

Report of: Corporate Director of People

Meeting of:	Date:	Agenda Item	Ward(s):
Audit Committee	2 nd September 2019		All

Delete as appropriate:	Exempt	Non-exempt


SUBJECT: Brexit Resilience Planning Update**1. Synopsis**

- 1.1. This paper summarises the work to date that has been conducted by the Brexit Resilience Group in preparation for a 'no deal' Brexit scenario.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Committee is asked to note the report

3. Background

- 3.1. The UK is scheduled to formally leave the European Union on the 31st October 2019. In order to ensure that Islington Council is fully prepared, the Brexit Resilience group [BRG] has been putting plans in place for a potential 'no deal' Brexit scenario.
- 3.2. The challenges posed by a no deal Brexit have been discussed and monitored by the BRG since the beginning of the year. The scenario could potentially pose unique and difficult challenges in the borough that have not been experienced before. Until recently, information specifically regarding the expectations of Local Authorities has been

minimal. Despite this, the BRG has produced and monitored the Islington Brexit risk register and have been engaged with civil contingency planning with partner organisations (police / fire). The BRG has run a number of no deal scenario exercises to test the mitigations detailed within risk registers with success.

4. Planning and Preparation

4.1. Brexit Resilience Group and planning arrangements

4.1.2 The Brexit Resilience Group [BRG] is a cross council group representing all areas of council business. The group meets on a regular basis, usually fortnightly with weekly meetings held in the run up to Brexit deadlines (March, April and October). The group is chaired by the council's designated Brexit lead officer, the Corporate Director of People and is closely overseen by the Brexit lead executive member, Cllr Una O'Halloran.

4.1.3 The council's executive lead and Head of Paid Service have been briefed on council readiness through regular briefings.

4.1.4 The council's Brexit lead officer participates in regular conference calls with the London lead for Brexit planning and MHCLG. The council's HR lead also has regular conference calls with the relevant government departments.

4.1.5 The BRG reviews the 'no deal' Brexit risk register, which has been developed for each directorate, contingency planning and monitors risks and issues that arise corporately around the specific themes of impact and support required for residents, for businesses and for council staff. Action planning to mitigate risks and prepare for worst case scenarios is co-ordinated through the BRG.

4.1.6 Over the coming weeks, it is strongly anticipated that there will be increased work required by the group as further messaging is received from Central Government. Work is advanced to adjust the resources which will be required as the 31st October deadline approaches.

4.2. Support for Staff

4.2.1 EU Settlement Scheme - Approximately 100 staff have self-identified as a non-UK EU national other than Irish. All of those that have applied for the EU Settlement scheme and are eligible have successfully gained settled status to date.

4.2.2 The nationality of staff is not routinely collected at recruitment and staff are not obliged to notify the Council of their nationality or whether or not they have applied for the scheme. Numbers of EU staff can therefore only be estimated. Staff are also applying for settled status or citizenship without having to notify the council.

- To encourage staff to apply to the scheme, HR have conducted a number of open information sessions across council buildings, including the Town Hall, Cottage Road, Drayton Park, Brewery Road, Vorley Road and Calshot Street, encouraging staff to apply for Settled status. More sessions will be offered in the coming weeks and months.
- Details of the scheme can be found on Islington Council's intranet, Izzi. Messages have been set out via email to all staff to raise awareness and encourage applications.

- Despite media coverage to the contrary, the Home Office have confirmed (as at 22 August 2019) for those in the country before 31 October 2019 that the deadline for applications continues to be 30 June 2021 if the UK and the EU reach a deal and 31 December 2020 if the UK leaves without a deal.
- Some staff have reported feeling anxious about their future status following media reports. Managers are being encouraged to support staff.

4.2.3 Communications to all staff will be ongoing, clarifying messages that are reported in the press which may be confusing, as well as highlighting how LBI values its EU staff.

4.3.Support for Residents

4.3.1 In June Islington ran the 'We are Islington' campaign, to celebrate the positive contribution that non-UK Europeans who live and work in Islington bring to the borough, but to also signpost residents a staff to local support. The month-long colourful campaign was featured on poster sites across the borough and in key council buildings, noticeboards on estates, social media (Twitter, Facebook and Instagram). It featured four different people, with different roles and nationalities. A second phase of the campaign will follow in the coming weeks.

4.3.2 Local group 'Islington in Europe' has worked in collaboration with the council and two local immigration law firms – Wilson Solicitors LLP and Wesley Gryk Solicitors LLP, to provide a number of free immigration and legal advice events for those concerned about their rights and future in the UK. A further event is planned in October which will correspond with the Council's rerun of the 'We are Islington' campaign.

4.3.3 Islington registrars have been providing the ID Verification Service, which supports applications to the EU settlement scheme, which is free to residents, residents of the City of London and staff. Over 600 appointments have been carried out so far, with a further 300 booked for September.

4.3.4 The Adult Social Care team has estimated that there are approximately 400 service users that will need to apply for EU settled status. Discussions have been taking place with care providers about the potential impacts of a no deal on staffing, fresh food supplies and health needs. An event with care providers is being held on the 01/10/19 which will highlight the need for them to assist residents and staff to apply and to support them with up to date information.

4.3.5 Information on the EU Settlement scheme and how to apply has been included in the last two editions of IslingtonLife which is distributed to households in the borough.

4.3.6 Islington is one of 13 London boroughs listed as providing 'Assisted Digital' service for those applying for the EU Settlement Scheme, through the borough libraries.

4.3.7 Work to support vulnerable groups is well under way. For example, detailed planning is in place to focus on the vulnerable residents that will need assistance applying for the settlement scheme e.g. rough sleepers.

4.4 Children and Young People

4.4.1 Local democracy think tank LGiU has recently summarised the major impacts of a no-deal scenario for Children's Services and Education (LGIU briefing 28 August, author Andrew Crompton). The LGiU has reassessed the likely impacts following updated guidance

published by the DfE on 19 August 2019. The LGIU describes the major impacts as likely *"to be in the rules and protocols governing the movement of people (families and workers) impacts on the supply chain, especially predicted shortages of food, medicines and other goods, and on the legal frameworks covering the work of the local authority children's services in areas of family law (where families cross borders), child protection, and supporting children suffering abuse, exploitation or abduction. There are also significant data protection issues raised where institutions and services work across boundaries."*

4.4.2 Detailed work is underway between the council's legal and the Safeguarding and Family Support teams to ensure detailed case planning around the relevant risks.

4.4.3 Detailed work to ensure that children in care and care leavers who need to apply for settled status is taking place and the progress of applications is closely tracked.

4.4.4 Council staff have been working with the contractor Caterlink, which provides school meals for the majority of schools in Islington to ensure that plans are in place to ensure the continuation of healthy meals in the event of supply chain disruption. The contractor has advised us of their Brexit contingency planning and has provided assurance about their detailed planning regarding their supply chains. Council officers will be supporting the schools which are not part of the Caterlink contract at the start of the autumn term with advice on contingency planning relating to their catering arrangements to ensure these are as comprehensive as for those schools in the Caterlink contract.

4.4.5 Guidance for Brexit planning from the DfE has been shared with schools through our regular communication channels and Islington Schools HR service is providing guidance and support to school leaders and staff on the EU settlement scheme. Further briefings are planned for school leaders and governors as information is received from the DfE. Updated information will be shared in our regular briefings for schools and settings.

4.4. Support for Businesses

4.4.1 The council is committed to supporting local businesses, particularly SMEs in their planning to mitigate any risks around a no deal outcome.

4.4.2 In autumn, Brexit will be a standing item on the agenda at the Town Centre meetings to help disseminate information and discuss and plan for potential impacts. It will also be a channel through which the Council can pick up business intelligence on arising issues and deploy interventions where feasible.

4.4.3 Business Continuity packs, provided by the council's Emergency Planning Unit, have been distributed to businesses by the Inclusive Economy team. Businesses are also being signposted to online advice from specialist trade associations, London Growth Hub, BEIS and DExEU - which provides the most up to date guidance.

4.4.4 The council's Inclusive Economy team arranged 2 workshops to be held by BrexitHelp.net, a delivery partner for the London Growth Hub's *Navigating Brexit for SMEs* training programme which is helping London business to become ready for Brexit. However, an uncertain national context meant that take up of the workshops was low and resulted in one being cancelled, with the other having a very small attendance from the tech sector. Feedback indicated that businesses were waiting to see the implications of the Conservative party Leadership contest and the future implications for

Brexit scenario planning. Since then there has been renewed interest and these workshops are set to be rearranged.

4.4.5 As the results from the recent survey of micro and small businesses in the borough are analysed, further work is planned to signpost businesses to government guidance around potential changes in import and export procedures.

4.5. Contingency Planning – Emergency Planning

4.5.1 The Emergency Planning Team [EPT] have been continually working with Police and the Fire Brigade to ensure that contingency plans are in place for a 'no deal' Brexit.

4.5.2 The EPT, with the BRG and Partners have tested the borough's 'no deal' planning by running a number of scenario exercises which considered multiple presenting issues, to ensure that the mitigations detailed within risk registers are robust.

4.5.3 As the deadline for Brexit approaches it is planned that tactical contingency meetings will increase in frequency.

4.5.4 Plans to mitigate any disruption in fuel or food supply due to potential delays or disruption in supply chains at ports of entry have been drawn up to ensure essential services are maintained and vulnerable residents supported.

5. Implications

5.1. Financial Implications

5.1.1. The government has provided funding of £105k in 2018-19 and 2019-20 and is expected to provide further funding of around £50k to support the Council's Brexit planning.

5.1.2. The impact of Brexit is detailed in Appendix A

5.2. Legal Implications

5.2.1. None arising from the content of this report.

5.3. Environmental Implications

5.3.1. None arising from the content of this report.

5.4. Resident Impact Assessment

5.4.1. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The

council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

5.4.2. A Resident Impact Assessment has not been completed for this report.

6. Background papers:

Appended:

- A. Impact of leaving the EU on council budget and treasury management
- B. Brexit Risk Register
- C. We are Islington' Comms Campaign

Final report clearance

Signed by



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