

Leaders' Committee

Exiting the EU - Update on Local Engagement

Item no: 7

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Summary: This paper provides an update on preparatory activity at a local and pan-London level in relation to identifying opportunities and mitigating risks for London local government as a result of the UK's planned exit from the EU.

Recommendations: Leaders' Committee is asked to note this report

Exiting the EU- Update on Local Engagement

1. This paper provides an update on preparatory activity at a local and pan-London level in relation to the UK's planned exit from the EU. Leaders' Committee considered an earlier report on preparations for leaving the EU at its meeting in February 2019.
2. London Councils has been actively engaging with Government, the Mayor of London, and the LGA to ensure that London's particular needs in relation to exiting the EU are heard. We have also continued to engage with boroughs, chief executives and relevant professional networks to support local preparatory activity and promote the exchange of local insights and practice.
3. Contingency planning is being taken forward under the auspices of the statutory London Resilience Forum, at the request of Government.
4. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has initiated an information sharing network, with regional Hubs, to facilitate information flow between central government and local councils. London Councils is supporting the collation and exchange of information within London and is seeking to manage the demands on London boroughs by aligning this exercise with the information that is being collated for contingency planning purposes.

Contingency Planning

5. Local authority contingency planning at a pan-London level is being co-ordinated through the Local Authorities' Panel (LAP), which is chaired by John Barradell, Chief Executive of the City of London. This initiative is operating under the auspices of the statutory London Resilience Forum and working through the Forum's Brexit Contingency Planning Group.
6. The London Resilience Forum is using a risk-based approach, and the Forum's Brexit Contingency Planning Group has set out an approach which covers key areas of risk, including:
 - Business Continuity – supplies / workforce / technical/regulatory/specific
 - Staff welfare
 - Border disruption
 - Critical sectors – health / food / fuel / transport / energy / water
7. A wide range of sectors are represented on the Forum, including London local government, and all are contributing to the overall London assessment. Individual London local authorities have stepped up their work to assess the potential impacts of Brexit in the short, medium and long terms.

8. The current focus of contingency planning is on the potential impact of a short-notice no-deal Brexit. That is, the potential impact of no agreement being reached on the Withdrawal Agreement between the UK and the EU, leading to immediate third country status for the UK on 29th March 2019. Potential impacts are currently being assessed, including the impacts in relation to:

- Health
- The economy
- The environment
- Wider society

The latter point encompasses knock-on impacts of any border disruption – potentially leading to delays in supplies of fresh foods, medical supplies or fuel - with further potential knock-on impacts on transport, as well as broader business continuity.

9. Potential disruptive impacts that have been identified by local authorities relate to:

- Supply chain disruption
- Workforce issues due to EU nationals leaving the UK, impacting on local authorities' ability to maintain critical services
- Increased numbers of vulnerable people in the community
- Disruption to the export of waste to EU countries

10. Community cohesion has been identified as an area which might be impacted, with potential protest activity and increased tension within communities. To help manage this, the London Prevent Network has put in place arrangements to monitor the impacts on communities and to collate overall assessments (working with the MPS).

11. The resilience capabilities and tools that have been established for broader purposes will be utilised to tackle identified risks, such as processes for providing humanitarian support or co-ordinating mutual aid.

12. In the coming weeks, the London Resilience Forum's co-ordination and assessment activity will be scaled up as required - as further clarity emerges about the UK's future relationship with the EU. This may require the establishment of a formal Strategic Co-ordination Group, with a key role for London local government and a more regular rhythm of reporting along with other partners. A verbal update on these evolving arrangements can be provided to Leaders' Committee as relevant.

Pan London Information Sharing

13. John O'Brien, is one of nine local authority chief executives who are working with the MHCLG as part of a national information sharing network to facilitate information flow between central government and local councils. The focus is on gathering and organising up to date intelligence and information on the issues of most concern across each region – then escalating emerging risks and threats to Government.
14. Single Points of Contact (SPOCS) have been identified in each London local authority and they are feeding into a regular weekly exercise to streamline the flow of information between central government and London local authorities. The feedback collected is being used to inform both the escalation of emerging issues to Government via MHCLG and to inform the LRF's contingency planning work.
15. The process has been used to amplify concerns that have been identified by some boroughs in relation to:
 - The need for increased clarity from Government about Settled Status requirements – both in public communications and in relation to expectations around authorities' support role for vulnerable adults.
 - Concern around the lack of clarity on the eligibility of EEA residents arriving after the EU exit to access local services - as well as the potential future NRPf implications for boroughs.
 - Concerns about demonstrations and community tension – as well the impact on local authority service delivery and the diversion of front-line policing resources.
 - The need for urgent clarification on the status of regulatory powers after EU exit and the need for certainty about the legislative basis for certain local government powers and responsibilities.
 - The need for guidance on national contingency plans to help inform planning and communications with residents.
 - Falling business confidence reported by some boroughs highlighting need for clarity around terms of deal/no-deal.
16. In addition, there are a number of key themes that cut across individual services, including workforce impacts; supply chains and data transfer. These have informed discussions within key London local government service areas and professional networks, including:
 - Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS)
 - Environment Directors (LEDNet)

- Directors of Adult Social Care (ADASS)

The groupings are also working with their respective national networks to liaise directly with Departments of State.

17. London Councils continues to support borough Heads of Communications in relation to communicating with the public on settled status and has facilitated engagement between the network and the Home Office. This is being supported by further information, key lines and signposting to good practice.
18. London Councils recently held a roundtable to facilitate mutual learning between boroughs who are working to help prepare EU citizens to apply for Settled Status. The discussion highlighted the importance of greater clarity regarding responsibility for supporting EU citizens who are vulnerable and may need additional support in applying for settled status. These concerns were amplified through the established MHCLG channels and increased clarity is being sought from Government.

Strategic Engagement

19. London Councils has been actively engaging with Government, the Mayor of London, and the LGA to ensure that London's needs in relation to exiting the EU are heard.
 - The Chair of London Councils attended the last MHCLG Ministerial Brexit & Local Government Delivery Board meeting. The Ministerial Delivery Board is currently meeting on a monthly basis and also includes senior political representatives from the LGA, County Councils Network, District Councils Network, and the Core and Key Cities Groups. In addition, the Executive Member for Business, Europe and Good Growth has discussed a number of the key issues with representatives of other party groups.
 - The Chair of London Councils took part in the Mayor of London's Advisory Group on London's preparedness for a 'no deal' exit from the EU when it met on Friday, 1 March 2019. The Advisory Group included a number of senior officials from a range of key public services and took stock of London's readiness both in relation to potential short-term plans and in relation to longer-term impacts.

Conclusion

20. It will be important that boroughs continue to plan and prepare for any anticipated place-based impacts and opportunities as a result of the UK exiting the EU. Borough's continued collaboration with the information sharing mechanisms that have been put in place to support both contingency planning and help the identification of emerging pan-London

issues – is very helpful in supporting an escalation of medium-term concerns to Government and the exchange of practice across boroughs.

21. As noted above, the London Resilience Partnership's co-ordination and assessment activity will be scaled up as required - as further clarity emerges about the UK's future relationship with the EU. This may require the establishment of a formal Strategic Co-ordination Group, with a key role for London local government and a more regular rhythm of reporting along with other partners.
 22. Verbal updates on these evolving arrangements can be provided to Leaders' Committee as relevant.
 23. Leaders' Committee is asked to note this report.
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Financial implications for London Councils

No immediate implications.

Legal implications for London Councils

None

Equalities implications for London Councils

None