

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 26th January 2021

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety

SUBJECT: EU Exit and the end of the Transition Period

WARD(S) All

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of the arrangements the Council has put in place, together with its partners, to monitor and if necessary and possible, to mitigate any impacts arising from the end of the EU Exit Transition Period.

1.2 It was considered appropriate to report to this Board given that any potential impacts that arise could affect any Council service.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That:**

- i) The Board notes the arrangements in place; and
- ii) Seeks clarification on any issues as required

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 As the Board is aware the UK left the EU on 31st January 2020 with a “Transitional Period” being put in place, ending on 31st December 2020. During that Transitional Period existing arrangements with the EU would continue. The intention being that the Government and the EU would have a Trade and Operation Agreement in place to govern their future relationships beyond that date. Again, Board members will be aware that such an agreement was reached on 24th December 2020. Copies of the Agreement and an “Explainer” document can be found on the Gov.UK website.

Whilst most commentators agree that having a deal was preferential to a “no deal” situation there is still likely to be some disruption caused because of the timing of the agreement being reached and new procedures required to put in place to govern future trading relationships with the EU.

There are many potential impacts of the UK no longer being a

member of the EU and developing new relationships with both the EU and other countries across the world. It is not the intention of this paper to second guess how all this might unfold. However, any potential disruption to imports and exports could have an impact in the borough both for the Council and other public sector bodies as consumers and for businesses within the borough who trade with the EU.

Any impacts arising from those new arrangements are likely to happen gradually for two reasons. First, being that the ports were likely to be quieter over the Christmas and New Year period and secondly as there will have been a degree of stock piling taken as the Transitional Period was drawing to a close.

What follows is a description of the arrangements the Council has in place with its partners to monitor and respond to any impacts that do arise. At the time of writing this report no issues of concern had arisen but as mentioned earlier it is early days.

Cheshire Resilience Forum (CRF)

The Council is currently working in partnership with Cheshire Resilience Forum partners and regional and national agencies, as part of a Command and Control structure. The aim is to predict, assess and mitigate the impacts of the UK's exit from the EU in Cheshire, whilst supporting the national response through the national strategic responsibilities.

As part of the Command and Control structure, Halton is part of both the Strategic and Tactical Co-ordination Groups, which meet on a weekly basis

The objectives of this overall approach is to work in partnership to:

- Risk assess and plan contingencies in the event of a significant risk to public safety or threat to life. This taking account of the principles of the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 2 – The Right to Life) and all reasonable measures to safeguard our workers in terms of health and safety legislation.
- Minimise disruption so far as is reasonably possible, to local residents, businesses and users of the local transport network. This has particular focus regarding the strategic road network and delays at ports, in order to maintain both Local and National movements of people and goods.
- Maintain the effective delivery of health and social care provision within Cheshire, including the supply of essential resources such as medicines and equipment.

- Prevent and deter crime and disorder, in order to maximise public safety and confidence in authorities.
- Maintain public confidence through continued dialogue and pro-active communication. Ensuring partners, local residents and visitors of Cheshire are where appropriate, informed, advised and reassured by an effective communication plan, using a variety of communications media.
- Safeguard vulnerable people, including low income groups who are affected are considered in decisions considered.
- Maintain the production and supply of strategically important food and water.
- Maintain the production and supply of strategically important energy.
- Maintain the production, supply and waste removal of other strategically important goods including fuel with a particular focus on the COMAH sites.
- Support the CRF to support local businesses and financial services with the aim to minimise any disruption and maintain business as usual to the public.
- Support the CRF to assess and where possible reduce the economic impact across Cheshire.
- Facilitate peaceful protests, providing a lawful and proportionate response, balancing the needs and rights of those involved with those impacted by the activity.
- Maintain business as usual services across Cheshire by careful planning and the proportionate use of resources.

Planning with Halton Borough Council

The Council has formed an internal officer group, which is meeting on a monthly basis and chaired by the Strategic Director Enterprise, Community and Resources. The aim of the Corporate EU Exit Group is to monitor potential impacts, provide information to the LRF and its risk assessments and escalate matters of concern to Management Team and members.

Some of the main areas of concern for the authority and which are reported on are:

- Rising costs in relation to food and consumable items;

- Level of preparedness of local businesses, particularly those importing and exporting goods;
- Availability and cost of materials for major projects
- Transport and movement of goods;
- Settlement of EU Citizens and access to employees
- Public anxiety surrounding EU Exit, potentially compounded with COVID anxieties.
- Concerns in relation to consumable parts regarding the maintenance of vehicles;
- Delays on 'vehicle parts' may mean a vehicle / machine is out of action.

Post EU Exit, end of Transitional Period and Implementation of Agreement

It is anticipated that the above arrangements will remain in place, at least until the end of February and until matters become clearer.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There is the potential that any disruption could delay or impact upon any of the Council's policies and objectives. These monitoring arrangements have been put in place to help mitigate any such activity.

5.0 OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There is a concern that both delay and additional bureaucracy at ports could add to the Council's costs. This would compound the budget challenges the Council already has and could impact on the delivery of frontline services.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 There is the potential for implications for any and all of the Council's priorities.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The risks are articulated within the body of the report. The arrangements outlined have been put in place to attempt to mitigate those risks.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no direct equality and diversity issues associated with this report.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
N/A		