

**Report for:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 14 January 2019

**Title:** Haringey Brexit Preparedness: OSC Progress Update

**Report authorised by :** Rebecca Hatch, Head of Policy and Cabinet Support.

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**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Report for Key/  
Non Key Decision:** Non key

## 1. Haringey Council workforce

We have run two briefing sessions for staff, alongside Unison, presenting the information we have about Brexit's impact on employment, and asking them to voice their concerns and questions so that we can build a bank of FAQs and information for staff. These have been welcomed and well-attended.

We have identified a person in HR – Nigel Wilson - to act as the key point of contact on Brexit-related workforce issues; he is monitoring anything that comes in via an internal mailbox.

### Help with applying for citizenship/settled status

Corporate Board have agreed that we should pay the fee (£65) for the application for settled citizenship status for Council staff, and ask contractors to do the same. The easiest way to do this is for staff to claim the cost back through expenses.

We are also reviewing our HR processes to ensure we can provide the documentation that staff might need in order to process applications. We are looking at the service that the registrars provide to the public in checking citizenship and “leave to remain” documentation to see if we can adapt this to some form of internal support service.

### Other issues to follow up

There are other issues that have the potential to affect people’s ability to do their jobs post-Brexit. We will need to ask HR BPs to work with services to define what these might be and check we have the answers to them. For instance – staff whose driving licence was granted in another EU country, social work qualifications, checks for criminal convictions in another country.

### Internal communications

We will create a mailing list for staff affected by Brexit issues, we will direct people to the FAQs, which will be up on the intranet once the answers have been checked, and set out the help that the Employee Assistance Programme can provide.

People at Work, who provide this service, have confirmed that staff who call with a “right to work” query can either speak to one of their advisers, be referred to Law Express who are their legal partner, or be referred to the Citizens Advice Bureau who have specialist immigration advisers on hand to help. (Ian Morgan).

We are looking at whether providing an opportunity for staff to come together and to share each other’s expertise would be helpful either through Yammer or a network based on the Haringey Champions model. As well as facilitating ongoing discussion and information sharing, senior officers, immigration officers and / or registrars could provide drop-in advice sessions for staff.

We are looking at the options for communicating with affected staff who are not based in offices.

## **2. Wider workforce in Haringey**

Social care sector:

- Officers have met with CONEL about their interest in, and ability to, increase the focus on skills development for young people and adults, encouraging entry into the social care sector, and has had a very positive response. Plans include:
  - Work placements
  - Work with schools on care as a career
  - Model for career progression
- We have engaged with other colleagues across NCL as part of our workforce development work to ensure Brexit is given adequate focus, particularly in light of the wider shortage of nurses in social care
- We have discussed with Whittington Health the risks around community nursing particularly as well as health visiting and school nursing both of which have a direct impact on our wider work with children and young people

## **3. Support to Residents**

We have set up a working group that is looking at the design, set up, and communication of a support offer, including digital assistance in our libraries and Customer Service Centres, and a passport verification service. We don’t currently offer the Passport Return service offered by many other London Boroughs, to enable EU citizens to apply for residency without sending off their passports.

The Home Office’s digital partner is ‘we are digital’ - more information at their webpage - <https://www.we-are-digital.co.uk/ukvi/>

There are three categories of help that can be offered via “we are digital”

1. Talking through the process over the phone

2. Drop-ins or appointments with someone sitting next to the applicant while they complete the process.
3. Home visits – if the applicant is not mobile.

It is the second of these that the Council will provide if people are referred on to us following a triage process by ‘we are digital’. The Government will provide a payment for each applicant according to how long it takes to complete the application. Trials have found that 90% of people complete the online process within 30 minutes for which the payment to the Council is £25.

Customer Services are putting together a proposal on how to implement this. Questions to consider include:

- Do we recruit for this specific role using sessional / temporary additional staff, or train up existing staff and block out time for the provision of support as drop in sessions?
- Provide the service at Wood Green and Marcus Garvey or at all libraries?
- Only by referral from “we are digital”, or can we direct residents to the libraries to be triaged as drop-ins?

For the passport registration scheme, £30 is the average London charge but this price varies significantly from £10 - £80 in other boroughs. Do we want to charge for this and if so how much? We will be able to verify passports using an app. There are some training requirements, which the Government will pay for.

#### Proof of residency checks

For most, this will be by National Insurance number. Proof can also come from GP registration, or electoral registration. We might want to encourage people to do these things in any case.

#### Criminal Convictions

The final check is on criminal convictions, and, as with current EU rules, the threshold is three offences within three months or a prison sentence. Applicants will be asked to self-declare. The Government will check every application on the national database, but say that they are not interested in “petty crimes”. Overseas convictions will be checked based on self-declarations.

#### Home Office’s EU Settlement Scheme Grant Funding competition

The Government is offering £9million of grant for VCS organisations to provide advice to affected residents. There are two categories of bid, between £5k-£40k and £40k – £750k. The deadline for submissions is 1<sup>st</sup> February.

We plan to organise a meeting in late December / early January that brings relevant voluntary organisations together to help put a bid together.

We have asked the Home Office for further information on the bid which is still relatively undefined i.e. who can money go to, can the Council co-ordinate / bid in partnership? A written response is expected in the next week.

#### What happens if there is no deal?

People already here will be allowed to stay, but there will be a cut-off point of the end of March. The implications for individuals might vary by nationality.

Citizens' rights in the events of a no deal are attached separately.

#### What happens if people don't apply?

The cost of the scheme - £65 for each adult and £32.50 for each child may put people off. Some won't be able to afford this and may risk not applying.

We will monitor who are engaging with and any VCS funding received from the grant above would be focused on identifying those residents who cannot afford to apply or have not applied for other reasons.

The cost to the Council of someone with No Recourse to Public Funds is an average of £8k, and residents who don't have settled status will become NRPF at the deadline for applications, 30 June 2021.

#### **4. External communications**

A Brexit page has been created on the council's website:

<https://www.haringey.gov.uk/news-and-events/latest-news/haringey-and-brexit>

Links to government advice on settled status and advice from VCS organisations are included.

There is a Home Office toolkit which provide a host of information, advice and communications' templates to local authorities:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-settlement-scheme-community-leaders-toolkit/>

There is an awareness that we need to engage as early as possible but that we don't want to be seen to be accepting the inevitability of Brexit which would be contrary to Council position resolved at the recent extraordinary council meeting.

We will focus our communications early next year on setting out the programme of advice and support for residents wanting to understand their legal status, how they get hold of documents pulled together from existing organisations and contracts.

If we're talking to people that we don't normally talk to, we may want to talk to them about other things:

#### Electoral registration

The rate of EU elector registration remains strong. We will update our website wording to make it more prominent for EU citizens to find in the event that they need to have registered to vote in order to apply for settled citizen status.

#### External event

We intend to hold a one-off public facing event to be introduced by the Leader / Cllr Jogee. This could potentially be along similar lines as the information session held by Westminster Council, which involved experts from the Home Office, DExEU, CAB and the Migrants Resource Centre.

## 5. Risk / Contingency Planning

The Council has a Brexit-specific risk register.

We are also in the process of gathering from Heads of Service their assessment of the potential impact on Council services, focusing on key risks around the workforce, supply chain and additional demand/new burdens. We expect to complete that exercise by early-mid December.

## 6. Engagement with London Councils, Mayor of London, LGA and Government

The LGA have produced some material on No Deal implications for local authorities [www.lga.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/brexit-no-deal-briefing-councils/](http://www.lga.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/brexit-no-deal-briefing-councils/)

London Councils have pulled together findings in response to a survey of London boroughs.

The Mayor of London has relaunched London is Open campaign, in the run-up to Brexit. There will also be a [Guidance Hub](#) on the GLA website to help European Londoners navigate Brexit, which may be useful for residents.

A Home Office teleconference on 4 December covered the latest advice on the settlement scheme.

## 7. Political Leadership

Leader statements to EU nationals and on the Council's Brexit position are published on the website.

Following the extraordinary full council meeting on Brexit a number of council resolutions have been actioned:

- A Brexit working group has been established
- The Leader has been appointed Cabinet Member with responsibility for Brexit preparedness. This has been updated on the website.
- Cllr Jogee has been appointed EU Citizens' Ambassador. We will provide some communications on this following the Purdah period.
- We have written to other Labour leaders requesting that they debate their response to the ongoing negotiations soon, if they have not already done so already.
- We have written to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government making a request under the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 for all governmental departmental information and analysis pertaining to the impacts upon Haringey's communities and businesses of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

- We have written to the Members of Parliament for Hornsey & Wood Green and Tottenham and thank them for their work in highlighting the devastating impact of the governments Brexit negotiations and for standing up for the rights of the 54,000 EU nationals who are Haringey residents.
- Publication of a Cabinet report on contingencies in the event of Britain leaving the EU has been suggested for January Cabinet.