



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

17th NOVEMBER 2020

BREXIT

JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (CLLR R. LEWIS)

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to:

- 1.1 Provide an update on the work that is underway across the Council to prepare for Brexit.
- 1.2 Identify the areas classified as the highest potential risk/impact, these are:
 - The supply of food to our frontline services (including schools and Residential Homes),
 - Ensuring appropriate / stockpiled supplies of key commodities (toilet roll, cleaning products for example); and
 - The wider impact of food poverty that has resulted from Covid-19, which would be exacerbated by Brexit.
- 1.3 Subject to any comments, seek approval to the recommendations outlined in Section 2.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Noting the uncertainties in respect of the negotiations currently ongoing between the UK Government and the EU, it is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Receive assurance that the Council is planning as best as it possibly can for Brexit.
- 2.2 Members identify any other areas which they consider require further assurance.
- 2.3 Review the areas identified as being the highest risk (section 1.2 above), and whether any others should be highlighted.



3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The UK left the EU on 31st January 2020 with a deal called the withdrawal agreement. The time between establishing the withdrawal agreement and the UK actually leaving the EU with or without a deal on 31st December 2020 is called the transition period. The transition period is an 11-month phase which started immediately after the 31st January 2020.
- 3.2 During the transition period, the UK continues to follow EU rules and trade between the two remains the same as before. The UK also pays into the EU budget.
- 3.3 By keeping most things the same, the idea behind the transition period was to give both sides time to negotiate the future relationship.
- 3.4 The transition period ends on 31st December 2020.
- 3.5 The deadline is fast approaching to agree the rules for the new UK-EU relationship. The changes will affect many areas of life - including trade and immigration - and will start on 1st January 2021.
- 3.6 When transition ends on 31st December 2020, the UK will automatically drop out of the EU's main trading arrangements (the single market and the customs union).
- 3.7 The single market means that countries share the same rules on product standards and access to services, whereas the customs union is an agreement between EU countries not to charge taxes (tariffs) on each other's goods.
- 3.8 However, if a new UK-EU trade deal is not agreed in time then tariffs and border checks would be applied to UK goods travelling to the EU - under the rules of the World Trade Organization. The UK also decides what tariffs and checks to impose on EU goods.
- 3.9 Tariffs could make UK goods more expensive and harder to sell in the EU, while full border checks could cause long delays at ports.
- 3.10 Failure to reach a deal would also result in the UK service industry losing its guaranteed access to the EU. This would affect everyone from bankers and lawyers, to musicians and chefs.
- 3.11 Even if a trade deal is reached, it would not eliminate all checks - so UK businesses will need to prepare.



- 3.12 The work required to manage the impact of Covid-19 over the past 8 months has taken precedence over Brexit. However, in the past couple of weeks has Brexit re-emerged on to the agenda of the Local Resilience Forum.
- 3.13 A Brexit Preparedness Plan is in place and covers the following areas:
- Communication;
 - Emergency Management / Business Continuity;
 - EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS);
 - Community Cohesion;
 - Supplies and Services;
 - Business and the Local Economy; and
 - Foodbanks.
- 3.14 Specific actions have been identified within the Preparedness Plan, with responsible officers assigned to them.

4. WHAT HAVE WE DONE TO PREPARE?

- 4.1 In assessing what was required in order to prepare for Brexit on the 31st October 2019, the following areas were identified (which are all still relevant):
- Our role in **raising awareness** of what our residents, our staff and local businesses should know / should be doing to prepare;
 - Establishing pragmatic **continuity plans** to ensure short-term disruption to our key frontline services is minimised, as far as we can practicably plan for;
 - Supporting residents to apply for the **European Union Settled Status** (EUSS) scheme, and **monitoring any underlying tensions** within our communities, and
 - Working with, listening to, and **supporting local food banks** in these uncertain times.

RAISING AWARENESS

- 4.2 In order to raise awareness of the guidance that has been published from the UK and Welsh Government, the Council put in place the following arrangements:

[Updated website](#)

- 4.3 A new '[Preparing for Brexit](#)' tab was added to the Council's website. The content provides succinct links to UK and Welsh Government sites.

Social media

- 4.4 A social media campaign took place during the lead-up to October 2019, which covered the following areas:



- 4.5 The campaign has been updated and re-launched.

Guidance to local businesses

- 4.6 The Council's main role in respect of supporting local businesses through Brexit is to provide the necessary links to the guidance and support that has been made available by the UK and Welsh Government. For example, the Welsh Government's '[Preparing Wales](#)' website and the Business Wales [Brexit Portal](#).
- 4.7 The information provided in **Appendix A** was posted to the relevant / local businesses across the County Borough in the lead-up to 31st October 2019. At this stage it is not intended that a mail drop be undertaken again, but instead the social media campaign referenced in the section above will help to reinforce key messages to the local business community.



- 4.8 In addition to the role of signposting businesses to the appropriate guidance, representatives of the Council's Public Protection Service are joining Webinars that are facilitated by DEFRA. Clarity for Approved Premises on labelling requirements post Brexit as well as Export Health Certificate Requirements is required. Ultimately this could result in a cost implication for the businesses, but it could also have resource implications for the Council's Public Protection Services.

Payslip insert to Employees & Elected Members

- 4.9 All staff received a payroll insert in the October 2019 payroll, a copy of which is provided at **Appendix B**. As well as raising awareness of the key supporting information that has been made available on our website, it was important that we encouraged staff to share this information with friends and relatives. Also, it is important that staff are aware of this information in the event that a customer asks them. It is proposed that we now re-issue this information to staff.

Our workforce – EUSS & Recruitment Processes post Brexit

- 4.10 A relatively small number of Council staff could be affected by the EU Settled Status (EUSS) process. The Council has reviewed its workforce and put in place arrangements that support and help staff to apply. We have also contacted our social care providers and asked them to review their staffing complement for colleagues who should apply for the EUSS. No significant concerns have been raised.
- 4.11 Moving forwards, once the UK leaves the EU on the 1st January 2021 all potential new employees that reside outside of the UK (that is, EU and non EU residents) could be required to meet eligibility requirements relating to their English language ability and ability to maintain themselves financially. In order to recruit from outside of the UK, the Council will be required to hold a Home Office licence. Work is now taking place to put these arrangements in place.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY – KEY FRONTLINE SERVICES

- 4.12 The Council is responsible for delivering a significant number of services, the scope and complexity of which is diverse. In order to put appropriate arrangements in place to ensure continuity of services to our vulnerable customers, and also ensure that key responsibilities are delivered, the following areas have been reviewed with a view to establishing short-term contingency arrangements:
- The provision of meals.
 - In schools, our residential homes and our meals on wheels service.



- Alternative menus will be developed by Catering Services, designed to take into account any potential shortages of goods.
- Ensuring that our residential homes are appropriately stocked with key supplies in the event of disruption.
 - It is imperative now, more than ever that these establishments are kept hygienic and clients have all of the key supplies they require, for example:
 - Cleaning / janitorial supplies;
 - Sanitary provision (hand soap, toilet paper, male & female sanitary products); and
 - Food.
 - Appropriate stocks of these commodities will need to be in place to cover any potential short-term interruptions to supplies.
- Keeping our fleet moving
 - As the Council operates a diverse fleet, the ability to forecast what parts could be needed is difficult. Parts that have to be sourced from abroad may take longer to obtain and could cost more.
 - Failure to obtain the required spares in a timely manner, will mean that the Council would have to seek support from hire companies in hiring-in similar or suitable alternative vehicles until such time as the spare parts arrive.
- Ensuring key vehicles have fuel
 - See fuel plan update below.
- Data
 - Work is currently ongoing to review any potential implications that could materialise in respect of the Council's storage and handling of data.

Continuity of Supplies and Services

- 4.13 Further to the engagement that took place in the lead-up to October 2019, key suppliers of the Council have been contacted once more to request Brexit preparedness statements. Suppliers have pointed to the impact that Covid-19 has had, and have also pointed towards the uncertainty that surrounds Brexit. At this stage, suppliers are not able to say with any certainty what the impact of Brexit could be. This will be monitored closely over next few weeks and the coming months.



- 4.14 During these communications, suppliers were reminded of the importance to review their workforce(s) in order to implement appropriate EUSS arrangements, and the links to EUSS websites have been provided.

Fuel Plan

- 4.15 Over and above the contingency plans that are in place in respect of our key frontline services, the Council has an established 'fuel plan'.
- 4.16 The fuel plan will be mobilised in the event of a national fuel shortage. The aim of the fuel plan is to ensure that prioritised Council vehicles have the appropriate fuel that could be used to deliver services, and also to transport key staff to and from their workplace(s). Should a national fuel shortage materialise, the Council will also work in partnership with Health Services to ensure that those residents that require specific appointments to be honoured are picked-up and dropped back home (dialysis patients for example).

EUROPEAN UNION SETTLED STATUS (EUSS)

- 4.17 As at October 2019 the Home Office identified that approximately 3,000 EU nationals resided within RCT. Unfortunately, they were unable to provide any further information in respect of where these may be located. The data that we had at that time suggested just over 1,500 EU nationals resided in RCT.
- 4.18 The latest data that we have from the Home Office relates to those EU Nationals that have applied for settled status between the period of [August 2018 to June 2020](#). The data indicates that circa 1,700 individuals that reside within the boundary of the county borough have applied through the EUSS scheme.
- 4.19 The Council's Registrars Service gained approval to [scan and verify](#) the required documentation, and the service went live to citizens with effect from 1st October 2019.

COMMUNITY COHESION

- 4.20 A team has been established and tasked with delivering a co-ordinated approach across Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil in respect of tracking any underlying unrest, and to support EU Nationals when applying for EUSS.
- 4.21 Prior to the March 2020 national Lockdown, these community cohesion officers were delivering work out in the community. Given the current restrictions, the previous approach of face to face working is no longer as feasible as it once was, so the team continue to explore how they can deliver this work 'remotely'.



LOCAL FOODBANKS

- 4.22 The Council is mindful that foodbanks are heavily reliant on donations from individuals. Given uncertainties that surround the potential impact of Brexit, coupled with the impact of Covid-19, there is a risk that donations drop-off in the short-term as happened at the beginning of the Lockdown.
- 4.23 Between April and August 2020, the Council's Food Distribution Centre (FDC) provided local foodbanks with £14,951 of products to meet the increased demand from people who were self-isolating or facing financial hardship and requiring food support. The FDC also reduced the impact on foodbanks by providing emergency food parcels to those who were in need. 2,463 food parcels were provided between April and August (excluding 2,512 delivered on behalf of Welsh Government for those on the Shielded Patients List). Work will need to take place once more with the local foodbanks to establish if they have any specific concerns, and whether the Council is able to provide assistance.
- 4.24 An additional concern for October 2020 onwards is the potential impact of changes to the Governments Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (the Furlough Scheme) and the extended Job Retention Scheme.. 30,900 people in RCT are currently on furlough (over 30% of the resident working population) and it is anticipated that a significant number may be facing redundancy. This will undoubtedly have an impact on local food banks and their capacity to meet demand.
- 4.25 Regular meetings now take place with representatives from the foodbanks in order to review any concerns that they have in relation to supplies and distribution.
- 4.26 In this regard the Council has already determined that foodbanks across RCT will receive financial assistance and/or the supply of food items to the value of £10,000, and the Council will also make both staff and vehicles available to assist providers in ensuring that deliveries can be made to those in need.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no equality and diversity implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 There are no consultation requirements emanating from the recommendations set out in the report.



7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 Currently, there are no direct financial implications upon the Council's revenue budget in respect of our preparations for Brexit. However, in the event that stockpiling will be needed there will clearly be an impact.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 There are no legal or legislative implications emanating from the recommendations set out in the report.

9. LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 9.1 The work undertaken to prepare for when the UK leaves the EU helps the Council to ensure that services delivered to our vulnerable citizens are as well prepared as we can possibly plan for. It also supports the Wellbeing Goals of ensuring a resilient Wales that has cohesive communities.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The Council is currently faced with uncertainties surrounding the deal between the UK and EU, at the same time we are entering into what seems to be a second wave of Covid-19.
- 10.2 Contingency plans need to be in place for our key frontline services that aim to manage interruptions are far as is practicably possible – particularly in relation to the supply of food and key commodities such as cleaning products and personal care.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Item:

Background Papers: None

Officer to contact: Marc Crumbie, Head of Procurement

Appendix A – Communication to all local businesses within County Borough

BREXIT

A chithau'n fusnes lleol gwerthfawr, mae'r Cyngor yn awyddus i sicrhau eich bod chi'n effro i'r hyn sydd angen i chi ei wneud er mwyn cynllunio ar gyfer Brexit. Mae'r canllaw byr yma yn nodi rhai meysydd allweddol rydyn ni'n eich annog chi i'w hadolygu.

Asesu pa mor barod ydych chi am Brexit:

Mae Busnes Cymru wedi creu gwefan ar gyfer helpu busnesau i baratoi ar gyfer Brexit. Beth bynnag yw maint neu raddfa eich busnes, mae'n werth edrych ar y wefan a chwblhau'r 'Pecyn Cymorth Brexit'.

Mae'r Pecyn yn canolbwyntio ar feysydd busnes allweddol - mae'n bosibl bydd rhai, os nad pob un o'r meysydd yma, yn berthnasol i chi. Wedi i chi gwblhau'r Pecyn, byddwch chi'n derbyn adroddiad a set o gamau gweithredu ynghyd ag arweiniad am sut i fynd i'r afael â'r camau sydd wedi'i nodi.

Hyd yn oed os ydych chi'n credu na fydd Brexit yn effeithio amoch chi, mae'r Cyngor yn eich annog chi i gwblhau'r Pecyn.

Yn ogystal â'r Pecyn, mae gwefan Busnes Cymru hefyd yn cynnwys llawer o wybodaeth a allai fod o ddefnydd i chi, gan gynnwys canllawiau ategol a manylion cyswilt.

Mae modd mynd ar BORTH Brexit drwy'r ddolen yma: businesswales.gov.wales/brexit/cy

Mae modd mynd i BECYN Cymorth Brexit drwy'r ddolen yma: businesswales.gov.wales/brexit/cy/pecyn-cymorth-ar-brexit

Statws Preswilydd Sefydlog yr UE

Os nad ydych chi wedi gwneud yn barod, rhaid i chi gynnal archwiliad o'ch gweithle er mwyn nodi os oes angen i unigolion wneud cais ar gyfer proses Statws Preswilydd Sefydlog yr UE.

Dyma ddolenni sydd â rhagor o wybodaeth am hynny: <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/CY/Council>

www.eusswales.com (Saesneg)
www.eusswales.com/cy/ (Cymraeg))

www.gov.uk/eusettledstatus

www.gov.uk/staying-uk-eu-citizen

The Council is keen to ensure that you, as a valued local business, is aware of what you need to do to plan for Brexit. This brief guidance note provides you with some key areas that we encourage you to review.

Assessing your preparedness for Brexit:

Business Wales has developed a website that is dedicated to helping business to prepare for Brexit. No matter the size and scale of your business, it's worth taking a look at the website and completing the 'Brexit Toolkit'.

The Toolkit focuses on key areas of business, some may not be relevant to you but others, if not, all will be. At the end of completing the Toolkit you'll receive a report, with a set of actions accompanied by guidance in terms of how to address the actions identified.

Even if you think you'll not be affected by Brexit, the Council encourages you to complete the Toolkit.

In addition to the Toolkit, the Business Wales website also holds a lot of information that you may find useful in terms of supporting guidance and contact details.

The Brexit PORTAL can be accessed using this link: businesswales.gov.wales/brexit/

The Brexit TOOLKIT can be accessed using this link: businesswales.gov.wales/brexit/brexit-toolkit

EU Settled Status

If you haven't already done so, you'll also need to review your workforce to identify whether any individuals need apply for the EU Settled Status process.

For more information the following links may help:

www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/Brexit/PreparingforBrexit/PreparingforBrexit.aspx

www.eusswales.com (English)
www.eusswales.com/cy/ (Welsh)

www.gov.uk/eusettledstatus

www.gov.uk/staying-uk-eu-citizen



BREXIT

Beth mae'r Cyngor yn ei wneud i baratoi at adael Undeb Ewrop (Brexit)?

Mae gwasanaethau allweddol y Cyngor yn cael eu hadolygu fel bydd modd rhoi cynlluniau wrth gefn ar waith i sicrhau bod cyn lleied o darfu ag y bo modd ar ddarpariaeth gwasanaethau, cyn belled ag y gallwn ni gynllunio ar ei gyfer.

Yn ystod y cyfnod sy'n arwain at y dyddiad y mae disgwyl i'r DU adael yr UE, bydd preswylwyr a busnesau lleol yn derbyn gwybodaeth allweddol mewn perthynas â Brexit.

Mae ein gwefan yn cynnwys canllawiau defnyddiol ar y meysydd allweddol canlynol:

- **Busnesau**
- **Dinasyddion yr UE sy'n byw yn RhCT a / neu'n gweithio i'r Cyngor**
- **Sefydliadau'r trydydd sector**
- **Data personol**

Mae mwy o fanylion ar gyfer pob un o'r adrannau uchod ar wefan y Cyngor.

Fel gweithwyr gwerthfawr, gwnewch yn siŵr eich bod yn edrych ar adran Brexit ein gwefan. Nid yn unig bydd yn rhoi cymorth i chi, ond gall hefyd gynorthwyo i gyfeirio ein cwsmeriaid, eich teulu a'ch ffrindiau at y canllawiau defnyddiol hyn hefyd.

Canllawiau gan Lywodraeth San Steffan, a Llywodraeth Cymru:

Mae gan Lywodraeth San Steffan wefan benodol, ac mae modd ei chyrru gan ddefnyddio'r ddolen hon: www.gov.uk/brexit#business

Mae Llywodraeth Cymru wedi datblygu gwefan sy'n darparu ystod eang o wybodaeth am faterion yn ymwneud â Brexit. Mae modd cyrru'r wefan gan ddefnyddio'r ddolen ganlynol: www.llyw.cymru/paratoi-cymru

What is the Council doing to prepare for Brexit?

Key council services are being reviewed so that contingency plans can be put in place to ensure that disruption to service provision is minimised, as far as we can possibly plan for.

During the period leading up to the date that the UK is scheduled to leave the EU, residents and local businesses will receive key information in respect of Brexit.

Our website contains useful guidance on the following key areas:

- **Businesses**
- **EU citizens that live in RCT and/or work for the Council**
- **Third sector organisations**
- **Personal data**

More detail for each of the sections listed above is provided on the Council's website.

As valued employees, please ensure that you take a look at the Brexit section of our website. It may not only provide assistance to you, but may also assist to sign-post our customers, your family and friends in the direction of this helpful guidance too.

UK & Welsh Government Guidance

The UK Government has a dedicated website, and can be accessed using this link: www.gov.uk/brexit#business

The Welsh Government has developed a website which provides a wide range of information on Brexit-related issues. The website can be accessed using the following link: www.gov.wales/preparing-wales

