

Status of Report: Public

Meeting: Combined Fire Authority

Date: 6 February 2019

Subject: Planning for a “No Deal” EU Exit

Report by: The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

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For: Information Only

Purpose

1. To inform the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) of local arrangements and in-Service planning for a “No Deal” EU Exit scenario.

Recommendation

2. The CFA is asked to note the local arrangements and in-Service planning for a “No Deal EU Exit” scenario.

Executive Summary

3. In September 2018 instruction was given by Central Government via the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to begin work on planning for a “No Deal” EU Exit. This was to be done by individual agencies as well as on a local multi-agency and regional level.
4. A local multi-agency planning group has met and produced a basic risk assessment as well as tasking each individual partner agency to produce its own impact assessment.
5. The LRF risk assessment has highlighted a number of areas where preparation may be required.
6. The Service Tactical Management Team (TMT) has identified and assessed potential risks to the Service, and also detailed proposed mitigation measures. These are detailed at Appendix 1.
7. A paper was submitted to the CFA Corporate Governance Committee in September 2018 detailing the proposed planning arrangements and after consideration, it was recommended that the report be presented to the full CFA.
8. At the time of writing this report, Central Government guidance on the possible impacts of a “No Deal” scenario is limited.

Background

9. Following the instruction from Central Government in September 2018, work on local planning for a 'No Deal' EU Exit began. This was done by individual agencies as well as at a multi-agency and regional level. The Service Tactical Management Team (TMT) began planning at this stage – identifying and assessing areas of potential risk, and identify potential mitigation actions. Details are set out below.
10. Effective planning has been hampered by a lack of National guidance.

Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service Internal Planning Arrangements

11. The impact of a “No Deal” scenario has been discussed at every TMT meeting since September 2018. TMT have identified and assessed potential risk to the Service and identified proposed mitigation actions. (These are detailed at Appendix 1). Some potential risks identified are considered of note because:
 - a) They appear in both the LRF and Service assessments and/or
 - b) They have been raised as a possible concern by more than one member of TMT or highlighted as a specific concern in their assessment.
12. The key potential risks identified by TMT were:

- i. FINANCE:

Fluctuation in the exchange rate of the Euro and US Dollar against the Pound resulting in increased project costs.

Reduction in funding received from local business rates (due to fewer businesses operating) negatively impacting on day to day funding and reducing capability and willingness to commit to future capital expenditure.

Increased costs arising from the purchase of new vehicles and equipment.

- ii. EU CONTRACTS:

Unknown impact on the command and control mobilising system used in Fire Control. This is provided by a company based in France (Systel) which may be affected by possible EU contractual and funding issues.

- iii. RESPONSE:

Possible impact on response times around East Midlands Airport.

Potential for social disorder/civil unrest resulting in crews having to respond.

13. A review of internal Service Continuity arrangements is to be undertaken to ensure that issues such as possible restrictions on fuel supplies etc. are managed effectively should they arise. This is expected to be complete prior to 29th March.

Local Multi-Agency Planning Arrangements

14. Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Local Resilience Forum (LRF) has undertaken a significant amount of work co-ordinating and facilitating local planning for a “No Deal” EU Exit. Senior Managers and the Corporate Risk and Resilience Manager have been heavily involved in this programme of works.
15. On 27th September 2018, the LRF held a Brexit workshop to identify, discuss and risk assess possible impacts arising from a “No Deal” EU Exit scenario. This was in response to a national instruction to begin work.
16. The meeting identified the following possible “Key Risks” which, in order of perceived possible severity, were:
 - East Midlands Airport (EMA) freight disruption
 - Impact on local health services
 - Transport network disruption – road (within a 5 mile radius around EMA)
 - Business continuity for local businesses
 - Community cohesion
 - Influx of British nationals from overseas
 - Transport disruption – rail
 - EMA passenger disruption
 - Public disorder/concern
 - Transport network disruption – road (beyond a 5 mile radius of EMA)
17. Other possible risks discussed included:
 - Disruption to food and fuel supplies
 - Disruption to power supplies
 - LRF partner agency business continuity
 - Loss of access to shared European ICT systems
 - Loss of staff
 - Concurrent incidents (including severe weather scenarios)
18. The LRF group felt that their task was made more difficult by the lack of clear guidance as to what a “No Deal” would look like, or the ability to assess the likelihood of it happening. It should also be noted that the risk assessment

undertaken was ad-hoc and not subject to the usual rigour applied to the Community Risk Register or our own internal risk registers.

19. The LRF Risk Assessment Working Group met to review the Community Risk Register in light of possible impacts from a “No Deal” scenario.
20. A formal programme of Strategic Co-ordination Groups is to be held as part of a wider national reporting process required by Central Government. The Service has committed to full participation in these meetings. Service Managers who will be attending the meetings have been pre-identified and will receive a scenario specific briefing and additional training on reporting tools and methodologies.
21. It is expected that a lengthy period of mandatory national reporting is to be required by Central Government. It is expected that this reporting period will last in excess of eight weeks, starting two weeks before and ending six weeks after 29th March. Tactical and Strategic Managers will complete this task.
22. A strategic exercise was held on Friday 18th January 2019 to test local arrangements. It was based on a scenario provided by Central Government as part of a national assurance programme. Participation was not mandatory, however the LRF felt it would be prudent to participate.

National Guidance

23. National guidance on likelihood or impacts arising from a “No Deal” scenario has been limited.
24. In November 2018, the National Fire Chiefs’ Council (NFCC) issued a document entitled “Post March EU Exit Planning.”
25. A National Planning Assumptions document has been issued, however access to the document has been limited to only three people in the LRF area. As a result all planning carried out by the Service has been done on the output from the work of the TMT and LRF.

Next Steps

26. Significant work has already been undertaken to prepare for a “No Deal” scenario and it is expected that this will continue up to and beyond 29th March 2019. The reporting period is expected to last several weeks after the EU exit deadline date.
27. The Service will continue to work towards minimising the impact of a “No Deal” scenario on service delivery through the work being done by TMT and the LRF.
28. Clarification on possible impacts is being sought from Central Government through the LRF and NFCC.

29. The Service maintains an active watching brief on developments and will attempt to identify any risk to its core business over the next three months and beyond. However, the high level of uncertainty and lack of national guidance on this issue means that confidence in risk assessments, planning, preparation and response arrangements can only be considered as medium to low.

Report Implications/Impact

Legal (including crime and disorder)

30. A failure to plan may result in the inability to meet relevant legislative and statutory requirements.

Financial (including value for money, benefits and efficiencies)

31. Planning and assessing the impact of a “No Deal” EU Exit allows the Service to identify potential financial burdens which may impact on the Medium Term Financial Plan.
32. Much of the planning and preparation being undertaken will also assist in the general improvement of internal Service resilience and as a result represents value for money.
33. All work arising from this issue has been in addition to pre-existing workloads. Time, resource and effort have had to be diverted away from other areas of work to meet tight deadlines and internal/external expectations.

Risk (including corporate and operational, health and safety and any impact on the continuity of service delivery)

34. Failure to adequately prepare for the potential outcome of a “No Deal” EU Exit may adversely impact on the ability of the Service to meet its core strategies as contained in Our Plan.
35. There is a risk to the reputation of the Service should planning be seen as inadequate or excessive.

Staff, Service Users and Stakeholders (including the Equality Impact Assessment)

36. The impact on staff, Service users and stakeholders is difficult to assess due to a lack of national guidance on this issue.

Environmental

37. The Environment Agency has identified a potential for an increase in pollution incidents arising from possible issues with legislation due to a “No Deal” scenario.

Impact upon Our Plan Objective

38. The implications of a “No Deal” scenario are not fully known.

Background Papers

CGC Paper “Preparations for a “No Deal” Brexit” – November 2018

<http://www.leicestershire-fire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/preparations-for-a-no-deal-brexite.pdf>

Appendices

Appendix 1 – “Items of Potential Note Raised by Members of the Tactical Management Team”

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