**SEMINAR ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT PREPAREDNESS ARRANGEMENTS FOR European Union (EU) WITHDRAWAL**

**COSLA**

**Verity House**

**23rd January 2019**

**12:45 – 16:00**

**Information note**

**Purpose of event**

1. One of the most difficult issues that Brexit is causing is the amount of confusion and concern caused by the competing and at times contradictory information that is available on potential Brexit impacts. The scale of the work required can seem overwhelming, and we still have no certainty on what exactly it is that will be required. However, what we do know is that if a no deal happens it may only be a few short weeks away and the time to put mitigating actions in place to ensure we reduce the damage as much as possible is far less than we would normally plan for to manage a change of this size.
2. This joint COSLA/SOLACE event is intended to help ensure all Councils have access to the same information, are aware of the key issues that need to be addressed in the short term in the event of a no-deal Brexit, and allow exploration of options to manage these issues. The aim is for attendees to leave the event knowing the key areas their Council will have to take some sort of action on, and initial proposals on what these actions may be.
3. Below is brief information on the key issues that have arisen from the recent COSLA/SOLACE survey, added to other intelligence from Councils gathered throughout the EU withdrawal timescale.
4. On the day of the event experts will set out some brief relevant information that will allow attendees to participate in meaningful discussions on the concerns, and where possible allow us to identify some key initial actions to take to ensure that by end of February all Councils have plans in place to mitigate as best we can the damaging short term impacts a no-deal Brexit are likely to cause.
5. There are of course other issues that need to be tackled, in the medium to long term, because of Brexit. These will lead to demands for new policies, approaches, processes, budgets, etc. However, the focus of this event is purely on the immediate actions we need to take to deal with the situation in front of us all in the first few weeks of a no-deal departure. As we move forward other events will be considered to address emerging and foreseen issues at the time most relevant and helpful for Councils.
6. COSLA will continue to facilitate the as smooth-as-possible flow of information etc across Local Government to ensure all Councils have access to relevant material as soon as they become available. **This is a 2-way process, and anything that Councils believe would help them in managing the impacts should be flagged up to the COSLA Brexit team via the mailbox as soon as possible:** [**brexit@cosla.gov.uk**](mailto:brexit@cosla.gov.uk) **.** COSLA will take these requests/suggestions to the relevant organisation on behalf of the Council(s) concerned and obtain a response as quickly as possible.

**National Local Authority Resilience Activity**

1. Since mid-November the Scottish Resilience Partnership (SRP) Sub-Group for EU-exit Contingency Planning, has convened regularly to consider the civil contingencies aspects related to exiting the EU (these meetings are now weekly, alternating teleconference and physical meeting). In particular, the more pressing contingency planning identified for a “no-deal” scenario, which at the time of writing could still be as soon as the end of March, has been prioritised. In terms of the structure tor planning and mitigating risks, there is a logical sequence for the assessment and planning, which is summarised as follows:

* Assessment of the UK Planning Assumptions, which led to:
  + Development of the Scottish Planning Assumptions, which led on to:
    - Category 1 Responders own Risk Assessment (Scottish Local Authorities submitted an aggregated response) which led to:
      * Development of the Scottish Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment (STRA) which led to:
        + Prioritised Mitigation i.e. Contingency Planning (either by Scot Gov, Category 1 Responders, Resilience Partnerships, and/or professional bodies)

1. The SRP EU-Exit Sub-Group has commissioned a series of regional and national resilience workshops and requested additional training through the Scottish Resilience Development Service (ScoRDS). Further, the Sub-Group is in the process of finalising both a Command, Control and Co-ordination system and a Communications Strategy. These two aspects of work are being brought together into a national multi-agency Contingency Plan.
2. The local authority resilience community is represented directly within the SRP Sub-Group and since mid-November the representative has been liaising back to members of the Local Authority Resilience Group for Scotland through twice weekly teleconferences. Other professional bodies have also contributed to the ongoing risk assessment and mitigation work. The preparedness of all Scottish Local Authorities is monitored and reported via a national Local Authority Readiness Dashboard which monitors progress through adoption of a 3-step process: ***establishing > developing > ready***. In addition, the President/Vice-President and Chief Executive also contribute to SGoRR(M) and on a weekly basis a teleconference is held between senior officials in COSLA, SOLACE and the LA representative on the SRP Sub-Group.

**Background**

1. We have set out in the agenda the key themes that we would like each table to explore. These discussions are informal and introductory to an extent. Solutions to the issues are not expected, although if a Council believes it may have one then that will be helpful for all. However, ideas for taking forward their handling/management should be possible given the breadth of experience in the room.
2. Each table will have around 1 minute to report back on an agreed key proposal/suggestion identified by group, these and all other points identified by tables (captured by a nominated note taker) will be captured and circulated after the event for information. The aim is for every Council to have a clear and consistent view of the actions they need to take, and the actions others may be taking that they need to be aware off and potentially assist in some way. Each of the themes have the key points from the various experts presented to attendees on the day, added to this are papers circulated to attendees in advance (Scotland Excel briefing paper, COSLA non-UK EU nationals workforce statistics). The key issues under each of the themes have been listed below as an aide memoire.
3. To secure as much value as possible from the event it would be helpful if Councils attending have a clear view on the steps taken within their Council on each of the themes. So:

* for supply chains, it would be helpful if Councils have had an initial discussion with local suppliers;
* for local resilience, have Councils put in place a robust communication chain to ensure information coming from resilience partnerships go to the relevant individuals;
* for workforce have Councils identified and engaged with, as best they can, the internal and external non-UK EU workforce in their area;

1. Key themes:

* Supply chains

Food supplies – fruit and veg in particular an issue, major suppliers are seeking to ensure sufficient stockpiles in place, but are Councils prepared if they are not?

Storage facilities for stockpiling is an issue, have Councils discussed this with suppliers and sought to identify temporary solutions?

Road congestion impacting on flow of goods – have Councils considered this as part of their contingency planning?

* Local Resilience

National and local links have been made through COSLA and SOLACE sitting on the Scottish Government national resilience group (SGORR)

COSLA and SOLACE officials are working together to ensure an effective flow of information

* Workforce

Need to ensure we are adequately supporting non-UK EU nationals who wish to remain in the UK post-withdrawal.

Short-term: Plugging staffing gaps to ensure adequate service provision – need to consider the impact on other areas if staffing resources redirected.

Long term: How can we take forward robust and relevant Workforce Planning for Local Government?