

SUBJECT:	BREXIT PREPAREDNESS
MEETING:	COUNCIL
DATE:	11TH APRIL
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide an information only update for Members regarding the Council's Preparedness for Brexit.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 For information only.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The UK has been a member of the European Union since 1973 however a series of issues raised concerns over the years, the latest of which was the Syrian refugee crisis which tested Europe's open-borders policy. In 2016, a referendum was held in the UK which resulted in 52% of the population voting to leave the EU.
- 3.2 On 29 March 2017, the UK Prime Minister wrote to the European Council President Donald Tusk, formally triggering Article 50 and so began the two-year countdown to the UK formally leaving the EU (commonly known as 'Brexit').
- 3.3 The UK has long been expected to leave the European Union at 11pm on 29 March 2019. However, following a House of Commons vote on 14 March 2019, the Government sought permission from the EU to extend Article 50 and agree a later Brexit date. The current position being that a 'variable' extension to Article 50 is now being sought with further outcomes being based on a series of 'indicative' votes. Depending on the votes outcomes can include: - Brexit with a deal; No deal Brexit; further extension. The situation remains fluid.
- 3.4 In preparing for Brexit Council Officers have undertaken the following tasks:
- A Brexit Working Group made up of Officers from key service areas has been established, which is now meeting fortnightly and led by Frances Williams, Chief Officer Enterprise;
 - Political Leads are Councillor Peter Fox (Leader) and Councillor Phil Murphy (Cabinet Member Resources) whilst Paul Matthews (Chief Executive) represents Greater Gwent on the Welsh Government EU Preparedness Group.
- 3.5 **The reporting process is as follows:**
- Officer Brexit Working Group established in December meets every two weeks;
 - MCC BREXIT specific 'Steady State' reporting ('Sit-reps') arrangements agreed and being implemented;
 - Central & WG Steady State Reporting structures now established and are 'live' with daily updates to MCC Senior Leadership Team prior to daily 'Sit-reps' being submitted to WG/

Cabinet Office via Gwent Police; (Council staff rotas are in place to support these arrangements);

- WLGA updates being sent directly to service areas and being actioned / shared as required.
- Council Officers attend the Gwent Local Resilience Forum (LRF) – Brexit remains on the agenda and there is a shared understanding of how Brexit risks impact partner agencies which are shared as necessary.

3.6 To date activities have included:

- The establishment of a [Brexit - Getting Ready webpage](#) for residents and businesses with relevant links to Welsh and UK Government pages;
- Raising awareness of the EU Settlement Scheme among the Council's EU citizens and staff. This has been done via the Council Intranet;
- Social media posts from the Council's Facebook and Twitter accounts, linking to the press release/Brexit Guidance section of the Council's website;
- A presentation from the WLGA in the form of a Member's seminar which was recorded for those Members who could not attend – delivered on Jan 15th 2019;
- LRF Brexit Risk assessments completed and endorsed by WG – captured as part of MCC specific Brexit Risk Register;
- Brexit & Business Continuity Preparedness - Presentations hosted for key Council Service managers and delivered on 12/13/14 & 18th March highlighting Brexit risks and business continuity mitigation strategies for services to consider/implement;
- Additional Welsh Government activities have included the acquisition of a warehouse in South East Wales to provide additional storage capacity for medical devices and clinical consumables to ensure there is a continuity of supply for Wales. Further information can be found [here](#).
- The Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW) met on the 26th March and having consulted with all Directors of Education / Chief Education Officers, none has thus far reported any Brexit related issues impacting on the education services being provided. Directors of Education / Chief Education Officers or their representative have committed to participate in a weekly teleconference with Welsh Government's Deputy Director for Education Planning and Governance; daily rhythm reports are being provided at local authority level and all local authorities are aware that the ADEW Chair attends the Brexit Preparedness Advisory Group and that they may raise any issues or seek advice via this route;
- Welsh Government support for businesses has been increased to £450M to enable businesses to access capital funds as they manage the uncertainty of Brexit. Further information can be found [here](#).

3.7 Ongoing work includes:

- Continuing WLGA support for Local Authorities (LAs) of £1.2M to help with Brexit preparations of which are there two components:
 - **LA Corporate Capacity Support (£1m)** which equates to £45k per LA for a senior officer to undertake Brexit related activities they feel would be most effective in their area. If and where appropriate, depending upon the practical effects of a disorderly exit, consideration will be given by LAs in a region to decide to pool their allocations to undertake activity jointly, in line with the spirit of regional collaboration;
 - **WLGA Support Programme Phase II (£200,000)** - £60k for an ongoing programme of research and support of benefit to all LAs, to be determined via requests from Brexit Leads in LAs and agreed via the Brexit Preparedness Panel

and WLGA's Brexit cross-party political group; £90k for the appointment of two posts one Communications Officer and a Policy Officer post to support priority areas of work as they arise (e.g. Social Services, migration issues, Environmental Health/Trading Standards/regional funding); £10k for a further five all-Wales events on service-specific issues and £40k to enable appointment of time-limited commissions, using service/ subject experts as and when required

- Additional WLGA support has included the production of Brexit exposure dashboards for every LA, along with a regional analysis of the data. The four regional dashboards can be found [here](#).
- The continuous updating and monitoring of the Council's Brexit risk register;
- Direct liaison with local businesses to understand any particular issues they may be experiencing;
- Discussions with other regional councils about regional risks;
- Maintaining steady state reporting – and daily specific steady state reporting;

3.8 **Next steps include:**

- Further awareness raising of the EU Settlement Scheme among Council staff and Monmouthshire's EU citizen community;
- Further direct contact with Monmouthshire's business community, once further clarity is received;
- Attendance at the all Wales Local Authority Brexit Leads meeting on the 17th April;
- Continuing to follow Welsh Government and Welsh Local Government Association advice.

4. **Options Appraisal**

- 4.1 Although at the time of writing the Brexit date has not yet been set, it is essential that the Council is as prepared as possible. From a business continuity and local resilience perspective, doing nothing is not an option.

5. **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

- 5.1 Report for information only and therefore not relevant.

6. **REASONS**

- 6.1 The Brexit top risks for the Council include:

- No dedicated resource to carry out Brexit preparedness work;
- Workforce retention;
- Impact of Brexit on the agricultural sector and wider rural economy;
- Disruption to the Council's supply chain;
- Threat to EU funded projects/lack of clarity over future funding streams;
- Financial implications on budgets due to increased costs in relation to supply chain directly attributed to Brexit and continued austerity measures;
- Potential increase in immigration over short term - pressure on school admissions;
- Potential rise in social conflict and hostility - social cohesion;
- Medication / medical needs could be disrupted and;
- Impact on construction projects including 21st Century Schools projects due to availability of skilled trade.

7. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Report for information only and therefore not relevant.

8. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

8.1 Report for information only and therefore not relevant.

9. CONSULTEES

Senior Leadership Team

Cabinet

Council Members

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A

11. AUTHORS:

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12. CONTACT DETAILS:

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