

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 19 September 2019

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community & Resources

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety

SUBJECT: Brexit Preparations

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Executive Board as to the resilience planning work currently being undertaken by the authority with regard to the UK leaving the European Union with or without a deal on 31st October 2019. Planning for such a scenario is unprecedented and therefore a reliance will be placed on the Council's usual business continuity arrangements. However, in these circumstances it is important that the authority has arrangements in place which will be activated to respond to whatever situations arise. Every local authority within the country faces the same scenario. Therefore, working collectively and in partnership with all Category 1 and 2 responders (as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004) is seen as a sensible and balanced approach. That is the approach the Council is taking in order, wherever possible, to reduce any potential impacts on the Halton Community.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted and the actions proposed therein be supported.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 **Background**

3.1.1 The authority has a number of statutory duties as outlined in the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004. As part of these duties, the authority already plans for a number of emergency scenarios which may have an impact on the Halton community. As part of Government's ongoing engagement with Local Resilience Forums (LRFs), Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) is working closely with LRFs to consider potential impacts, mitigations and barriers, in a range of Brexit scenarios.

3.1.2 As part of this emergency planning process, a series of Technical Notices have been shared by MHCLG, to provide advice on the preparations for a range of sectors within the economy. These can be accessed on the gov.uk website. A number of groups have been created by the Cheshire Resilience Forum (CRF) to coordinate a Cheshire wide response, to any issues arising from the UK's exit from the EU, working with Category 1, 2 and 3rd sector voluntary groups, including businesses. In relation to the Technical Notices, the groups consider the subject areas, for instance, Transport, Health, Social Care, Food, Business, Law & Order, Finance, Community Tension & Engagement, Event Management and Business Continuity.

3.2 CRF Groups

3.2.1 The subject areas taken from the Technical Notices are discussed at a number of CRF Groups, which have been formed as part of this resilience work.

Meeting	CRF Chair	Format	HBC Representation	Frequency	Aim
CRF LRF Chairs Meetings	Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service	Teleconference / Face to Face	Divisional Manager, Traffic, Risk & Emergency Planning	Monthly	To raise and identify impacts, address issues and work in partnership.
Tactical Co-ordination Group Meetings	Cheshire Police	Teleconference / Face to Face	Divisional Manager, Traffic, Risk & Emergency Planning Principal Emergency Planning Officer	Weekly	Risk Assessment (SitRep); submitted to MHCLG, as part of the National Risk Assessment.
Strategic Co-ordination Group Meetings	Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service	Teleconference / Face to Face	Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community & Resources Principal Emergency Planning Officer	Fortnightly	Effectively coordinate a Cheshire wide response to any issues arising from the TCG and from the UK's exit, using the SCG Strategy. (Appendix: 1).

3.3 **CRF Risk Assessment**

3.3.1 Risk Assessments for the County are produced on a weekly basis and submitted to MHCLG, as part of the National Risk Assessment programme. Any areas of concern are shared with the Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG), who co-ordinate these matters in line with the strategy agreed by the SCG (see Appendix 1 attached). All feedback from meetings is shared with the CRF single point of contact at the MHCLG, who is acting as a conduit of information to Whitehall, from the Local Resilience Forum.

3.3.2 Brexit is also identified as a risk within the Council's Corporate Risk Register. The Risk Register is considered and approved by the Business Efficiency Board, who also review it mid-year.

3.4 **EU Exit Workshop**

3.4.1 Working with the Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) and the Emergency Planning College, MHCLG designed a "reasonable worse-case" scenario exercise for LRF workshops across the country. The exercise scenarios were based on risks compiled from the Technical Notices. The aim of the exercise was to test Business Continuity Plans, with the emphasis on a 'no deal' scenario. A number of Council officers attended the exercise.

3.4.2 The scenario aimed to explore the potential short to medium term and longer term impacts, which may result from exiting the EU, covering a number of issues, public order, critical supply chain failure, transport disruption and mutual aid requests. Potential issues and considerations were discussed and how they may be managed at the local level. The discussions covered the following:

- Exploring risk, impacts, contingency plans and other arrangements;
- Identifying gaps in capability and capacity;
- Identifying ways forward and next steps, acknowledging further information is to be shared via the MHCLG with the CRF, in the near future.

3.4.3 The authority has a stringent work programme regarding the updating of its own Business Continuity Plans. Those plans have only recently been reviewed and updated and tested.

3.5 **Workshop Results**

3.5.1 Following the exercise, a report was produced, which covered areas discussed at the event, such as, business continuity plans for local businesses, industrial sites, health and social care etc. The aim is to develop local planning assumptions, which will assess the strengths,

weaknesses and gaps in local planning arrangements. Also, the capabilities and steps which may be required to adapt to a no-deal scenario.

3.6 Planning Assumptions

3.6.1 MHCLG have circulated a list of 'Planning assumptions' to the CRF Co-ordinator. These planning assumptions have not been made publicly available nor have they been made available to the Council. Representations have been made about this to Government and a Cheshire version of those planning assumptions are currently being prepared for distribution and consideration by the Cheshire LRF. Once that has been done further work on potential mitigating actions both across Cheshire and within Halton will commence.

3.7 Internal Resilience Planning

3.7.1 The Council's Corporate Resilience Group is currently meeting on a monthly basis, with the aim to discuss the potential impact and management of Brexit. This group is chaired by the Strategic Director, Enterprise, and Community & Resources, who is also the Brexit Lead for the authority. Internal resilience planning is discussed, which includes the annual review of the authority's Business Continuity Plans. This is also an opportunity to share the outcomes of the SCG and TCG meetings with the group, which are also shared at the authority's weekly Management Team meetings.

3.7.2 To support the Terms of Reference of this group, a number of emails have been circulated via the Strategic Director to all Operational Directors and Divisional Managers, requesting information regarding any Brexit concerns to be sent to the Emergency Planning Team, who is facilitating all Brexit information for the authority. Any emergency issues will be raised at the LRF and the Council's own Management Team.

3.7.3 A designated area within the Emergency Planning portal has been created for Brexit information and a weekly email circulation is sent by the Emergency Planning Team to all service areas within the authority to ensure officers are kept up to date with the information which is stored within this area.

3.7.4 Individual service managers are required to keep up-to-date with Brexit related issues affecting their areas and to raise any concerns through the processes outlined in this report.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are currently no policy implications in connection with this report.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are potential serious resource implications for the Council as numerous commentators are predicting an increase in costs of goods arriving into the UK from the EU as a result of a no-deal Brexit. Given the Council's current financial predicament, any increase in costs is going to put further pressure on the Council's already under pressure budgets. The Government has made two one-off grants of £105,000 (£210,000) available to the Council to cover any additional costs arising from the UK leaving the EU. It will remain to see if this proves to be enough.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

A no-deal Brexit could have implications on the Council's 'Children and Young People in Halton' priority.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

A no-deal Brexit could have implications on the Council's 'Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton' priority.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

A no-deal Brexit could have implications on the Council's 'A Healthy Halton' priority.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

A no-deal Brexit could have implications on the Council's 'A Safer Halton' priority.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

A no-deal Brexit could have direct implications on the Council's 'Halton's Urban Renewal' priority.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

- 7.1 There are clearly potential risks to the Local Authority of a no-deal Brexit, however, it is difficult to quantify these with any certainty at this time. The Council will work closely with the LRF to mitigate those risks if and when they arise and will rely on its own business continuity plans to do what it can to reduce any impacts on the Halton Community.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 None identified.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.

Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG) Strategy – Brexit

To effectively coordinate a Cheshire wide response to any issues arising from the UK's exit from the EU by working and support all Cheshire Resilience Forum (CRF) partners (Cat 1, 2 and 3rd sector voluntary groups) and business.

Objectives:

- To minimise any disruption within Cheshire associated with either delays at our ports and or the displacement of goods originally destined for other UK ports.
- To minimise any disruption to the strategic road network within Cheshire in order to maintain both local and national movements of people and goods.
- To minimise any disruption to the delivery of health and social care provision within Cheshire.
- To work with strategically important food and water companies (utility companies are a Cat 2 responder under the Civil Contingences Act 2004) both in production and distribution to minimise any disruption to supply.
- To work with strategically important energy (gas & electric) companies (utility companies are a Cat 2 responder under the Civil Contingences Act 2004) and fuel companies (particularly Essar / Stanlow Oil Refinery) to minimise any disruption in supply, both local and national.
- To support locally based companies to minimise disruption to them and the services and goods they supply, particularly some of Cheshire's nationally important COMAH sites.
- To maintain law and order in order to maximise public safety and confidence in authorities, particularly Cheshire Police and Local authorities.
- To effectively inform the public of Cheshire regarding the delivery of this strategy by the CRF to maintain community cohesion and minimise any possible community tensions.
- To support locally based financial services and companies to minimise disruption to them and the services they supply and help maintain public confidence in them.
- To maximise the CRF and business preparedness and capabilities so as to both minimise any disruption owing to Brexit and maintain business as usual process and response.
- To support regional and national colleagues including HM Government in the delivery of their strategies, when appropriate.