



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	AUDIT AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE 26 September 2019
Report Number	AGENDA ITEM No. 7
Subject	Preparations for the UK's exit from the EU
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr James Mills – Leader Email: james.mills@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Christine Gore - Executive Director (Commissioning) Tel: 01285 623605 Email: christine.gore@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To provide the Committee with an overview of the Council's preparedness for the UK's exit from the EU.
Annexes	None
Recommendation	<i>That the report be noted</i>
Corporate priorities	Vibrant Economy, Stronger Local Communities
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	None required

1. **BACKGROUND**

The UK is currently scheduled to exit from the European Union on 31 October. At the present time a deal has yet to be concluded with the EU and so all preparations are being based upon a 'No-Deal' scenario. Central government sees local authorities as being key to ensuring that local communities and businesses are prepared for the potential outcomes of such a scenario.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government is leading government's planning for 'Brexit'. It has written on two occasions direct to the Leader of the Council setting out those matters which it believes councils should be actively dealing with. The second letter, sent soon after the new Prime Minister took up his position, asked all local authorities to designate a lead officer for Brexit preparations. WODC's lead officer is the Executive Director (Commissioning) (Christine Gore).

Preparations across the whole public sector in the region are being coordinated by the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum. Any specific concerns relating to WODC are fed in to the relevant meetings as necessary.

2. **MAIN POINTS**

- 2.1. A Brexit Planning Group, consisting of officers representing key services including communications and emergency planning, as well as those services provided to the public, has been meeting since February this year. The main implications of Brexit for services provided by district councils relate to Environmental Health, specifically around food safety. DEFRA and the Food Standards Agency have been issuing guidance and technical information for some time and officers have been acting promptly to ensure that relevant local businesses are aware of and making necessary changes to their operations.
- 2.2. Officers have been working with the council's key contractors to ensure that any potential supply chain issues are minimised and are satisfied that suitable contingency arrangements are in place wherever possible.
- 2.3. As part of normal business, all services have been updating their Business Continuity Plans over the past 2-3 months and so any potential disruption to the delivery of services that may occur as a consequence of a 'No-Deal' Brexit should be minimal.
- 2.4. The Council's website has been updated to provide residents and businesses with information regarding their own preparations for Brexit, principally by directing them to the government's own website www.gov.uk/brexit, which contains a wide range of information about how to prepare for Brexit.
- 2.5. The Head of Communications is actively engaged in government briefings about relevant issues.

3. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Council received £17,484 from the government in 2018/19 specifically for funding its Brexit preparations. A further £17,484 was received early in 2019/20 and more recently the Secretary of State announced that a further £17,484 was to be allocated. To date £10k of this funding has been spent on Treasury Management Advice. The balance of the grant funding remains available to support further work as appropriate.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. A 'Risks, Issues and Actions' log is currently being prepared to ensure that the council is fully prepared for the implications of Brexit. This is for internal use only.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1. The Council could choose to do nothing in terms of preparing for Brexit, but this would be in direct contravention of the wishes of central government and could have a detrimental impact on the residents and businesses in the district.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1. None.