

BREXIT IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RESILIENCE PLANNING

To: **Audit and Accounts Committee**

Date: **28 March 2019**

From: **Adrian Chapman - Service Director: Communities and Safety**

Electoral Division(s): **All**

Purpose: **To inform the Committee about preparations for Brexit**

Key Issues: **None**

Recommendation: **To note and comment on the information within this report**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At time of writing, the UK is set to leave the European Union on 29 March 2019. At present, the detail of the terms of that exit is unknown. However, it is imperative that the Council seeks to identify the potential impacts of this on our organisation, our staff, and our residents.
- 1.2 This report seeks to update Members on the preparations that have been taking place since the last report which was presented to this Committee on 24 January 2019.

2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 In our January report to Committee, we confirmed that a new Brexit Taskforce had been created, and this is now well established and supported by regular meetings and online communication. The taskforce has continued to refine and develop our Brexit Impact Assessment to:
 - Identify impact 'sponsors' for each of the risks
 - Demonstrate the level of risk more clearly
 - Allow risks to be re-assessed in the light of mitigations
 - Include a new risk concerning personal data and General Data Protection Regulations
 - Show the date of the latest updates to each risk, as requested by Committee
- 2.2 It is significant that despite mitigation, for many of the risks the scores have not reduced. This reflects the fact that there is no change in the level of likelihood as the overall nature of our exit from the EU remains unclear. Once the national picture becomes clearer then we will update the impact assessment accordingly.
- 2.3 Task and finish action groups have been formed by the Taskforce to ensure delivery of agreed mitigations at pace. These groups include those focussing on workforce engagement, community and councillor engagement, hate crime mitigation, and data sharing implications.
- 2.4 A communications strategy and plan is in place alongside a community engagement strategy and plan with a focus on promoting the EU Settlement Scheme, targeted work with EU citizen employees and identifying Looked After Children (LAC) and other vulnerable people who are EU citizens. The communications strategy includes a page on our council website which directs people to government sources of information. Communications include information for our citizens on what they should do if they are visiting or living in EU countries. It is felt that this will provide some balance against the focus on EU citizens living in the UK. We are also seeking to collaborate with the other councils across Cambridgeshire to develop a single engagement strategy, to ensure consistent messaging, and to capture key issues that emerge across our communities.
- 2.5 It has been agreed that it is a priority to encourage affected members of our own workforce to apply for settled status as soon as possible. A small group of service

leads has been identified to work with our commissioned services, such as care providers, to ensure that plans are in place to stabilise their workforces.

- 2.6 The taskforce is also considering of the best use of new burdens government funding for Brexit. This includes approaching the Public Services Board to suggest that organisations pool a percentage of this money for effective use of resources to meet shared priorities.
- 2.7 We are continuing to proactively source all available information to better inform our work and our citizens, and this includes participating in calls into Government as well as researching their online content. We are also directly engaging with the Local Government Association (LGA), and the Strategic Migration Partnership.
- 2.8 Along with other councils in the eastern region we are sending a weekly update to the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA), who then collate this information and provide a weekly update to government. Each week EELGA send us the collated version which has been sent to government which gives us the opportunity to review information supplied by other councils, some of the challenges that they are facing and the issues which they are raising with government.
- 2.9 Through these weekly updates we have been able to draw government attention to the following:
- The fact that many of the issues that our councils face are not unique to our area and are heavily dependent upon the co-ordination by national agencies (Highways England, NHS, and Government Departments) so it is critical that we understand the approach they are taking to support the ongoing delivery of our services
 - Our positive response to increased sharing of information from government and to stress that it is important that this continues and is built upon
 - The fact that our community and voluntary sector is particularly worried about the potential impacts of Brexit on inequalities and poverty, pressures upon their services and funding for their work
 - Concerns that a potential “black market” is beginning to emerge with small advice agencies offering “charged for support” in applying for EU settled status which we will counter by increased publicity around the free support offered by our councils
 - Need for information about Home Office grants for the voluntary sector to help vulnerable people, as we are not aware which organisations applied and which were successful. As we are trying to develop a single system-wide approach to managing Brexit, and particularly to engaging with our EU residents, knowing this information would be invaluable.
- 2.10 We have also been able to ask the government to:
- Communicate with Councillors through whatever additional routes they have
 - Assist us in communications to the voluntary and community sector

- Provide further information on the definition of “criminality” as referred to in relation to applications for settled status. We believe that it would be very helpful to understand the threshold for acceptance that will be applied, as we are aware that this is likely to generate considerable concern amongst some members of our population
- Provide clarification on the definition of “vulnerable people”, and the minimum standards to be applied, in relation to supporting people to apply for settled status. We stressed the need for the vulnerable people definition to include people with very limited English or IT skills as they would tend to rely on others to complete the documentation process and hence remain vulnerable to be exploited (financially) or have their data stolen/misused
- Provide assurance that the issue raised by one school, who identified that for specialist food supplies (particularly gluten-free), the main producers are EU-based, has been considered and mitigated, as it will impact beyond schools alone
- Consider the impact of Brexit on maintaining school and other public buildings

2.11 Local Resilience Forum

We continue to work closely on Emergency Planning issues through our Local Resilience Forum. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Resilience Forum (CPLRF) is undertaking activity to consider potential Brexit scenarios in the context of partnership preparation. The CPLRF has run a workshop facilitated by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and continues to liaise with the department. A schedule of regular CPLRF Strategic Coordination Meetings has been prepared and this will be adjusted in light of the demands that emerge. The CPLRF maintains existing plans to address disruption to supplies and services, which are available to be activated if conditions develop.

2.12 At the January Committee, Members raised several queries which we have sought to respond to as follows:

2.12.1 School funding and the ability of headteachers to plan budgets as a result of the potential impact of post-BREXIT causing a rise in food and fuel prices.

Refer to Impact Assessment reference BX 9

In the short term it is difficult to predict the impact on food and fuel prices and the knock-on effect on budgets. This is a risk that will be included in the longer term Brexit Impact Assessment which will address issues that may extend beyond the initial six months.

2.12.2 Potential fuel shortages impacting on public transport, transport to schools and staff and pupils being able to travel to work / schools.

Refer to Impact Assessment reference BX15

CCC and PCC continue to review business continuity plans, and have requested commissioned services do likewise. In addition, national government

arrangements are in place to address disruption to the supply of fuel, with local arrangements overseen and managed by the Local Resilience Forum. Work is currently underway in CCC and PCC to assess fuel usage by services. Once this data is complete then mitigation and risk will be updated.

- 2.12.3 The duty as a local authority employer to communicate to EU staff to reassure them around the work being undertaken to help with settlement, as well as issues around the rights of low skilled jobs earning under £30k, highlighting that their protection had been removed.

Refer to Impact Assessment reference BX4

CCC HR are communicating messages to all employees about the Settlement Scheme via various forms of internal media to inform and encourage applications to the Settlement Scheme. They are also encouraging and monitoring completion of the ERP field to record Nationality so that they can begin to target those that may need help with applying.

PCC have highlighted to those eligible under the Pilot Phase 2 (Social Care Sector) the Settlement Scheme and how to apply. There will be further targeted work with EU Employees to encourage them to apply for settled status, and to determine if they require assistance. Information is being communicated via management teams to their staff about this process, as well as wider communication to reinforce information and messages using the Employers Toolkit published by the government.

With regard to the £30k threshold, the government is still consulting on this and it is widely anticipated that the new immigration legislation will bring this level down and explain how it affects those currently employed. Once we have this information we will update our plans accordingly. This point is also relevant in the event of a no-deal exit.

- 2.12.4 What plans there were to deal with rising tensions in the community, highlighting that some children could be bringing to school some of the negative views expressed by their parents?

Refer to Impact Assessment reference BX1

The programme board led by the Service Director for Communities and Safety is leading the communications and community engagement strategy. The board is working closely with community and faith groups to communicate Government information and messaging, particularly to highlight the EU settlement scheme to the voluntary and community sector and the wider public. The importance of EU and other non UK citizens in supporting the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough economy is being stressed. The Tension Monitoring Group and Hate Crime Task and Finish Group are closely monitoring the community tension situation. Reported hate crime for the month of February remains low with no notable cases relating to EU communities.

- 2.12.5 BREXIT exacerbating long term rises in inequalities and their negative knock-on impact on public health. The potential impact on personal finances.

Refer to Impact Assessment reference BX 10

In the short term it is difficult to predict the impact on personal finance and the resultant inequalities and health impacts. This is a risk that will be included in the longer term Brexit Impact Assessment which will address issues that may extend beyond the initial six months.

- 2.12.6 The need to clarify the voting rights of EU citizens in local and general elections.

The following information is extracted from an LGA bulletin produced in early February 2019:

“After pressing for guidance from Government on your behalf, we received further clarification on election eligibility for EU Citizens living in the UK. It is the UK Government’s intention that voting eligibility will not change for the May 2019 elections, and that candidates who are validly nominated and elected at or before the May 2019 local elections in England and Northern Ireland should be able to serve that term of office in full. We will continue to work with Government to understand their intent on this issue post May 2019, and, in the case of an extension to Article 50, we have raised with them the need for clear guidance on the European 2019 elections.”

- 2.12.7 Potential difficulties in paying Council Tax.

Refer to Impact Assessment reference BX10

Finance colleagues report that no specific impact upon council tax receipts is currently identified but this will need to be monitored and central government informed if further support is required.

- 2.12.8 While it was known some supermarkets were already stockpiling products, needing to know the position on medicines.

Refer to Impact Assessment reference BX3

Local communications on national guidance has been sent to GPs and the local message to providers continues to be not to stockpile medication supplies. Local system and regional EU Preparedness Testing workshops were held in February and the supply of medicines was discussed in detail. National government and NHS led continuity plans will be prioritised and further detail on national continuity plans is awaited. A local system wide drug shortage group has been established and meets weekly to enable close oversight of medicines availability. An ongoing dialogue is in place with NRS Healthcare, our community equipment supplier, who have assured us that business continuity plans in place.

- 2.12.9 Officers to consider factoring in to the risks timetable the risks / impact of a delayed BREXIT.

If the government should announce that Brexit is to be delayed, then it is planned that the Brexit Impact Assessment would be reviewed in response to the changed situation. The work and planning that we have done so far should provide the basis and can be built on for this review.

- 2.12.10 Details of when library and other front line staff would be briefed / appropriately skilled to provide advice to EU nationals etc.

Originally the intention was to be ready for March, but with the Government undertaking a beta test of the settlement scheme now, some Libraries were already offering an advice service on Settlement which would be rolled out to other front line staff such as social workers.

- 2.12.11 The updated plan to show for each identified risk the last date when the particular section was updated.

The Brexit Impact Assessment now includes a column to show the date of the latest update to each line.

3. NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 We will continue to update the Brexit Impact Assessment in the light of national developments.
- 3.2 We will begin to collect information to inform the next stage of the Brexit Impact Assessment which will address longer term impacts beyond the initial six months.

4. APPENDICES

- 4.1 Appendix 1- Brexit Impact Assessment

Source Documents	Location
None	N/A