

Local Resilience Forum Briefing Note

GSC Classification: **Official**

To:

Hertfordshire County Councillors
Hertfordshire Borough / District Councillors

From:

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EU Exit (Brexit)



1 Overview

- 1.1 It will not be lost on anyone that there is a significant uncertainty and lack of clarity in relation to the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union (Brexit). At the time of writing there still is no confirmation of a deal and the potential for a 'No-Deal Brexit' is still a possibility.
- 1.2 This uncertainty has led to confusion and dissatisfaction resulting in, currently limited, protest. This is predominantly confined to central London. Subject to the outcome and method of the UK's exit from the EU, the terms of the deal or no deal, there may be a level of unrest amongst various groups.
- 1.3 The uncertainty has also led to confusion and uncertainty for business and organisations, including public bodies.
- 1.4 A principal feature of talks and news is that of freight and trade, particularly in relation to ports. Kent and the port of Dover features greatly in this theme. There is a concern in relation to congestion caused by trucks being held up at the ports;
 - Inbound cargo being held up for customs checks having an implication on delivery, particularly of 'just in time' delivery methods.
 - Outbound cargo being held up and backing up onto the Strategic Road Network (main arterial routes and motorways) as was seen in 2015 and the previous implementation of Operation Stack.

2 Local Resilience Forum

- 2.1 The Local Resilience Forum (LRF) constitutes the principal mechanism for multi-agency cooperation under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004). It provides a structure within which multi-agency emergency responders can effectively co-operate with each other. It is not a statutory body, nor does it have powers to direct its members.
- 2.2 Chaired by Hertfordshire County Council, Chief Fire Officer Darryl Keen, the LRF provides an overarching framework for multi-agency engagement and co-operation in the event of a major incident in Hertfordshire.
- 2.3 The LRF's Strategic Business Plan outlines membership, group structure, budget details and three yearly strategic and annual key objectives. It also outlines the LRF's approach to risk assessment, multi-agency emergency plans, learning and development, community resilience and performance monitoring.
- 2.4 The LRF consists of four groups:
 - Executive Group – provides strategic leadership and direction to the LRF;
 - Management Group – manages the efficient and effective running of the LRF on a day-to-day basis;

- Response & Planning Group – ensures the LRF has robust plans and arrangements in place to deal with a wide range of emergencies.
 - People & Communities Group – ensures that the needs of individuals and various communities are central to multi-agency response arrangements and to encourage greater resilience and preparedness.
- 2.5 Although the emergency services are most likely to declare a major incident, any LRF member can declare one if they feel there is likely to be a significant impact upon their own resources and/or ability to manage an emergency response. In this situation a Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) will be convened.
- 2.6 Comprised of local decision makers the SCG is where the policy, strategy and overall response framework are established and managed. The SCG looks at the wider influences and longer term impact of the major incident on those affected and day-to-day services.
- 2.7 At the LRF’s Executive Group meeting on 5th October it was agreed that due to uncertainty around EU Exit and the need to undertake preparedness activities that the early setting up of an SCG would enable a formal information sharing mechanism and establish an early battle rhythm locally.

3 Strategic Coordination Group

- 3.1 The Brexit Strategic Coordinating Group, chaired by Assistant Chief Constable Nathan Briant of Hertfordshire Constabulary, has produced a strategy for its intentions, in summary it says;

“The purpose of this Strategic Co-Ordinating Group (SCG) is to take overall responsibility for the multi-agency management of emergencies resulting from the effects of Brexit within Hertfordshire, and to ensure that any effects spreading beyond, or into the County from other areas are identified, assessed and subsequently responded to. Where no other appropriate route exists the SCG will provide a route through which issues affecting multiple agencies in Hertfordshire can be highlighted and their effect mitigated.”

- 3.2 The core function of the SCG is to ensure agencies and organisations share information relating to the effects of Brexit and where necessary and appropriate work together to help alleviate each other’s issues.
- 3.3 The SCG membership currently consists of:
- Police
 - Fire
 - Ambulance
 - Health Agencies; NHS, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Trusts, Public Health England
 - Hertfordshire County Council
 - Local Council representation
 - Environment Agency
 - Highways England
 - Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce
 - Armed Forces

- Ministry for Housing, Community and Local Government Resilience and Emergency Division (MHCLG RED)

- 3.4 Following an inaugural meeting in November 2018, the SCG has had a series of planned meetings which will progressively increase in frequency throughout March and April to daily.
- 3.5 The SCG has considered a broad range of possibilities across a variety of sectors and has engaged with other LRF's to share information and benchmark concerns. In doing so a Local Risk Assessment has been produced and in line with that Local Planning Assumptions which are constantly reviewed.
- 3.6 Assisted by MHCLG RED the SCG held a table top exercise in January 2019 to test the strategy and planning assumption across the various partner agencies. Some agencies have also held their own internal table top exercises. A representative has also attended neighbouring LRF table top exercises. These have allowed for a broader understanding, the development of plans and best practice.
- 3.7 In February members of the SCG attend a broader South East regional conference hosted by MHCLG RED where neighbouring LRFs shared their planning assumption, plans and contingencies. This allowed each to ensure plans were in unison and prevent unnecessary impact on each other.
- 3.8 With the SCG looking at the broad aspects, a Tactical Coordinating Group is being set up as the operational arm of the SCG, looking at specific issues and implementing plans.

4 Reporting

- 4.1 The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Resilience and Emergencies Division (MHCLG RED) have requested all LRFs to report into them using a standardised template on the effects of Brexit across a number of sectors; Transport, Health, Food, Water, Energy, Business, Law & Order, Community Tensions / Cohesion, Environment etc. This is currently weekly but expected to increase to daily.
- 4.2 The report is coordinated by Hertfordshire Constabulary with member agencies contributing.
- 4.3 Through this report each member agency is sharing their information, intelligence and perception of the impact of Brexit on the community of Hertfordshire and the services provided to them.
- 4.4 At a senior level the SCG is engaging with Council Chief Executive Officers and at a local level Safer Neighbourhood Inspectors are engaging with Council Community Safety Managers in the compiling, assessment and monitoring of the impact of Brexit on the community and community groups.

5 Planning Assumptions

5.1 In line with the national risk assessment and planning assumptions, the SCG has produced a risk assessment and planning assumptions localised to Hertfordshire. These are predominantly based on a worst case scenario following a no-deal exit.

- There may be significant delays to freight through key ports which could lead to disruption of the flow of goods into and out of the UK. This could impact on the strategic road network (motorways / A roads) within Hertfordshire whereby truck drivers choose to stop rather than get caught up in any congestion.
- There is not believe to be significant implications to utilities (water / gas / electricity)
- Access to medicine has been highlighted but will be managed nationally.
- There will not be an overall shortage of food but likely to be a reduction of choice i.e. out of season fruit and vegetables.
- Businesses will need to set up for import and exports processes through HMRC.
- There will be implications to law enforcement.
- There is not likely to be protest or civil disorder within Hertfordshire but there may be a draw of police resources through mutual aid to other areas that do experience it.

5.2 The plans look at the management of public concern and the impacts of the various factors on the public.

6 Freedom of Information

6.1 In line with guidance from Central Government the LRF / SCG, and its members, will not be providing specific information in relation to Brexit plans on named subjects or specific topics. If details of any specific plans or proposals are disclosed, or the existence or non-existence of these plans, it is considered that this would prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs by distracting the Public Authority from the delivery of its public duty, either by diverting resources to deal with resulting requests for action, public concern about proposals, or by prejudicing the work of Government in this area.