

Council Meeting	
Meeting Date	9 October 2019
Report Title	Brexit Preparedness
Cabinet Member	Cllr Roger Truelove, Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance
SMT Lead	Nick Vickers, Chief Financial Officer
Head of Service	Nick Vickers, Chief Financial Officer
Lead Officer	Della Fackrell, Resilience Manager
Key Decision	No
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. To update Council on the work being undertaken on Brexit preparedness.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report is to update Council on the work that is being undertaken on Brexit preparedness.
- 1.2 In the absence of the Chief Executive, the Chief Financial Officer has been nominated as the Council's Brexit lead. He is supported in this by Della Fackrell the Resilience Manager and her team.

2 Background

- 2.1 Brexit is clearly a massively challenging and complex issue. For this Council we need to be clear about what role we play in the event of a no deal Brexit on 31 October. This can be summarised as:
 - (1) The role as community leaders and this particularly focuses on the role of individual elected members in their wards,
 - (2) Our direct service provision of key services to the community. The service where we have most concern is over waste collection, and
 - (3) The Council's role within the wider public sector response to problems arising from Brexit, in particular in relation to the broader roles played by KCC and Kent Police. This will put a particular emphasis on communication with residents. The Council's Communications team will have an important role but so too should individual members through their own communications structures, either leaflets or social media.

Each of these areas will be considered in more detail in this report.

- 2.2 One of the early actions of the new administration was to arrange for a representative of the Kent Resilience Forum which coordinates the Brexit work with the Council's own Resilience Manager to present to Cabinet members and Deputy Cabinet members on the latest position on Brexit preparations. This meeting did reinforce the amount of preparatory work that has been undertaken led primarily by KCC and Police. The contingency planning revolves largely around the movement of goods through the Channel ports, highways provision in case of major congestion and more local responses if gridlock disrupts the normal flow of daily life. The assumptions being made are that any serious consequences will be time limited.
- 2.3 The Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer before Mark Radford's illness attended a Strategic Command training session on Brexit in March 2019 and the Chief Financial Officer attended the Operation Lundy II training session on 11 September. Both these sessions focussed on the potential for significant traffic disruption due to tail backs of lorries trying to get to Dover port or Eurotunnel. At the session on 11 September the official estimates were that lorries will be in a queue for 1.5-2.5 days, the queue average would be 8,500 lorries and a 60% flow compared with current. It was also estimated that 50-85% of lorries won't be ready for new French customs requirements. All of this is speculative and there are huge unknowns such as the actual approach of French customs and the behaviour of hauliers who economically do not want vehicles caught up in long queues.
- 2.4 The KCC Council received a report on Brexit on 12 September. This highlighted a number of outstanding issues for Government:
- Confirm locations of all Customs stations/border readiness checking areas both inside and outside of Kent. It is important that vital imports are not held up in Kent but can proceed quickly to customs stations in other counties,
 - Finalise customs procedures and border control practices and provide necessary guidance to freight companies. It is essential that companies have border ready documentation at the start of their journeys. It is disturbing to read that so many exporting companies are not yet ready for this task,
 - Government to grant enforcement powers to Kent Police, Highways England, KCC Highways for operation Brock compliance, enforcement and implementation The Government have given police and local authorities these powers, including the power to limit heavy freight traffic to inside lanes. Authorities will have the power to use fines for enforcement,
 - Confirm priority freight arrangements (particularly medical supplies),
 - Confirm extension permits for UK hauliers to operate in the EU and vice versa for foreign lorries entering the UK,

- Confirm extension of cabotage arrangements (the transport of goods or passengers between two places in the same country by a transport operator from another country), and
- Further develop websites.

This list seems to suggest a great deal of clarification is still required from Government.

Community Leadership role

- 2.5 Brexit and in particular a no deal Brexit is a highly divisive issue with extremely strong views on both sides. This does create the potential for disturbances in communities if the no deal Brexit happens. Ward members given their close links with communities potentially have a key role to play in working with communities in addressing concerns but also in highlighting serious issues to Kent Police. The Council will also need to be clear who is speaking on its behalf with TV/press interviews focussed on the Leader. Individual Council members will have their own strong views whatever happens but they should recognise their responsibility for community cohesion and encourage mutual regard for opposing views.

Service Impact

- 2.6 The impact on the Council's direct service delivery to residents can be seen in a number of ways:

- (1) Waste collection- Council officers have been working with KCC waste team and Biffa to ensure contingency plans are in place should the worst case scenarios occur. This has included mapping out the home locations of waste and street cleansing staff across the Mid Kent Joint Waste Partnership (with Ashford and Maidstone) to understand how to direct resource to the required places, and, looking at new locations for vehicles and whether they can be spread them out across the Borough to ensure they are closer to their collection points and thus not so impacted by travel disruption. Officers have also liaised with KCC and their contractors for the transfer stations where the bin lorries unload the collected waste to ensure that they can open longer to allow the bin lorries to unload their contents at quieter times of the day.

Travel complications for freight vehicles may lead to an increase in lorries stopping at locations across the Borough. This will have an impact on street cleansing and as a result meetings have been held with Highways England about restricting use of laybys or putting in additional measures to reduce the impact. The details of this and the additional resource that be required to clear up afterwards has been costed and sent to KCC who are leading on the impacts of Brexit.

Finally a set of communications for residents are being prepared which will help them understand any changes that may need to make such as different days, starting earlier or finishing later or prioritising some collection types over others.

- (2) Food safety- the Environmental Health service needs to support businesses that export or import food and will potentially see an increase of export certificates for food of non-animal origin. Currently, there are a limited number of businesses exporting food to third party countries, generally for non-perishable foods of non-animal origin (dried fruit, biscuits, tinned goods) whereas there may be a need to provide for perishable foods and most significantly for fish exports to France the main destination of fish from Queenborough

Generally, export certificates for Products of Animal Origin (POAO) are dealt with centrally by the Animal and Plant Health Agency in DEFRA. In the event of a no deal the service locally will be expected to provide certificates for a number of food businesses in Swale. Currently only a few export non-POAO foods to third countries outside the EU. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) indicate that any change will be dependent on the outcome of negotiations. The EU system is based on a veterinary system of certification. There is a possibility the EU would require a similar arrangement in the UK, thereby taking this away from local government.

In Swale there are 13 approved premises; these include Cook, Two Suns Fishery. The FSA's working assumption is that re-approval will not be needed. Should this change it will be a significant body of work. The March 2019 deadline proved to be an interesting 'dry run' in how this work could be supported with the trade in the event of a no deal to meet the need for fish export certificates being required for night time catches and the need for the trade to work together to export under one certificate per load. At that time the Designated Import Post was Dieppe not Calais which caused some concern.

- (3) Overall service delivery- Council services depend upon the ability of staff to get to work. Prior to the March exit date a survey of staff home locations was undertaken which found that 39% of staff live close enough to walk to work with an additional 30% living close to a direct train route. The ICT section have also tested a large number of staff working from home on the same day across all three MKS Councils which provided assurance that the Council IT systems will cope. This does give a considerable assurance that Council services can be maintained if there is severe traffic disruption,

Council wide response

- 2.7 Brexit preparedness has been coordinated through the Kent Resilience Forum. The Council's Resilience Manager fully participates in their conference calls and this will be used to keep members and officers informed. These meetings will increase in frequency the more likely a no deal outcome is.

- 2.8 From 1 October the Leader and senior officers will meet weekly with the Resilience Manager to review that latest issues on preparedness. The Chief Financial Officer will provide updates to members from these meetings.
- 2.9 The Resilience Manager is presenting on Brexit to the Corporate Leadership team on 1 October. The Resilience Team is running a multi-agency table top exercise on 8 October and a live emergency centre exercise on 7 November. It is especially important in the absence of the Chief Executive to remind officers of their roles in an emergency situations and a business continuity incident.
- 2.9 The fundamental role of the Council will be to keep residents well informed on events in the borough in the event that serious disruption to traffic happens. So the focus will be on the Communications team using the tools at its disposal to keep residents as well informed as possible. We are aware of the need to supplement the resource in this small team to ensure that potentially it can operate for 24 hour periods.
- 2.10 In the event of a very significant trigger event the Council will put in place its Major Incident Plan.

Funding

- 2.11 Earlier in the year the Council received £30,000 for Brexit preparedness. None of this was committed. The Council has now received a further £70,000.
- 2.12 Discussions with members identified a potential issue in village halls being able to provide storage of food and to fully paly their role as envisaged in the Emergency plan as rest centres. Funding requests are being considered.
- 2.13 The Citizens Advice Service has also applied for additional funding to help cope with additional demands. Officers are in discussion with CAS.
- 2.14 The major potential call on funds is to fund additional waste collection costs.

Impact on Policing

- 2.15 Police resources will be seriously stretched, with Police leave potentially suspended and extra Police resources will be transferred from other areas. The concentration of Police resources on these issues will put a strain on conventional policing

3 Proposals

- 3.1 The proposals are to note the preparedness action underway.
- 3.2 Also the funding proposals set out above are to be noted.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Council has the option of not making preparations for a no deal Brexit. This is not recommended but the actions proposed are proportionate.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Advice has also been taken with Legal and Commercial advisors.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Supports all Council objectives.
Financial, Resource and Property	The additional £100,000 is available to fund preparedness and cost pressures.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	No implications have been identified from this change.
Crime and Disorder	No implications have been identified from this change.
Environment and Sustainability	No implications have been identified from this change
Health and Wellbeing	Potential issues in getting care and medical supplies to at risk individuals.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	Potentially significant operational risks.
Equality and Diversity	No implications have been identified from this change
Privacy and Data Protection	No implications have been identified from this change

7 Appendices

- 7.1 None

8 Background Papers

8.1 None