

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL
Wednesday, 9 January 2019

1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR SHAW
Re: Risk Management and Brexit Risk Register

Noting that the Risk Management report presented to CIRS Scrutiny in November stated that a detailed DCC focused Brexit Risk Register was in preparation and would support reporting to the Leadership Group on potential Brexit impacts, will the Cabinet provide an update on the possible effects of (a) the Withdrawal Agreement 'deal' and (b) No Deal, with reference to the areas of EU funding, labour market impacts, civil unrest and food/farming, mentioned in the Risk Management report?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART

An internal Devon County Council Brexit Group was set up following the EU Referendum in the summer of 2016, to identify the potential financial impacts on the organisation. In the summer 2018, this Group started to review the risks and potential impacts on the County Council. This has proved a difficult task as little information has been made available by Government and there are a number of possible Brexit permutations still making their way through Parliament. To assist with this work the Leadership Group will be meeting on 14th January 2019 to consider what other steps should or can be taken in the run up to the actual scenario that will be in place by Brexit Day on 29th March 2019.

2. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR SHAW
Re: Brexit and Support to Devon's Businesses

Noting that the Government has urged all businesses to make urgent preparations for a possible 'No Deal' Brexit, and that the 2018 LEP report showed that Devon businesses had made few preparations, will Cabinet report on what assistance has now been given to Devon businesses?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART

The County Council works with a range of business organisations and programmes. Examples are the regulatory services and advice provided by the Joint Devon, Somerset and Torbay Trading Standards and a Growth Support Programme. It also works alongside organisations such as the NFU, FSB and Chambers of Commerce. As part of these regular activities the County Council has been gathering information on possible impacts from exiting the EU on local businesses. As has already been reported the Council has established an internal group to consider impacts from BREXIT on our own supplies and goods and services and we are an active partner in the Heart of the South West's BREXIT Resilience and Opportunities Group which has also been considering the risks and opportunities for the local economy, and this is chaired by the County Council's Chief Executive. Part of the work of the group has included liaison and engagement with Cornwall County Council and their partners. With no clarity on the eventual position for exiting the EU both groups have considered at a high level the possible impacts and outcomes. The County Councils' Leadership team are considering the work from the above three groups on 14th January and will consider what further plans and preparation is required including support to businesses. The work undertaken to date is without non-additional funding from Government to support the additional activity.

3. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR SHAW
Re: Emergency Planning and Preparations for a 'no deal' Brexit

In the light of the Council's primary responsibility for emergency planning, will the Cabinet advise on any risks of disruption to fuel, food and medical supplies in Devon in the light of a 'No Deal' Brexit, and what preparations have been made to mitigate these?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART

The response to Brexit planning is addressed through a number of groups to ensure preparations include response and short and longer term recovery to fulfil the Civil Contingency function of the local authority and wider partners.

There is an internal DCC Brexit planning group, the HoSW Brexit Resilience and Operational Group and the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). The LRF has a tactical coordinating function and strategic coordinating function and regular meetings are being held to support planning and preparedness and response. The meetings will increase in frequency over the next few months and beyond as required. The groups will respond to published Technical notices and guidance which is being issued by various Government Departments to the business and public sector.

Devon County Council is also planning an internal Brexit planning event in January to exercise various scenarios.

The three areas described are part of the scenarios that are being planned for. The Local Health Resilience Partnership is specifically considering planning for medical supplies and working with local providers to ensure readiness.

The food and fuel issues are multi-faceted and require consideration of Business Continuity plans by all sectors. Specific support is being given to Port Health Authorities through the Food Standards Agency and DEFRA.

All areas are subject to national contingency planning.

4. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR PROWSE
Re: Autumn Budget Allocation / Highways Money

The news in the Chancellor's Autumn Budget that this Council is to receive a staggering £18.75 million (new money) is to be most welcome.

Can the Leader confirm whether this money has been allocated?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

The additional funding has been received and I agree it is most welcome. There is a requirement that we publish before the end of March 2019 how this money has been committed. Expenditure from this funding is required to be allocated to carriageway structural maintenance and bridge structural repairs. I intend to ask that a report is taken to the next meeting of this Cabinet, when the Forward Plan is discussed later on in the agenda. The report will cover allocation but we will continue to operate the Council's approved asset management strategy, looking at the asset condition as a means of prioritisation. This may mean the distribution is not necessarily evenly distributed across each area.

5. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR PROWSE
Re: Autumn Budget Allocation Methodology

If allocated, what was the methodology?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES