

**CABINET**  
**14 NOVEMBER 2019****EU EXIT PREPAREDNESS UPDATE REPORT**

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**Relevant Cabinet Member**

Mr S E Geraghty

**Relevant Officer**

Director of Commercial and Commissioning

**Recommendation****1. The Leader recommends that Cabinet:**

- (a) notes the responsibility of the Council to contribute to Government-directed EU Exit contingency planning activity (co-ordinated through the West Mercia Local Resilience Forum);**
- (b) notes the internal planning taking place to ensure that key Council services identify risks and are prepared; and**
- (c) considers what, if any, further preparations are needed to support the local economy and residents.**

**Background/Council Responsibilities**

- 2. Following a request from the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Leader and Chief Executive have nominated the Director of Commercial and Commissioning, Andrew Spice, to fulfil the role and responsibilities of lead Brexit officer for the Council.
- 3. The Council has received financial allocations from Government amounting to £87,500 in addition to an earlier allocation of £80,000, specifically for spending against EU Exit-related issues. Each District Council and the West Mercia Local Resilience Forum (LRF) secretariat have also received dedicated funding.
- 4. Government introduced regular reporting arrangements in March 2019, originally to ensure that public sector organisations demonstrate their preparedness in readiness for a no deal EU exit and maintain the continuation of key public services should disruption occur.
- 5. The Council has been contributing to the no deal EU Exit contingency planning which is co-ordinated through the West Mercia LRF and its emergency response arrangements.
- 6. Following the decision to grant the UK an extension to the withdrawal agreement to 31 January 2020, and subsequent calling of a General Election on 12 December 2019, these reporting arrangements have now been suspended.
- 7. In September 2019, full Council resolved to ask for a report to Cabinet on its own preparations to support the local economy and residents of Worcestershire throughout

this challenging time, and on the mechanisms in place to co-ordinate with other organisations such as the Local Enterprise Partnership, Worcestershire Business Central, the Chamber of Commerce for Herefordshire and Worcestershire and the six District Councils.

### **West Mercia LRF update**

8. As requested by Government, the LRF has prepared an Exit Preparations Plan. This Plan is based on the response to several planning assumptions defined by the Government. The Exit Preparation Plan is designated a "Restricted document" by the Local Resilience forum (LRF). The Council contributed to the development of this Plan and its content is kept up to date via regular weekly LRF Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG) teleconference meetings.

9. Until the suspension of the reporting arrangements, the Director of Commercial and Commissioning (or his substitute) participated in the weekly LRF Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG) teleconference meetings, chaired by the Chief Constable (or his substitute) to provide an assessment of any 'no deal' EU Exit risks and consequential impacts for the West Mercia area.

10. West Mercia Police ran an exercise on 2 October for LRF partners to consider a range of possible 'no deal' EU Exit scenarios. Of specific interest to the Council, scenarios included potential failure of a care home and possible consequences and the impact of the closure of key roads due to demonstrations.

### **National Guidance**

11. All links to publicly available national documents and regulations are available on the landing page at the [Government website](#) under Get Ready for Brexit or for local government specific issues via the LGA [Brexit advice hub for local government | Local Government Association](#).

### **Key Issues for Worcestershire**

12. The Council's Corporate Risk Management Group (CRMG) has compiled information provided by each Directorate on the potential risks faced by individual service areas. This information was considered against the government planning assumptions and used to inform the wider LRF planning analysis.

13. Key issues that have emerged for Worcestershire include: requirements to support local businesses and residents (including uncertainty around current EU grant funded programmes to support the local economy), Internal Business and Service Continuity, Care Homes and Social Care Provision, EU Nationals employed by the Council, Provision of Supplies and Provision of Regulatory advice. The preparedness activity currently taking place within the Council in relation to these key risk areas includes:

- Requirements to support local businesses and residents

14. The Government currently funds growth hubs in each LEP area, in Worcestershire this is Worcestershire Business Central (WBC) which is a partnership between Worcestershire LEP, the County Council and the Chamber of Commerce, The County

Council has members of staff co-located in the team based at Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce.

15. Government have nominated growth hubs as the mechanism to disseminate information to business re Brexit. All information and practical advice for businesses in relation to Brexit and a no deal Brexit are contained within the Brexit tool kit on the growth hub website. (see link below).

16. Therefore, in the first instance businesses will be signposted to growth hub staff and this information. Officers from Worcestershire LEP, the County Council and the Chamber of Commerce located in the service will give advice as required e.g. on exporting and potential changes re free movement for example. Government has also announced that a proportion of the Business Readiness Fund will be routed via the growth hubs to provide additional support and advice to companies on issues related to Brexit.

<http://www.business-central.co.uk/brexit-tool-kit/>

17. The growth hub along with Council Economic Development staff will, where appropriate, be making companies aware of the £16m Grant Scheme for Customs Intermediaries Ahead of Brexit. This enables customs intermediaries, traders and hauliers completing customs declarations to apply for grants to support training and new IT systems. Businesses are also referred to the events already operating within the county led by the private sector and the Chamber of Commerce.

18. The Government's 'Business Readiness Fund' has enabled Business organisations and industry bodies such as the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce to apply for grant funding to help UK businesses prepare for a no-deal Brexit. The grant has been used for example to produce advice packs and running events, training courses and webinars as part of the country wide programme coordinated by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

19. Should local businesses experience any difficulties, then advice and support will be available through the growth hub, Worcestershire Business Central supported by the County Council and District Councils' economic development teams and business organisations or industry bodies as required.

- Internal Business and Service Continuity

20. The Corporate Risk Management Group provides the focus and overview for ensuring the continuity of the Council's service delivery and ensures that the Council's Business Continuity planning arrangements remain agile and fit for purpose.

- Care Homes and Domiciliary Care provision

21. The DAS is following government EU Exit advice and guidance specific to adult social care and has considered and revisited, with providers, the potential impacts on care homes and domiciliary care provision. The Interim Director of Adult Services is confident that existing business continuity and support arrangements are tried, tested and fit for purpose. Every care home is expected to hold a comprehensive business continuity plan which can be implemented effectively in the event of a full failure or for an aspect of its services such as food provision. Providers of domiciliary care are expected

to continue to operate business as usual arrangements based on their own business continuity arrangements.

22. NHS England advise that arrangements are in place to ensure that supply of medicines and medical equipment will not be disrupted. Any emerging issues regarding medicines availability to care homes for instance will be managed through NHS and Clinical Commissioning Groups.

23. Should difficulties be experienced by domiciliary care providers such as medicines and fuel shortages these will be dealt with through LRF partner and NHS response channels respectively.

- EU Nationals employed by the Council

24. The HR team has analysed the numbers of EU nationals employed by the Council or in a commissioned service and determined that they are comparatively low (compared to neighbouring councils), and arrangements are in place to inform any staff of their rights to apply for leave to remain.

- Provision of Supplies

25. The Government has provided assurances that there are unlikely to be shortages of fresh food. However, should this become an issue for schools, care homes and domiciliary care meals provision, it is expected that their existing business continuity arrangements will ensure alternative supply. Existing monitoring arrangements for schools, care homes and domiciliary care providers will highlight any issues arising and enable guidance and support from our services should this be required.

26. Similarly, the Government advises that fuel supplies are unlikely to be disrupted. The Director of Economy and Infrastructure reports that the vehicle fleet (via Ringway) has fuel supplies stored at key depots. Ringway hold a 2 to 4-month supply in stock. Fleet (minibuses etc) hold a 4 to 6-week fuel stock. These are reviewed weekly and re-stocked as needed.

27. Contractors including those involved with Highways work such as the Southern Link Road advise that they have continuity arrangements in place including securing supply of steel and other materials in the event of any import delays.

- Provision of Regulatory advice

28. Trading Standards has a significant regulatory role with emerging EU exit-related issues and advising local businesses. The main risks lie under a no deal scenario as the UK may lose access to the single market.

29. Business support for exporting food businesses by way of health certification for both bacteriological and labelling matters will be needed. Non-food businesses are also likely to require support. There is a risk that shortages of some products and product types will lead to unregulated alternatives.

30. Additional Trading Standards officer capacity has been agreed locally using the funding allocation for EU Exit-related activity, to help ensure regulatory advice continues for businesses.

## **Legal, Financial and HR Implications**

31. Any Legal, Financial or HR implications arising from the update reported here will be addressed as part of the programme of work on those specific areas.

## **Privacy and Public Health Impact Assessments**

32. There are no direct Privacy or Public Health implications from this report.

## **Risk Implications**

33. There are potential risks to critical Council services and the local economy as a result of insufficient preparedness for EU Exit.

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

34. The Council must, during planning, decision-making and implementation, exercise a proportionate level of due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the equality act 2010
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

35. An Equality Relevance Screening has been carried out in respect of these recommendations. It is identified that further equality impact analysis will be required in respect of: access to fresh food and meals provision at schools, care homes and domiciliary care. However, it is expected that existing business continuity arrangements will ensure alternative supply.

## **Contact Points**

### County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763

### Specific Contact Points for this report

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## **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Commercial and Change) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda papers for the meeting of Council on 12 September 2019