

Brexit, Infrastructure and Legislative Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 9 January 2019

PRESENT:

Councillor Morris, in the Chair.
Councillor Fletcher, Vice Chair.
Councillors Buchan, Churchill, Cook, Mavin, Stevens and Wheeler.

Apology for absence: Councillor Carson.

Also in attendance: Darin Halifax (Senior Policy Advisor), Ruth Harrell (Director of Public Health), Councillor Haydon (Cabinet Member for Customer Focus and Community Safety), Kevin McKenzie (Policy and Intelligence Advisor), Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive), Jamie Whitford-Robson (Civil Protection Officer) and Helen Prendergast (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 4.00 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

34. Declarations of Interest

In accordance with the code of conduct, Councillor Stevens declared a personal interest in minute 38 as he was employed by Devon and Cornwall Police.

35. Minutes

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2018 are confirmed as a correct record.

36. Chair's Urgent Business

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

37. Emergency Planning

Councillor Haydon (Cabinet Member for Customer Focus and Community Safety), Ruth Harrell (Director of Public Health), Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive), Jamie Whitford-Robson (Civil Protection Officer), Darin Halifax (Senior Policy Advisor) and Kevin McKenzie (Policy and Intelligence Advisor) provided an overview of the Council's approach to planning for a 'no deal Brexit' and highlighted the issues which could potentially need to be addressed, either through emergency planning procedures, or where risks were known and could be mitigated through the normal risk management process. The key areas of the report included -

- (a) the withdrawal agreement which the UK Government had negotiated with the European Union would be subject to a meaningful vote in Parliament in the week commencing 14 January 2019; currently it was likely that Parliament would reject the agreement; the default position if no deal with the EU had been agreed would be that the UK would leave without a deal in place on 29 March 2019 (11pm);
- (b) the EU did have the power to extend the Article 50 negotiations but if it refused to do so, the UK could withdraw notice unilaterally as confirmed by the European Court of Justice last week;
- (c) planning had commenced on two parallel work streams in the event of a no deal which included -
 - civil contingencies planning which was focussing on the immediate impacts of leaving the EU such as disruption to supplies and services (including medicine/medical supplies), travel, borders, information and data sharing, demonstrations and disorder, community tension and business continuity;
 - implementation planning which aimed to develop the Council's proactive response to identified risks which included information, advice and guidance, economic shock and community cohesion;
- (d) the political position in seeking an agreement within Parliament, the withdrawal agreement and the corporate work being undertaken including risks and opportunities and no deal risks.

The key areas of questioning from Members related to –

- (e) whether the generic plan that had been published by the Government for Local Authorities would need to be adapted with the council's civil and business contingency plans;
- (f) which multi agencies would be involved in a 'no deal' contingency exercise;
- (g) whether the Government had appointed a regional Tsar to cover contingency issues in the event of a 'no deal Brexit';
- (h) what measures would be put in place to control the movement of livestock through the city's port;

- (i) whether there had been any indication of the potential increased activity at the ferry port;
- (j) whether more detailed information would be released with regard to the increase in vet inspections required, hygiene checks, etc;
- (k) whether highways were also part of the planning process with the anticipated increased level of additional freight using the port;
- (l) whether the council had entered into discussions with the supermarkets regarding the potential disruption to food chain supplies;
- (m) what measures were in place for the long term emergency planning;
- (n) whether the Council would be reimbursed by the Government for the work undertaken on the planning for Brexit;
- (o) what had been the cost to the Council, to date, in planning for Brexit;
- (p) whether there was a communication strategy in place.

The Committee noted the report.

The Committee recommended that Cabinet consider lobbying Government for reimbursement of the work being undertaken on Brexit planning.

The Committee requested a briefing report on the port issues, following the meeting with Brittany Ferries at its March 2019 meeting.

The Committee requested that all Councillors were involved with the Brexit communication plan.

38. **Community Cohesion**

Councillor Haydon (Cabinet Member for Customer Focus and Community Safety), Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive), Darin Halifax (Senior Policy Advisor) and Kevin McKenzie (Policy and Intelligence Advisor) presented the overview of community cohesion in the city and related issues arising from the decisions of the UK to leave the European Union. The key areas highlighted were –

- (a) Plymouth had seen a significant influx of migrant workers and their families from the European Union between January 2004 and December 2016;

- (b) between these dates the free movement restrictions on the A8 accession countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) had been lifted;
- (c) a total of 14,119 National Insurance Numbers (NINOs) had been issued to EU nationals who were resident in Plymouth, of these 7963 were men and 6159 were women, 76% were aged between 25 and 44; the increase had been primarily as a result of EU enlargement as only 20% came from countries that were EU member states in 2001;
- (d) the Plymouth City Survey had been distributed to 8000 households in partnership with Marketing Means; 2296 (28%) of valid surveys had been returned; the headline cohesion rate was 17.3% below the most recently recorded national figure;
- (e) in 2017 there was a total of 443 hate crimes and incidents reported in Plymouth which was a small decrease on the figures reported for 2016;
- (f) the key issues that needed to be addressed included -
 - the need to promote community cohesion in the 'left behind white communities';
 - encourage social mixing (sports, arts and cultural events were ideal as language was much less of a barrier);

The key areas of questioning from Members related to –

- (g) the ability to be able to compare the number of hate crimes reported in 2017 to previous years;
- (h) whether the 'cohesion rates by Council ward' could also plot diversity and deprivation within each ward;
- (i) what was the proportion of non-English speaking residents;
- (j) whether a copy of the Integrated Communities Green Paper could be made available;
- (k) the interruption of the specific question used to measure community cohesion within the Plymouth City Survey ('my local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together');

- (l) the impact of placement through social housing on community cohesion and the effect on communities that had a lot of social housing;
- (m) the provision of better facilities and funding to facilitate bringing communities together;
- (n) concerns that Plymouth was not viewed as a ‘welcoming city’ which was one of the Council’s strategic objectives;

The Committee noted the report.

39. **Work Programme**

The Committee noted its work programme for 2018/19 and agreed to include the following items –

- (1) air quality/pollution (March 2019)
- (2) community cohesion following the UK leaving the EU to be scheduled for a future meeting.

40. **Tracking Decisions**

The Chair drew Members’ attention to the appendix attached to the tracking decisions which detailed the Cabinet’s responses to the Committee’s recommendations relating to the impact of Brexit on higher education.

The Committee noted the progress of its tracking decisions.