

COUNCIL: 12 SEPTEMBER 2019

STATEMENT OF THE LEADER

Brexit Preparedness Update

At time of writing, and following the Prime Minister's declaration that the UK will leave the EU on 31 October 2019, the likelihood of the UK leaving the EU without a deal has substantially increased. The Council's ongoing Brexit planning and preparation work has therefore been further re-assessed with a specific focus on a No-Deal scenario.

As I have previously updated Council, established processes are in place to reasonably plan, prepare and respond to the identified issues which may occur as a consequence of Brexit. The work has included a review of Business Continuity Plans and Emergency Planning Arrangements, as well as the production of Assurance Statements by Directorates confirming that arrangements are in place to respond to issues identified by local, regional and national planning work. This has included a consideration of the resilience of supply chains, particularly those supporting key services.

The Council continues to engage with National Government, Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association and Public Service Delivery partners through established structures to identify and respond to relevant issues. For example, arrangements for a Wales-specific Civil Contingencies response to Brexit have been undertaken. Brexit is also recognised as a Corporate Risk, which allows the Council to satisfy itself that appropriate processes and governance structures are in place to ensure an informed and coordinated approach to Brexit. This structured approach enables the Council to identify issues, either during the short term period immediately before and after Brexit or over the medium to longer term period following Brexit, which may require planning or mitigation. Councillors should be aware of some of the immediate issues facing the city.

In August 2019, the Home Office published the first quarterly release of more detailed statistics on the progress of the EU Settlement Scheme. The publication takes a more in-depth look at the total number of applications to the scheme between 28 August 2018 and 30 June 2019, and their outcomes, including a breakdown by Local Authority area. This covers the period between the launch of the first private beta scheme to the end of Q2 2019. In Cardiff, 4,000 applications have been made to the scheme by June 2019. There are an estimated 20,000 – 25,000 EU nationals living in Cardiff, suggesting an application rate of approximately 16-20%. However, it should be emphasised that these figures are only estimates as there is no robust data on the number of EU nationals living in Cardiff.

The Council has developed a Community Engagement Action Plan to support co-ordination of the EU Settlement Scheme locally, which reflects the recommended actions contained within UK Government guidance. In line with the Action Plan, the Council has organised three engagement events to promote the EU Settlement Scheme and available support to EU nationals living in Cardiff, with targeted engagement for vulnerable groups. The first of these events was held in August 2019 and the remaining two will be held in September and October 2019 in Hubs across the city. The Council is also in the initial stages of developing engagement events for the scheme with Cardiff schools.

No significant Brexit-related tensions have been identified to date and there are no observable changes to levels of hate crime in the city, which remain consistent. Daily monitoring continues, alongside participation in the weekly tension monitoring protocol via the South Wales Police.

Councillor Huw Thomas
Leader of the Council
6 September 2019