


REPORT TO

ECONOMY, SKILLS, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY BOARD

7 November 2019

Subject:	Brexit Update
Director:	Executive Director - Neighbourhoods Dr Alison Knight
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
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DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board:

1. Members are asked to note the contents of this report;
2. Members are invited to ask further questions if clarification is required.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief overview of the plans that have been put in place in regarding Brexit and any mitigations than can be actioned.

2 IMPLICATIONS FOR VISION 2030

- 2.1 Non-directly arising from this report, however, Brexit has the potential to impact on all of the ambitions of the Vision 2030.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 On the 6th August 2019, we received a letter from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) advising us that the UK will be leaving the European Union on 31 October. The letter explained that although it was preferable to leave with a deal, that the necessary preparations to leave without a deal needed to be taken. As part of these preparations, the council was asked to designate a senior officer as Brexit Lead Officer. Alison Knight, Executive Director of Neighbourhoods had previously been taking a lead role with regards to Brexit, so it was agreed that she would take on this role.

The role of Brexit Lead Officer includes:

- Ensuring the council has taken all reasonable steps, in line with relevant guidance and messaging coming from Government and its agencies, to prepare for our exit from the EU on 31 October. This should include clear communication to local residents and businesses to support their own preparations for Brexit and a plan for how the council would communicate important messages to stakeholders;
- Ensuring the council has a team in place which is equipped to support the delivery of Brexit, ready for the period around 31 October;
- Overseeing the expenditure of the specific Brexit funding allocated to the council and ensuring it is effectively contributing to local preparations;
- Playing a full part in the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to ensure that its plans for No Deal take account of relevant local circumstances and potential impacts on local communities. MHCLG is writing separately to all LRF chairs to set out how it proposes to work with them to prepare for Brexit and to ask that they liaise with the council's Brexit lead officer to assess relevant impacts;
- Bringing together local public service providers, the voluntary and community sector, community groups and businesses to effectively prepare for the potential local impacts of leaving the EU without a deal;
- Acting as the principal contact point for our regional lead chief executive (Nick Page from Solihull MBC) and central Government; and
- Proactively raising with central Government or our regional chief executive representative any emerging trends, issues and other local intelligence that might assist in No Deal preparations.

Following this letter, a Brexit Working Group was set up with officers from the following areas:

- Neighbourhoods (including the representative on the Local Resilience Forum)
- Finance
- Communications
- Adult Services
- Children's Services
- HR
- Public Health
- Risk management

A number of meetings have taken place and a Risk Register has been developed which includes the following risk areas:

- EU Residency Staff
- Sandwell Residents (EU status)
- EU funding
- Local Economy and Businesses
- Supply of medicines
- Fuel Shortages
- Food Supplies
- Adult Services
- Children's Services and Schools
- Financial Impact
- Community Cohesion
- Data sharing and data protection
- Schools preparations for Brexit
- Cost, supply, availability and quality of goods and services

In addition, a Communications Plan has been drawn up which sets out our plan to ensure residents are up to date with Brexit preparation, particularly those who may need to apply for EU Settled Status.

Update

At the time of writing (29th October 2019) the European Union has agreed that it will accept the UK's request for a Brexit extension until 31 January 2020. In light of this development, the "Get Ready for Brexit" public information campaign is being paused but SMBC will continue to provide information to local people regarding the EU Settlement Scheme as well signpost individuals to gov.uk/brexit

- 4.1 Finance – Funding has been received from government to the council to assist with Brexit. 50% of the total has been placed with the WMCA to ensure there is a regional response and task force in place.
- 4.2 Fluctuations in interest rates and inflation are being regularly monitored to assess how any changes impact cost of goods and services and thereby impacting on the budgetary and medium term financial position.
- 4.2 Human resources - Details are included in the Risk Register and implications for staff not currently classed as UK residents

5 Equality Implications

- 5.1 The Communications plan will take into account issues relating to equality to ensure that all residents have chance to access information.

6 Risk Implications

- 6.1 The council has reviewed its strategic, directorate, operational and project risks in light of Brexit and where appropriate, has updated the assessment of these risks and identified further mitigating actions.
- 6.2 The Brexit risk register is reviewed and monitored by the Brexit Working Group to ensure that all local, regional and national risks and issues identified are considered for inclusion in the register and that agreed actions are being implemented in order to mitigate any risks.

Dr Alison Knight
Executive Director - Neighbourhoods