate preparations and share intelligence regarding risks.

At a regional level, West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) have established a regional Brexit Committee to manage and respond to government advice on withdrawal. The Commission has a number of working groups, including Trading Standards, Environmental Health, Regulatory, Health, Social Care, and external funding. WMBC are represented at all groups and report back to the local EU Exit Planning Group.

The Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (BCLEP) has also established a working group, of which Walsall are a member, and will be reviewing and circulating government communications.

The Council is also represented at the Local Resilience Forum Brexit sub group, which holds fortnightly meetings to cover strategic and tactical planning.

There is no requirement placed upon us to produce a specific EU Exit response plan. The event is being treated as a known business continuity issue and therefore our business continuity plans will be activated accordingly.

The Government produced a 'Local Authority Preparedness Check List'. All local authorities were advised to use this Check List to assure themselves that their organisation has undertaken the necessary EU Exit impact assessments, relevant planning and prepared appropriate mitigation processes in relation to the following seven areas:

1. All the statutory services for which the council is responsible.
2. All regulatory services for which the council is responsible
3. The impact (direct or indirect) of border areas
4. The impact on supply chains
5. Data handling
6. Local partnership working
7. Communications

Corporate Management Team (CMT) has been assured that the Council and its Brexit planning group are fully up to speed on requirements of this and are in a positive position at this moment in time.

Across the Authority:

- All service areas have been asked to ensure that their Business Continuity Plans have been reviewed and updated accordingly
- Where service areas rely upon external partners, reassurance of their readiness has been sort
- HR have investigated our employment situation and have confirmed that we have a very small number of staff, across the whole of the Authority, who will be impacted upon re the EU Settlement Scheme. Staff support mechanisms are being looked into to ensure that any staff who need to register for EU Settlement understand and are supported to apply.

EU Exit Planning Group were asked to submit project proposals that would enable the Council to effectively manage and support our communities through the EU Exit Process. Expression of interest were received and reviewed and three proposals look to provide the best opportunity to support these activities.

These include a project to support any additional burdens to Trading Standards team, an increased provision for Environmental Health and additional support for residents looking apply for EU Settlement Status. These projects will be financed through Government allocations.

Financial information

The financial implications of Brexit are difficult to assess, however the Council has received additional financial contributions from Central Government to mitigate some of this risk.

The Council has received £314,984 in total from Central Government of which £157,492 has been pooled with the WMCA. The remainder of the funding, £157,476 will be used to support projects that meet local needs and activities.

Reducing Inequalities

The Council will continue to consider how leaving the EU may affect our corporate plan aim to reduce inequalities and maximise potential. We will continue to monitor and manage any impact as and when this is anticipated or evident.

5. Decide

Due to the unknown and ever changing of the Brexit landscape, any decisions made at this stage, may be unnecessary should the central government position change.

This report suggests that the Council should continue to assess and update its planning and understanding of the risk posed by Brexit and take mitigating action wherever possible.

6. Respond

The committee is asked to review progress to date and advise on any further work that it feels will ensure that the Council are best placed to meet the changes arising from Brexit.

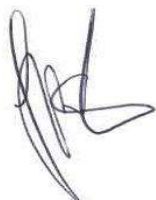
7. Review

Risk register to be monitored and updated to ensure we are in a position to effectively respond to potential changes.

Background papers

Author

Lianne Deathridge
Resilience Manager, EU Exit Lead Officer
☎ 652226
✉ lianne.deathridge@walsall.gov.uk



Simon Neilson
Executive Director

24 January 2020