Leaders' Committee

Exiting the EU — Update on Local Engagement

Item no: 6

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Summary: This paper provides an update on preparatory activity at a local and pan-London level in relation to identifying opportunities and mitigating risks for London local government as a result of the UK's planned exit from the EU.

Recommendations: Leaders' Committee is asked to note this report

Exiting the EU- Update on Local Engagement

1. London Councils has been actively engaging with Government, the Mayor of London, the LGA and London public services to ensure that London's particular needs in relation to exiting the EU are heard. We have also continued to engage with boroughs, chief executives and relevant professional networks to support local preparatory activity and promote the exchange of local insights and practice.

2. There are two main strands of pan-London activity:
   - Contingency planning, which is being taken forward under the auspices of the statutory London Resilience Forum, at the request of Government.

   - The collation and exchange of information across London boroughs, supported by London Councils. This is part of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's information sharing network, to provide a mechanism that helps identify and escalate issues identified by London boroughs and to feed information back.

3. The Chair of London Councils attends meetings of MHCLG EU Exit Ministerial Delivery Board, chaired by the Secretary of State, and has used the opportunity to raise issues identified by boroughs.

Contingency Planning

4. Contingency preparations are being taken forward under the established London Resilience Forum (LRF), at the request of Government. Local authority input to this process is co-ordinated through the Local Authorities' Panel, which is chaired by John Barradell, Chief Executive of the City of London Corporation. The Panel has led on liaison with local authorities in relation to preparedness for the short-term resilience related impacts of a no deal situation.

5. Brexit contingency planning continues to be developed, under the oversight of the LRF's Brexit Contingency Planning Group, based on advice from Government. The Group is developing support materials which will set out potential impacts and responses to mitigate against any disruption in the following sectors:

   - Fuel
   - Food
   - Social Care *(With input from Directors of Adult Social Care and Children's Services)*

6. It is envisaged that a formal Strategic Co-ordination Group will be established in the run-up to 31st October 2019. At the request of the Mayor for London, this Group will be chaired on

behalf of the wider partnership in an <u>independent</u> capacity by John Barradell, and supplemented by Eleanor Kelly, chief executive, LB Southwark. A London borough chief executive will represent London local government in the meetings, acting as EU Exit Gold, following the model developed in March 2019. This will build resilience within the system and allow the scheduled Local Authority Gold to remain available to respond to any large-scale emergencies unrelated to EU Exit.

7. A regular rhythm of meetings, reporting and assessment activity will be put in place to support the Group's activity. It is anticipated that the Group will be supported by thematic groups ('Cells'), focussing on key areas of risk, including: Medicines and Health; Social Care; Fuel/Utilities; Business; Funders and the Voluntary Sector and Food.

Pan London Information Sharing

8. John O'Brien is one of nine local authority chief executives nationally who are working with the MHCLG as part of a national information sharing network to facilitate information flow between central government and local councils. The focus is on gathering and organising up-to-date intelligence and information on the issues of most concern across each region – then escalating emerging risks and threats to Government.

9. The network of Single Points of Contact (SPOCS), which we established in each London local authority earlier in the year, has evolved to be a network of Brexit lead officers - following the Secretary of State's formal request that authorities appoint a Brexit Lead Officer. Weekly reporting across the network resumed in September, to inform both the escalation of emerging issues to Government and the LRF's contingency planning work.

10. London Councils organised London local government participation in a range of national government workshops in recent months, including:

- Two Local Economies' Resilience Workshops:

    - Analysis and Policy Levers. The workshop explored policy thinking around how to support local economies.

    - SME engagement.

- A series of task and finish groups covering:

    - Transport and planning related to port disruption.

    - Business support.

    - Support for the EUSS.

    - Trading standards and port health.

- A London roundtable with Home Office officials to discuss the Settled Status Scheme.

- Roundtables with officials wishing to discuss wider preparatory activity in London.

11. London Councils continues to support borough Heads of Communications in relation to communicating with the public on EU Exit issues, including settled status and has facilitated engagement between the network and the Home Office. This is being supported by further information, key lines and signposting to good practice.

12. Boroughs have received a fresh allocation of funding from MHCLG to support local preparatory activity. Brexit Lead Officers have indicated to London Councils that most boroughs are holding at least part of the funding in a ring-fenced reserve to be drawn down as issues arise in the run up to, and following, EU exit. In addition, funding has been directly applied to staffing and support costs in relation to resilience, communication and engagement with residents, customer contact centres and support for residents applying for settled status.

Ministerial Board

13. The Chair of London Councils is a member of the MHCLG EU Exit Ministerial Delivery Board. The Board is currently meeting on a monthly basis and also includes senior political representatives from the LGA, County Councils Network, District Councils Network, and the Core and Key Cities Groups. The Board's last meeting was on 3 September 2019 and it discussed matters arising from a series of updates including:

- The Settlement Scheme. Members raised the challenges that council face in supporting children in care and those that were vulnerable but below the threshold.

- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund. London Councils' Chair suggested that broader skills funding should be included within the discussions which are now taking place on the replacement for EU Structural Funds, with consideration being given to maximise devolution to local government.

- The Department for Education's plans to communicate with local authorities and Academy Chains about preparations within schools.

- The Department for Transport's plans, including:
  - traffic management
  - work with ports

- Mobile customs points

14. The Chair is due to attend the next meeting of the Board on 9 October 2019.

Conclusion

15. It will be important that boroughs continue to plan and prepare for any anticipated place-based impacts and opportunities as a result of the UK exiting the EU. Borough's continued collaboration with the information sharing mechanisms that have been put in place by London Councils is appreciated and supports:

- contingency preparations.

- the identification and escalation of emerging pan-London issues.

- the exchange of practice across boroughs.

16. As noted above, it is anticipated that a formal Strategic Co-ordination Group will be established under the auspices of the London Resilience Forum, in the run-up to 31st October 2019.

17. Leaders' Committee is asked to note this report.

Financial implications for London Councils

No immediate implications.

Legal implications for London Councils

None

Equalities implications for London Councils

None