

**Wiltshire Council**

**Council**

**16 October 2018**

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**Notice of Motion No. 11 – Brexit Preparations**

**From Councillors Ian Thorn and Clare Cape**

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**To consider the following motion submitted in accordance with the constitution:**

It is now less than six months until Britain is due to exit the European Union. Brexit, in whatever form is finally agreed, will affect all Wiltshire residents.

Whether or not you believe Brexit is in the best interests of the UK, Wiltshire Council has an obligation to our residents to ensure that risk and impact assessments are undertaken in an open, inclusive and transparent way so that our residents are well informed, involved and reassured that the short and long term effect on our services and the local economy resulting from Brexit are mitigated and managed.

A Freedom of Information request revealed that as of 31st August:

*“Wiltshire Council have not held any meetings specifically about the UK exiting the EU (Brexit). A range of financial planning meetings have considered the impact on areas such as the health and social care workforce in Wiltshire.... We have not undertaken any Brexit impact assessment, however Wiltshire Council via the Joint Strategic Economic Committee continues to work closely with the Swindon and Wiltshire LEP to plan for the use of the remaining European funding.”*

As an example of why this is so important, well over 60% of the Council's turnover relates to social care provision for adults and children – our core business. Evidence is widely available that recruitment to, and retention in, the caring professions has significantly worsened since the referendum in June 2016. We have a responsibility to our residents and to our families and loved ones that the quality of these services is maintained and they are provided cost effectively.

There are also well documented effects on agriculture, business and tourism:

- Defra's figures suggest that 25% of farms could go out of business as EU subsidies cease
- The media have reported widely that businesses are already making arrangements to stockpile products
- Here in Wiltshire we've already observed the effects of reduced tourism in Salisbury; with Sterling continuing to weaken against the Euro businesses depending on tourism may well suffer next year; and into the future.

Council recommends that a cross party working group urgently examines the risks to Wiltshire Council's services related to Brexit, particularly in light of the potential financial hole for the remainder of 2018/19.

Council, as is being agreed elsewhere, for example in North Devon, a full, transparent and frank discussion at a public conference / symposium for experts and leaders – from business, agriculture, tourism, education, health and social care and elected representatives – is needed to tackle this issue, which is probably the most significant of our generation.

Council will need to consider how it can assist businesses before and during the Brexit transition period (as has been the case during and following the events in and around Salisbury earlier this year).

The findings and conclusions of this working group and the symposium would then be presented to full Council and other authorities.

Citizens have an expectation – and a right – to the best possible understanding of the likely effects of Brexit on the Council's services and to the local economy. We need the people of Wiltshire to contribute to; and to evaluate the full range of mitigations needed.

**Therefore, this council agrees an urgent, comprehensive and cross-party Brexit risk and impact assessment for the full range of the Council's own services and its financial position; and also for the business economy of Wiltshire as a whole. This should include a symposium dedicated to the challenges of Brexit, to be held before the end of December this year, to ensure wide involvement of local experts and interested stakeholders.**