

Preparations for leaving the European Union

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- 4.25 The lack of clarity so far on the shape of an exit deal and a clear way forward, as well as the absence of additional funding, inevitably means that councils have been limited in terms of the practical preparations they can make.
- 4.26 Exiting the European Union (EU) is a significant risk to local government service delivery, in particular Community Planning, the economy and tourism. Preparations for EU withdrawal across councils vary. Approaches commonly include monitoring and inclusion in risk registers as well as briefings and reports to councillors. Some councils also reflect the risk in corporate and financial plans. Several councils have established working groups or committees' to focus on this issue.
- 4.27 However, no council is fully ready, in operational terms, for a no deal exit. The outworkings will have most impact on those councils which have a border with the Republic of Ireland. There are also concerns that, whatever the outcome, the capacity of councils to implement any changes necessary may be constrained given the short time available. If the UK Government and EU fail to agree arrangements for the UK's exit from the EU, there will be no transition period and councils will need to respond immediately.

Conclusion

- 4.28 Looking ahead, councils face a wide range of challenges and opportunities. Delivering positive outcomes will require strong leadership, effective governance structures and continued engagement both internally and externally. This can be further enhanced through the development of effective partnership arrangements with other public bodies and local communities. The C&AG has recently published a good practice guide on "Making Partnerships Work"²⁹, which provides practical advice and guidance to encourage open and constructive collaborative working between public sector organisations and with local communities.

29 https://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/sites/niao/files/209675%20NIAO%20Effective%20Partnership%20for%20Outcomes_FINAL%20Combined_%28LwRes%29__3.pdf