



SEEC workshop BREXIT: PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SOUTH EAST 31 January 2019 ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS – SUMMARY

Questions for discussion

Speakers raised some of the possible implications of Brexit for South East local authorities. The points below reflect delegates' views and ideas for the way forward.

Question 1. What are the biggest potential risks for councils from Brexit?

SUMMARY OF TABLE DISCUSSION FEEDBACK (by theme):

FUNDING:

- Loss of EU funding – there is a potential impact on projects (eg. agriculture & infrastructure). Scale of impact not fully clear yet.

TRANSPORT NETWORK:

- Disruption to ports and surrounding road networks – eg Kent and Hampshire.
- Increase in human trafficking and unauthorised people coming into the country – risk of increases in numbers/ exploitation if ports are very busy and resources tied up.

SKILLS, SERVICES AND GOODS:

- British citizens returning to live in UK – people returning from EU countries could place increased demand on South East local services, with possible resource implications for housing and care.
- Shortage of skilled workers – there are particular concerns around the construction, care and hospitality sectors in the South East. On construction, there is a specific concern about how authorities are going to meet their targets on new homes if builders don't have necessary workforce. On care, more information is required about the possible impact of the proposed £30k earnings threshold for non-EU workers as part of Government's new skills-based immigration policy.
- Impact on private sector investment – including risks to housebuilding plans if major builders are cautious about impact of Brexit on economy etc.
- Availability/costs of food and supplies – prices may be distorted by people stockpiling etc. Petrol and other supplies could be impacted if roads are blocked by traffic congestion.
- Providing council services to the community – eg. There could be a risk of carers not being able to reach clients if roads are blocked by congestion.

OTHER:

- There was also a reference to databases or information currently shared by EU member states – would there be ongoing access to these? One example could be criminal databases.
- Generally, so many unknowns – it seems very difficult to get information out of central Government to help councils plan for impacts/risks.
- Some delegates felt reassured by the speakers' presentations and felt the impacts of Brexit may not be as bad as anticipated.

Question 2. What is needed to help councils mitigate these risks?

SUMMARY OF TABLE DISCUSSION FEEDBACK:

What are councils/partners already doing well?

- Joint working and communications – Councils, Local Resilience Fora and partners are working well together in many places and avoiding using Brexit for political gain.

What more could Government do to help councils prepare? (by theme)

FUNDING:

- Government commitment to match EU project funding beyond 2020 and provide clarity on replacement funding post Brexit.

TRANSPORT NETWORK:

- Need help with robust enforcement to ensure compliance with road management plans – for example access to additional staff to direct/ manage traffic.
- Need DfT to engage with councils/ Local Resilience Fora to assist with contingency plans proposed for ports/ surrounding road networks eg. in Kent and Hampshire.
- Need Government to release national freight plan and national ports plan and to engage councils in these.
- Increase use of technology to reduce need to travel/minimise pressure on transport infrastructure eg. encouraging greater of tele-conferencing / Skype.

SKILLS, SERVICES AND GOODS:

- Greater clarity from Government on the Brexit deal and timing – this is important for both councils and private sector.
- Greater funding for councils to address the risks/ impacts on services. It is important to ensure particular groups' service needs are still met despite additional Brexit pressures - eg vulnerable residents.
- Funds for the EU settled status programme should be given to local authorities as they are best placed to know their own area/ communities and work with partners as appropriate.
- Need good evidence/ research on where the gaps and skills shortages are. There is potential that LEPs could play a role in helping provide this data.
- Tackle silos/ barriers between Government departments, because these hinder joined-up thinking and information dissemination.
- Need to ensure effective resourcing for trading standards so they are able to monitor/enforce relevant import/export rules.