

Report



Cabinet

Part 1

Date: 14 January 2022

Subject Post Brexit Update for Newport City Council

Purpose To present an update to Cabinet on the impact of leaving the European Union on Newport Council services and Newport's communities and economy.

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Head of People and Business Change

Ward All

Summary It has been over a year since the UK left the European Union and Single Market on 31st December 2020. Over the course of the year the UK has seen significant impacts across its economy resulting which has affected trade, employment and cost of living for households. In Newport and Wales these impacts are affecting low-income households with the cost of living due to increases in the cost of food, goods and energy prices. In response the Council's Cabinet has committed £100k to support food banks in Newport. The Welsh Government also announced a £51.7m Winter package that will give households on certain benefits a contribution to mitigate some of these costs.

Newport Council continues to face ongoing pressures on the cost of goods and services as increases in costs are being passed onto the consumer. The Council alongside other sectors are also facing pressures on staffing and recruiting staff into key roles especially in Social Services, housing & support and City Services.

Since the deadline passed for EU and EEA citizens to apply for EU Settled Status, the Home Office (31st October 2021) has received 6.2m applications and have concluded 5.9m applications. 52% of applications have been granted Settled status with 42% granted Pre-settled Status. The remaining 7% have either been refused, withdrawn or invalid claims. There is no data available for the current status of claims in Newport.

Proposal To consider and note the contents of the report and for Cabinet / Cabinet Members to receive updates from officers as part of their portfolio.

Action by Corporate Management Team

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Heads of Service and officer 'Task and Finish' group.

Signed

Background

It has been over a year since the UK left the European Union and the Single Market. The economic impacts that Wales and the UK have faced in 2020 have continued into 2021 and with the coronavirus Omicron variant being spread across the UK and worldwide, there could be further impacts. In December, the Office for National Statistics reported a further increase in inflation to 5.1% in the last 12 months to November 2020. This increase was largely attributed to wider global impacts such as fuel, energy, clothing, raw materials and second hand cars. In response the Bank of England increased interest rates to 0.25% and has also warned inflation could hit 6% in 2022. The UK / EU continues to negotiate the trade arrangements that were originally agreed with Northern Ireland being a key sticking point. Key economic facts to date:

- Wales employment rate (aged 16 to 64 to October 2021) is at 74% (UK 75.5%) with 2.7% (UK 4.2%) unemployed.
- The number of job vacancies continued to rise to over 1.2m between September and November 2021 across all sectors of the economy. Public sector bodies including Newport Council have vacancies being advertised for roles in key areas across the Council.
- With tighter restrictions being brought in to manage the Omicron outbreak, it is likely to have an impact on the economic growth of Wales and UK. Areas around hospitality and entertainment are likely to see the biggest impacts.
- Services and key projects such as Disabled Facility Grants, social housing projects delivered by the Council are citing issues with the purchasing of materials to complete construction and adaptation work.

As highlighted in the Council's Covid Cabinet Report, Households across Newport continue to feel the pressures and impacts on their incomes and costs. For low income households, this has a greater impact as they are most likely to struggle to meet increasing costs such as energy, food, clothing. Historically after the Christmas period, households will also see increasing demand to manage their debts.

Newport Council alongside its public sector / not for profit partners have a range of services and support packages in place to support those that may be struggling or need advice and guidance. Below are some of the services offered by Newport Council and partners found on Newport Council's [website](#). Some of these services include:

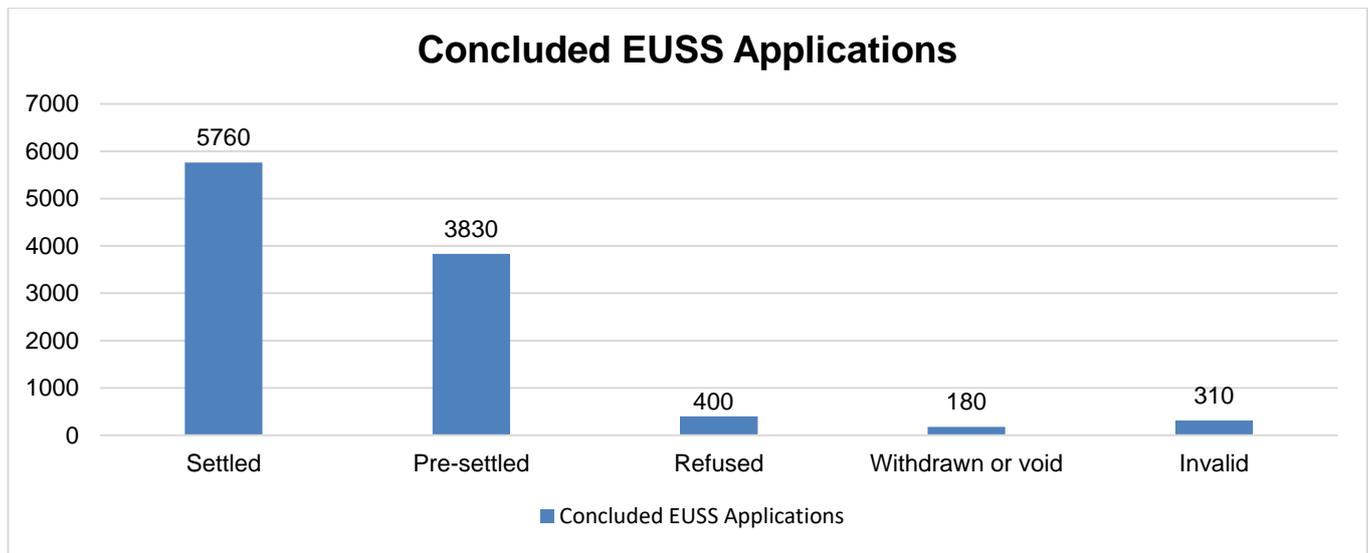
- [Winter Fuel Support Scheme](#) - to support households with winter fuel bills and applications will be open until midnight on 18th February 2022.
- [Covid-19: Self-isolation support scheme](#) – supporting people on low income and cannot work from home who have to self-isolate.
- [Council Tax and Benefits](#) – The team is available to offer support to households and businesses struggling to pay their Council Tax, Non Domestic Rates and also can assist in signposting to other organisations offering money / debt support

At December's Cabinet meeting, we also announced an additional £100k to be distributed across the City's foodbanks and groups to help support increasing pressures on some of the city's most vulnerable households.

EU Settled Status / Rights of Non UK Citizens

The council recognise that as well as impacting on opportunities to live, work and contribute to life in Newport, the UK's exit from the EU can also have an impact on our communities' sense of belonging and wellbeing. The Council alongside its partners will continue to welcome and value our EU citizens and support them to remain living in the city.

Statistics published by the Home Office for EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) applications concluded between 28th August 2018 to 30th September are outlined in the graph below for EU/EAA citizens in Newport.



In total over the same period, 11,390 applications have made by residents from Newport with 10,470 applications concluded and 920 applications awaiting a decision. This is the second highest number of applications in Wales with residents in Cardiff making the highest total of 24,530 applications. As identified in the graph, 5,760 (55%) of applications have been granted full settled status with 3,830 (26.6%) have been granted Pre-settled status.

For applicants that applied before the deadline but have not received an outcome, existing rights and entitlements are protected pending the outcome of their application, providing that they had a right to reside in the UK on December 31st 2020 and they have obtained a Certificate of Application. EU citizens who were resident in the UK after the 31st December but haven't made an application no longer have their rights protected, including the right to live, work, study and access benefits and services in the UK. If an EU citizen is identified by someone in Immigration Control who may be eligible for the EUSS, they will be given 28 days to make a late application. From mid-September Department of Work and Pensions also suspended benefits for all EEA citizens who do not apply for EUSS within 28 days of reminder letters.

The Home Office continue to receive late applications from any EU citizen who has 'reasonable grounds' for missing the deadline. Reasonable grounds include a serious medical condition, where a parent or guardian has failed to apply on behalf of a child, or where a person is isolated or digitally excluded and has not been able to access the application system.

It is anticipated that the number of families and individuals presenting as needing support to due restrictions of their rights and entitlements will continue to increase over the coming months. The council have established a multi-disciplinary hardship solutions group to respond to this demand, as well as other cases where people have no recourse to public funds due to precarious migration status (for example, asylum seekers who have received a negative decision on their claim).

This period, the council has launched its EU Community Grant Scheme which will support grassroots communities and third sector organisations to address some of the emerging issues affecting citizens in Newport. Funded projects will be focussed on:

- Promoting and encouraging late applications to the EU Settlement Scheme
- Reducing discrimination against or hate speech directed at EU communities
- Promotion of EU rights and responsibilities in Post-Brexit Wales
- Social inclusion and integration
- 'Giving a voice' to EU citizens
- Increasing awareness of EU citizens' rights in service provisions
- Creating a welcoming culture amongst our communities towards EU citizens
- Outlining EU citizens' contributions to Newport/Wales

- Addressing inequalities brought about EU exit

The council's Connected Communities team continue to support and signpost EU/EAA citizens and their family members to specialist support services that are able to make late applications to the EUSS, challenge negative decisions and provide advice around rights and entitlements.

These services, provided by voluntary sector organisations including CAB, TGP Cymru, Newport Mind, Settled and Newfields Law are funded by the Welsh Government and Home Office until the end of March 2022. There is no indication that services will continue to be funded after this, which presents a significant risk to available support for EU/EAA citizens and is likely to result in an increased demand on local authority resources.

The council's hardship solutions group continues to see an increase in referrals for individuals and families who are experiencing significant challenges due to their migration status and limited/lack of access to public funds. Without specialist support to regularise status and ensure support is in place, numbers of people facing hardship will increase, alongside risks of exploitation.

Financial Summary (Capital and Revenue)

As part of the Council's financial monitoring process, the Council's Finance team are identifying, monitoring and reporting where appropriate, any impacts on budgets due to Covid-19 and Brexit.

Risks

The Council's Brexit risk is recorded on the Council's Corporate Risk Register which is presented to Cabinet and Audit Committee every quarter. The Quarter two risk score is detailed below:

Risk Title / Description	Risk Impact score of Risk if it occurs* (1-5)	Risk Probability of risk occurring (1-5)	Risk Mitigation Action(s) What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect?	Risk Owner Officer(s) responsible for dealing with the risk?
Brexit	4	3	See Report	Head of People & Business Change

* Taking account of proposed mitigation measures

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

Corporate Plan
Strategic Recovery Aims

Options Available and considered

1. To consider and note the contents of the report and for Cabinet / Cabinet Members to receive updates from officers as part of their portfolio.
2. To request further information or reject the contents of the report

Preferred Option and Why

1. To consider and note the contents of the report and for Cabinet / Cabinet Members to receive updates from officers as part of their portfolio.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

As commented in previous reports, the lasting financial impact of Brexit is still uncertain, however, there are emerging issues, as referenced in this report, which have the potential to impact upon both capital and revenue budgets. Whilst no significant financial impact has been explicitly reported to date, increased costs and delays to schemes have been identified as part of the Capital Programme, which are partly due to increased costs of materials and challenges with the availability of labour. During the remainder of the year, budget / service managers, with finance team colleagues, will continue to monitor on a regular basis and any issues arising will be highlighted through the regular monitoring processes.

Should there be any impacts, on the in-year revenue budget in particular, it will be necessary to manage these from within existing resources and any overall Council underspend, as there are no specific reserves or contingencies for Brexit, aside from the following:

- £828k was allocated in the 2021/22 revenue budget for increased adult social care costs in relation to market stability, Covid recovery and Brexit;
- additional funds were set aside from the 20/21 underspend and added to the Council's 'general risk' reserve which could contribute towards this risk, amongst others. Details are included within the 2020/21 revenue budget outturn report.

Officers will continue to explore the possibilities of accessing the various grants that are being made available to public bodies in supporting the potential impact of the new arrangements. In addition, as part of the medium term financial planning process, consideration will be given to any Brexit-related financial pressures that may need to be funded within the Council's budget.

It should be noted that both the distribution of the Winter Fuel Payments and oversight of the Community Renewal Fund will place an additional requirement upon the Council in terms of the administration and governance needed but this is fully funded through Welsh Government grant so there will be no adverse budgetary impact. In addition to this, an announcement was made at December's Cabinet meeting to contribute £100k to local community food banks and this will be funded through the overall Council underspend currently being forecast in 21/22.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal issues arising from the Report, which provides an update for Cabinet regarding the Council's Brexit preparations. The specific risks associated with the withdrawal have now been mitigated by the belated trade deal, subject to ratification by the member states. However, despite the agreement regarding no tariffs and quotas on imported and exported goods, there is still remaining uncertainty regarding the impact on other areas, such as services and data security. Any legal implications for existing contracts for supplies, services and care provision, data security matters and any regulatory enforcement issues, particularly in relation to port health, will be addressed once the details of the trade agreement are clarified and implemented in national legislation. Despite the non-imposition of tariffs and quotas, additional port health checks will be required in terms of certifying compliance with new Regulations. Environmental Health officers have now been trained to undertake import and export food health certificate checks, and this will have significant resource implications once the port activity increases. Local business advice and support is also being provided in relation to Brexit compliance. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the implementation of the Internal Markets legislation will have implications in terms of public sector contracts and procurement and also equivalent state-aid, fair competition requirements.

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

The Council's Brexit Task and Finish officer group is continuing to monitor the people aspects of support required and regular updates will continue to be provided by finance, regulatory and other supporting services. The Council and its partners remain committed to support EU/EAA citizens as outlined in the Report.

Scrutiny Committees

The Council's Audit Committee receives regular risk register updates on the Council's Risk Register which includes the Brexit Risk.

Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment:

Not applicable as this is an information only report

Wellbeing for Future Generations

There is potential long term impacts of post EU and single market Trade Negotiations which could affect the future demand on our services to provide the necessary support, advice and guidance. There may also be opportunities that could arise, and the Council will need to make preparations to accordingly. In preparation we have been working collaboratively across the Council and with our partners to make sure that our services to prevent any scenario where services are disrupted and to provide resilience across the City and to our local partners.

We have also been involving our stakeholders and where necessary providing the necessary advice and guidance to those that need our support. We will continue to monitor and report where necessary any impacts which Brexit could have on the delivery of our services.

Consultation

Not Applicable

Background Papers

Welsh Government website '[Preparing Wales to leave the EU](#)'

Welsh Local Government Association '[Brexit Website](#)'

Newport City Council's '[Brexit Webpage](#)'

Dated: 5th January 2021

Appendix 1 – Summary of ongoing Council Activity

Theme	Progress of Activity completed by Newport Council to 1 st January 2021
Social Services and Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Welfare Officers and schools were reminding parents to apply to EUSS prior to the deadline. In September Education Welfare Officers will be supporting schools to identify any pupils that have not returned to school as a result of returning back to their home country. • All schools were reminded to inform EU families of the need to apply and offered further support from Newfield's Law who have been commissioned by Welsh Government to work within schools • The council has engaged Newport MIND to support all eligible children who are looked after to apply to the EUSS • Maindee Primary School collaborating with Compass to deliver a project supporting Roma children and their families to improve their understanding and knowledge of the Roma community, their history and traditions. This work is also supporting the identification of community leaders and influencers to support this work.
Policy and Partnership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council received additional funding for 2021/22. This funding is being used to support two officers to support Migration work and additional work related to Brexit. • Remaining funding will be used to support services with any Brexit / Covid work in 2021/22.
Local Community (Community Cohesion) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Settled Status / EU communities • Food Poverty • Homelessness (EU Citizens) • Community cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council continues to lead a city-wide food project network and has engaged with a range of foodbanks to assess current and expected demand over the winter period. Foodbanks report an increase in demand as a result of energy price rises and changes to Universal Credit as well as continued challenges associated with the pandemic. The council has committed £100,000 to support food projects meet additional demand over the winter months. • The Connected Communities Team worked with local Hungarian, Polish, Czech and Slovak communities in early December to celebrate St Nicholas Day. Community events across the city reached around 200 families who were signposted to appropriate support and received information on the EUSS. A community survey on perceptions of the city and council services was also distributed. • The work of our Community Cohesion officers continues to focus on post-Brexit rights and access to key services in the City for EU citizens • Complex migration cases continue to present to the council for support, and this is expected to continue • The council are aware of a growing number of EU and non-EU nationals who are finding themselves with no recourse to public funds as a result of EUSS outcomes, and the hidden demand for support which is at present masked by extended COVID duties which require LAs to house people with no recourse to public funds, as well as the current restrictions on private evictions. • We continue to provide free school meals to any family that is identified as having no recourse to public funds • Hardship Group has been established to consider complex migration cases and develop organisational policy in relation to NRPF • A weekly partnership drop in for EU communities continues to be co-ordinated and supported by the council • A bi-monthly EU Citizens forum continues to bring services providing support to EU citizens to maintain a cohesive response to emerging issues.

Theme	Progress of Activity completed by Newport Council to 1 st January 2021
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• EU Community Grant Scheme launched EU citizens' rights cards distributed to community venues across Newport