

EU Exit Working Group – Thursday, 25 October 2018**Transcript of Item 4 – Panel 2 – Question and Answer Session with John Barradell OBE, Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum, and John Hetherington, Head of Resilience, London Fire Brigade**

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Now we welcome John Barradell [OBE, Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum (LRF)], who is going to be supported by John Hetherington, Head of Resilience at the London Fire Brigade (LFB).

Welcome, John. You are Deputy Chair of the LRF, but you are also - as I mentioned earlier, this is your proper title to your day job - Town Clerk and Chief Executive of the City of London Corporation. Thank you very much for that. Do you want to make an opening statement first before we go into our questions?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): If I could just say a few introductory remarks, Chair, first of all, you are right that I am here as Deputy Chair of the LRF and representing that group. I will give a bit more detail of the context of the Resilience Forum so that there is clarity around what its purpose and responsibilities are, along with the work programme that we are currently undertaking that may be of help to you.

In essence, what we are doing here is giving a view or offering a view on the preparedness of the various agencies within the resilience partnership for the no-deal and other alternative Brexits. You will be aware that the circumstances continue to change and what we are likely to face and so of course this is an evermoving feast and evermoving picture.

For clarity, in terms of the Resilience Forum itself, there are around 104 organisations that are represented on it. They range from the emergency services that you will know about, all of London's local authorities both at the London level and at the local level, all of the statutory health providers, the Environment Agency, and the Greater London Authority (GLA) itself. The role there is to assess risks, to make sure that appropriate plans are put in place and are available, to provide information and ensure that is available to the public, to share information between the individual organisations, and to make sure that there is advice and guidance given to businesses and other organisations within London.

There are an additional 63 organisations that also participate. You can see that the scale of this is rather large. That includes faith groups around London. The idea here is sharing information and co-operating between those agencies for the benefit of London's resilience itself. In addition to that, of course, we have the business sector and various representative groups for London's employers, along with the faith and other sectors within London itself.

The partnership meets on a regular basis. It is chaired by the Deputy Mayor [for Fire and Resilience, [Dr Fiona Twycross AM] and has a number of work strands and guidance and notes with it. The idea here is very much one of co-ordination, guidance and sharing best practice and information with those statutory responders.

Part of what we have been doing recently, at the request of the Mayor and indeed the Government, is pulling together those partner agencies to work through the implications of Brexit in its various guises and what those

implications would be to London and the individual institutions themselves. It is ongoing work. It is fair to say that that work is quite detailed. It is following Government guidance that no doubt we will get into a little bit later on and providing that information back both to the Government and to the Mayor at his request.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Thank you very much for that. In terms of the work on resilience planning, it really almost began with both the request from the Government in early August and the mayoral request that highlighted a number of areas he was concerned about and thought you should be looking at. You have had one summit so far and a lot of side meetings. I understand that.

In terms of information and your report that you published this morning, I understand why there was a delay. The Government was quite clear that it needed to see what you were saying and how you were saying it - do you have enough information? In your report that you are presenting, you are clearly saying you do not have enough information to do adequate preparations, particularly in light of no-deal. Is that correct? I do not want to put words in your mouth. Because we have quickly gone through your document, I can read out what we think is the case, but you are the scribes of it. Where do you actually sit on that issue? It is important work and I do not want to raise areas, but it is a bit worrying at this stage of what you have been asked to do that you do not appear to be giving any scenarios or any very heavy detail to help you in your preparations.

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): I will summarise it in the following way. In this profession, you can, first of all, never have sufficient information to make a 100% guaranteed result, guidance or anything else. There is a reality that any emergency planner or any resilient person would always say, "I need more information", because that is the nature of us frankly wishing to respond to that.

It is undoubtedly the case that there is not a lot of information around from the Government because the details of any negotiations taking place are at best opaque and at best are kept within the confines of the negotiation team. Personally, I find that very understandable. The risk it presents to us is having to scenario plan on various things, whether it be the ability of EU nationals to continue to work under what premise or whether we have sufficient resource in terms of environmental health, port staff and so on post-Brexit and will continue to be able to attract staff to work here, through to the fundamental pieces around the replacement of regulation and legislation that affect the way London operates. That is at the heart of what the two sentences in the report are trying to get at: there is not information, it is not sufficient, and, therefore, any guidance or operational notes that are given have to be caveated that this is based upon the best information we have at the moment as it is being released.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Does the work that you have been requested by the Mayor and central Government complicate issues or complement issues in terms of going forward and scenario planning?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): They do not contradict each other. There are different aspects. The Government is looking across the country at each of the resilience forums, of which London is one, to look at how we respond and what work would need to take place. Within London, there are particular contexts, structures and requirements that you heard from the Mayor earlier on this morning that are in addition to those coming from central Government. They are not contradictory, Chair. They are at a bigger scale in London than perhaps you would see in Cumbria or somewhere like that.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): In terms of your work plan that you have identified in the various sectors, I suppose I ought to read this into the record. On the impact of a no-deal Brexit on resilience in the health sector, you have come to a view that it is a significant negative impact on resilience within the health sector. When you come to the impact on local authorities, it is a significant negative impact on resilience. For emergency

services, a negative impact on resilience. For business, a slight negative to negative impact on resilience. In transport and utilities, a significant negative impact on resilience. For the environment, voluntary and faith, a slight negative to negative impact on resilience.

On all those assessments, behind those sectors, there will be some detailed work that breaks down into giving that view of how you have reached that, I would be correct in saying? That work is going on through those syndicate groups as we speak, really, and is ongoing work? Is that how it works in resilience?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): It is a judgement at a moment in time based upon the people who contribute to it. It is fair to say that some of these groups are national by definition. Some of them - water utilities and energy, for example - would take a national view of resilience rather than a local one. Others like faith groups are far more community-based and therefore will be feeding back what they are seeing and what they are responding to on a London or local neighbourhood level.

I would also caution that these things do develop over time and the impact of the job we are in is identifying between the partners and encouraging the partners - by which I mean agencies or groups of agencies - to understand and identify what the risks and impacts are likely to be and then encouraging them to mitigate those where they are negative. For example, you would expect faith groups to build capability and capacity within their own communities to help people respond, and similarly with utilities and other firms.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): It is quite clear that no-deal presents the greatest challenge to resilience planning rather than a deal because things may well be clarified. There would be difficulties in the transitional period, but there will be something if a deal is done that would give guidance. They are all challenging but there are degrees of challenge.

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): Honestly, Chair, I could not give you an answer to that because I have no idea what a potential deal or no-deal actually would mean in terms of the individual context and the individual businesses.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): In resilience planning, you work to the most adverse or the most --

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): You identify the worst and the least worst, and then individual organisations are asked to make individual judgements on that based on the risk of likelihood and impact.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): All right. I just wanted to clarify. Is there further planning that you are undertaking in the coming months or at this moment in time?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): There is a work plan through to January 2019 that takes the work from the workshops on and continues to develop that, both in terms of information coming from the Government as that becomes clearer and also within the individual business areas, whether they be utilities, private or public sector, and as they continue to develop their plans.

The second piece is around the potential emergency capability and the response to that. I know that again you have discussed the food supply and border controls, the things that are frankly making the media at the moment, and how those develop, and the plans therefore are developed. That work plan goes through to January 2019 currently.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Can we pick one of the sectors and if you can give us some pen pictures of some of the challenges they are facing? Let us go to local government. I get the issue about EU nationals who may well be employees and the issues there. What other things would local government be looking at? I get the community impact of preparing for, unfortunately, as we saw in the referendum, hate crime, rising tension in community areas. What is the bit in the middle, if there is such a thing as a middle because it is not the middle, that they have to grapple with in local authorities in terms of what we think they are preparing for?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): It falls into three or four key areas. One is around workforce and the dependency that London has certainly in terms of EU nationals working in the public sector and particular parts of the public sector as well and whether those individuals, regardless of whether they are given assurance about continued work status in the UK, choose to stay. I know from a City perspective that we have lost a couple of members of staff already who have decided to go back to their countries of origin, if I put it that way, as a result of the decision that was taken. That is clearly one impact.

The second one is that in some particular professional areas there has been a virtual ceasing of people applying for public sector jobs. Here I am thinking of environmental health, for example, and people with professional qualifications choosing to come to work in the UK given uncertainty. That will clearly require management within the local authorities in terms of workforce planning and that work is carrying on.

The one you alluded to is around community cohesion and, clearly, some communities within London will be more adversely affected than others. Work is going on to try to make sure that the additional work in terms of bringing communities together takes place. That will vary borough by borough. Some boroughs have chosen to appoint individual officers who are responsible for Brexit planning. Most have held some form of scrutiny or leadership challenge in that area anyway.

The second one is around structural funding that is received from Europe and that will have a medium to longer-term impact on some of the work that authorities can do, and there is also a requirement for some of the regulation that we use and that local authorities are required to implement having to be reinstated and brought back through the UK legislation system. That has an impact.

It is best to say that the local authority context is probably best covered with the local authorities and London Councils in truth to look at the individual and collective impacts across all of it that you would see from a no-deal Brexit.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): I suppose there is a secondary bit where they are in partnership with others and so there may well be an impact between NHS work and local authorities or an impact on local authority areas that they need to be aware of.

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): Almost certainly, and the potential again of an increase in requirements for some social care and particular support for individuals may be increasing. Some I know are looking at contingency planning for that aspect as well.

Caroline Russell AM: In terms of the biggest risks and concerns that have been highlighted in the work of local governments preparing for this unknown situation, whether it is no deal or a bad deal or whatever the deal might be, what are the risks that you think local authorities across London should be preparing for?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): The ones that they themselves actually see. It is not for me or any agency to tell them, but what they are doing --

Caroline Russell AM: Of course, but what do you think the risks are that they might be advised to be looking out for?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): The ones that I know that they are looking at, based on the workshops and so on that we have been doing and pooling information are around workforce and service demand, whether it is adult social care or whether it is education, for example. Foreign language teaching is one of the peculiarities, for example, that had not hit the radar until someone thought a number of foreign language teachers in the system are EU nationals and they may choose to stay or to go. There will be service-specific staffing issues. There certainly will be some around funding and the European Social Fund and other funds coming from Brussels that are used within local government. There will certainly be skill shortages and ancillary in the supply chain; building services, for example, and some of the skill areas that we rely upon for building and construction, highways maintenance and some of the other ancillary services. Predominantly, though, as you can tell, it is workforce-related. In the longer-term, potentially, a reduction in business rates, for example, a potential change in terms of income areas that local authorities use, and increased costs in planning and responding to planning.

Caroline Russell AM: As our meeting has progressed this morning, I am thinking, for instance, about food security and the Mayor outlined the importance of thinking about food security particularly in relation to low-income Londoners. I am a councillor in Islington as well as being an Assembly Member and I know there are a lot of people living in Islington who live on very precarious incomes and may be working in the gig economy. They are already experiencing food poverty and fuel poverty.

Are local authorities preparing for the impact of the possibility of food prices going up or of food shortages in terms of their local authority responsibilities and work?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): Certainly I have heard of some who are. The reason I am hesitating with this, Chair, is that it is not the remit of the LRF, which I am here representing, to mandate or dictate to agencies of the number they should be considering. It is simply to co-ordinate that and to challenge and to make sure that they are sharing information for the mitigation of those risks.

To try to answer the question, though, just with that caveat, it is fair to say that a number of authorities have appointed specific officers and some have done scrutiny specifically around this area to look at the likely impact of Brexit on their communities, whether it be in terms of community tension, whether it be in particular terms of impact on food - some communities have specific food requirements, for example - and what those impacts would be. I am aware of some that are doing that.

Caroline Russell AM: Do you think that the information that is out in the public domain means that that is a rational and sensible decision on the part of those local authorities?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): My experience is that my colleagues will make decisions based upon the best information that they have.

Caroline Russell AM: Thank you. My other question is: what advice have you given to the Mayor in terms of preparing for a no-deal scenario?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): We have had the summit that you have heard about. That has been documented. The public document has been released this morning, which gives

an indication of some of the areas of concern and some of the areas of planning that are needed. Beyond that, the advice is through the Deputy Mayor [for Fire and Resilience, Dr Fiona Twycross AM] who chairs the LRF itself to the Mayor and to the Mayor's office. It is done through that route.

Caroline Russell AM: In this document that has come out today - and we have all just seen it this morning - there are specific risks, particularly around the lack of information and the lack of information sharing that you mentioned at the very beginning. Do you think that there is anything the Mayor could be doing to try to overcome those particular problems about information? Is there anything that he could be doing on behalf of Londoners that would help to unblock that information flow?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): Raising the concern that the more information that is given as early as possible without necessarily negatively impacting our ability to negotiate the best deal for the country, bluntly, is helpful. Highlighting to various sectors that the need for co-operation, even in terms of non-disclosure. One of the concerns with us is that there is a fair dependency on private sector provision of public sector goods and services within London. There are commercial constraints on some of these organisations sharing a lot of commercially sensitive data and how that would be done. Similarly with some public sector organisations, they are not only based in London but are based nationally and, therefore, there will be different constraints placed upon them and different areas of concern that they are going to have with their relationships with the Government. Anything that the Mayor can do and is doing to try to encourage people to share information in a safe environment, which is what the Forum does, to allow people to make the best planning decisions they can is to be welcomed.

Caroline Russell AM: In particular, presumably, that means these private sector organisations that are delivering public services, in a sense, if we are looking at really serious impacts on communities, then the public interest needs to come to the fore more, are you saying, in terms of those private sector organisations?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): I do and I would put a little piece of context around this. It is very easy - because everyone does this; I certainly have - to think of Brexit as a 'peculiarity' in resilience terms. This is a series of events that we respond to by encouraging joint working, by encouraging information sharing, by working through consequences; if you like, business continuity. How do we make sure that the work of local government - adult social care, children's services - continues regardless? Working through the consequences of Brexit and what is likely to happen as a result of it and how we would mitigate the service impact or the risks involved is almost daily work for John [Hetherington] and colleagues. This is a different set of circumstances. We would apply the same structures and constructs that we do for other things and simply make sure that where we can we mitigate, where we cannot we understand, and we raise attention to the right agencies in the Government and elsewhere to say we need support in this area to be able to mitigate the risk to the public and, where we cannot, highlight and flag it.

Caroline Russell AM: Do you think that the highlighting and flagging is happening enough, given that people are concerned about what they can and cannot say?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): From my experience, the Government is aware of the concern that there is a dire need and a desperate need and a constant need for more information. I am not sure they are able to give it because I am not sure they have the knowledge to be able to impart it, but we will continue and have continued simply to keep pressing. We need to understand as soon as they know for planning purposes to mitigate the risks that are in the system.

Caroline Russell AM: We have an actual known deadline here of 29 March next year [2019] and that is five months away. Is there a point at which you have to stop being open to all of these possibilities and being good civil servants and say, "We have a crisis"? You must have a deadline in your heads by which point you need to have more information in order not to have a cliff-edge catastrophe on 29 March [2019]. What is your deadline that you are working to?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): Sadly, I do not have one --

Caroline Russell AM: Do you think you should?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): -- and I do not have a catastrophe. The reason I do not do that is because in the planning assumptions and the understandings of the different agencies involved - and in the end it is the responsibility of all of those 108 agencies to make sure their own plans exist; the forum's job is the co-ordination and the understanding of the system risk in that - the situation will develop anyway to the point at which the cliff-edge for us would not be there, in my view, because there will be a series of decisions being taken and a series of requests or requirements for information that will be surfaced as we move towards March [2019] that will hopefully start to mitigate some of those risks. We will understand, for example, very clearly the status and the ability of EU nationals to work in the UK. We will understand because local authorities will be testing with staff, "Are you going to be staying with us, please, for the next year or so as a social worker?" The idea of a cliff-edge in some of this is just not applicable in the context of service provision. In the context of some of the service sectors - food, for example, and so on - their knowledge and their understanding will become far clearer as they understand the likelihood or otherwise of a deal. Again, I do not see that as being cliff-edge in that sense as much as starting to understand the mitigation that needs to take place, the likelihood of fresh food coming in and so on. Sorry, I have to be quite specific. Otherwise, the language becomes very weaponised, if I can put it that way.

Caroline Russell AM: I know you are being very specific, of course, but I am trying to understand for Londoners. For instance, you have talked about food and you say that the information will become clearer. Do you have a sense of when? For the people who are charged with supplying food, they have to have their plans in place. We have heard that stockpiling food is not realistic and so there has to be some other kind of plan in place. Are they working to deadlines by when they need to know more so that they can put different plans into place?

John Hetherington (Head of London Resilience, London Fire Brigade): Yes. Following recent conversations with central Government and the Department for Exiting the European Union (DExEU), which is leading all of the planning, it would be wrong to suggest from the report that it is a bad relationship with the Government. Actually, it is an extremely good relationship with the Government; there is just a frustration on all sides about the lack of information or the lack of ability to determine the reasonable worst-case scenario that we are working to.

Caroline Russell AM: Sorry, just to be clear, it is difficult for you to determine what the worst-case scenario might be?

John Hetherington (Head of London Resilience, London Fire Brigade): Yes. We cannot foresee the future. There are so many options and variables in this in terms of there being a deal or not being a deal.

Caroline Russell AM: It is difficult to determine what the worst-case scenario might be, and so how can London be resilient and ready for a worst-case scenario if you just do not have the information to determine what it might be that you need to plan for?

John Hetherington (Head of London Resilience, London Fire Brigade): That is everything that we are working through at the moment, working closely with the Government. As you can see in the work plan, we have invested in putting more detail into a risk assessment, working closely with each of the agencies to try to determine that, but the picture changes almost on a day-by-day basis as to what the outcome will look like. We have not heard what the deal will look like. We do not know the implications. We have some broad areas, as John [Barradell OBE] has spoken to, of areas that we are concerned about and we are putting effort into working through.

The point I was going to make in terms of the Government is that it is now looking in the raft of 105 technical notices at where the deadlines are and communicating through either Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) or known small businesses where there is a deadline for them to meet. They have to work back on four months' implementation of any of those workstreams and communicate directly to the businesses as best as they can. Some of this work is ongoing where there is a definite three-month limit or four-month limit in terms of putting systems in place and --

Caroline Russell AM: Those limits are going to be coming? We have five months. In three months and four months, we are beginning to be approaching some limits where information from the Government is critical. Are you confident that you will get that information?

John Hetherington (Head of London Resilience, London Fire Brigade): Yes. It was in the latest update from DExEU that they are working through all of those deadlines and working to communicate and to provide better public communications in the work that they are doing.

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): If I can just add, the work programme looks forward to January next year [2019] because of the timing of the information that is being expected to be released and the point at which we will be able to make some informed decisions and informed recommendations back through the Mayor and other agencies at that time. That is why there is the January [2019] deadline.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Sorry to interrupt. Is that when I should bring you back?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): You should certainly bring someone, but hopefully the Chair of the Resilience Forum [Dr Fiona Twycross AM], potentially, will be here. Yes, you should, Chair. January [2019] would be a reasonable time to come back.

Caroline Russell AM: January is a whole month, sorry. The beginning or the end?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): Whenever the Committee feels it appropriate.

Caroline Russell AM: Thank you.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I have to say to both Johns that you are incredibly calm - it is probably why you work in this field of resilience - considering everything we have been hearing this morning. Surely the threat of no deal is the worst-case scenario you will be working to.

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): The threat of not having sufficient information come March [2019] is the biggest threat because you can manage most things given the right amount of information and sufficient time to get people and colleagues together. I have great faith in individuals and institutions to be adaptable and to work things through. The risk is not knowing and not being told.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: If you know that it is no deal and therefore this is the consequence --

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): It is Rumsfeldian, if I can put it that way. A known known is the ideal. The unknown known is where we probably are at the moment.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: One of the things we touched on earlier with the Mayor is the issue of medicines and we have not looked at that. Are you confident around that field? That is an area that certainly we are concerned about. I also raised with the Mayor a very specific issue around some treatments for cancer, which come with medical radioisotopes - that is a technical name - that cannot be stockpiled. Have you been looking at scenarios around that and how you can make sure that those medicines are available?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): Those areas are, frankly, specifically looked at by the NHS and so the detail of mitigation and plans for those and for the medical side you would need to take evidence from the NHS about. I could not answer that.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Do they not feed into your work for London?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): The NHS would and it is part of its individual contingency planning. Where it cuts across to others would be in things, for example, like adult social care within local authorities and the potential increased amount on care services from that. That is an area that is being looked at between the two agencies.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: That is the area that you are particularly looking at?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): It is particularly that one.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I wanted to pick up on what concerns the partner bodies you work with have fed to you about the risks to law and order.

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): I will let John [Hetherington] pick up from this, but there is clearly concern in some local authority areas around community tension between local community groups as a result of this. I am particularly concerned to make sure that activity does take place in some community areas, for example, to encourage people to work together and to encourage communities to work across. That is an area where there is active work taking place.

In terms of the public order and potential disorder issues, that would be one more for the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) to deal with as an individual agency under the Mayor, rather than the resiliency partnership, and it has not been an area that was raised specifically at the meetings we have had.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Are they not part of your partnership?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): They are, but the law and order piece, I would argue, in terms of the response to that, outside of the community engagement work that local authorities and other partners would do, would be one for the MPS rather than for us.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: If there are huge tensions across the streets of London and if there are riots on the streets of London, that is not only a law and order issue. It is a much wider piece there that would involve local authorities and others.

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): That is why I said that the local authorities are doing work in specific community groups, looking at reducing community tensions between and inside those groups.

John Hetherington (Head of London Resilience, London Fire Brigade): It would also be wise to bring in that, as John [Barradell OBE] said earlier, each organisation has its own duty to put in place business continuity measures for their sector and organisation. We do not want to replicate all of those at a London level. We concentrate on the capability of the partnership to come together to respond to an acute shock at a time and thereby work together to resolve an issue. We are confident we have those plans in place. We have seen over the last few years that the partnership does come together swiftly and that we have the right arrangements. We always have those arrangements whether there is an incident now or whether we need it at the time over the period that we exit the EU.

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): Can I just build on that a little bit? One of the things goes back to the point I made earlier. A lot of this work is about ensuring that the existing plans that we have, for example, around civil unrest are tested against what is a likely Brexit scenario or not. The plans would exist regardless of whether it is Brexit or some other incident, and we have seen that in the recent past in London and the response of the partnership to that. The testing here is about the existing plans and whether they would be fit for purpose in the likely scenarios that we may see with a no-deal Brexit, as opposed to writing a new plan from scratch. That would not be the way we would do it.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: In terms of the Fire Brigade, we have not really focused on that at all this morning, but what are its particular concerns around Brexit and what is it planning for?

John Hetherington (Head of London Resilience, London Fire Brigade): Again, I am not here to speak on behalf of the Fire Brigade. You would have to speak to them individually. Across the partnership, we can surmise that the supply chain issues, the workforce issues and the general uncertainty highlighted in the report are common to all, pretty much, but I would not go into any of the specifics for the Fire Brigade.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): In terms of some of these planning and being on the list, of course, you are just one group co-ordinating it and there are sub-groups and a lot of people on the ground doing the different bits of work. Somewhere in terms of business resilience and no-deal, lots of preparations are taken across the EU. We heard from the Mayor earlier on about his business hub advice, which has been well received, with information that people can rely on and use.

If a scenario with no-deal is there, we know that some of the big businesses in the City will be fine and can look after themselves and have good sector issues and advice to follow. Those small and medium enterprise

(SME) companies are involved in their sectors, but in terms of being told how to manage their supply in the event of no-deal and advice around some of those issues, do we look to the Government to do that or do we initiate that here in London? Is somewhere in your co-ordination someone picking that up?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): There is a business group within the Resilience Forum representing large to SMEs with the Federation of Small Businesses and people like that. The work that the GLA has been doing and the Mayor has been doing around advice to SMEs is very helpful in that regard, with specific local advice for Londoners and London's small businesses.

Just to pick up one point, there are 12,000 SMEs in the City of London and so everywhere is a small business in that sense. The larger ones, yes, are clearly more capable in the sense of having capacity to do this. The co-ordination and strength and correct advice to businesses is quite key.

Again, it goes back to the terms, frankly, of workforce, of capability, of ability to continue, of regulation being transferable and bought across, as well as of supply chain. That would be the other area that is of particular concern.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Your local authority is very good at supporting the business sector in providing some of that information and supporting issues. Is that an aspect that other local authorities are picking up on when it might not have been on their main agenda? If they do not have enough businesses as a critical mass to have the capacity to deal with that and where, is that being shared? Do you see that as part of business resilience being shared about what good practice might well be in this scenario?

John Barradell OBE (Deputy Chair, London Resilience Forum): It is fair to say that it is a developing area because the local sub-regions - Central London Forward and some of the others, for example - are sharing experience across. Where the local authorities themselves have done a risk assessment and got the Brexit officer, if you will, or the Brexit scrutiny taking place, that exactly does fit on that agenda. As I say, the Mayor's piece of work is very helpful in acting as a clearing house, as it were, for small businesses to be able to get the information.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Just to go back to an earlier question that Caroline said, one of your key issues in your report is that you are about to write to central Government to request further specific information and planning assumptions. Is that a rather substantial letter with a long list or is it quite constrained? Are you pinpointing where it is or are we talking about something more substantial? Are we doing it just from your point of co-ordination or is it in terms of the sectors? I presume some of the sector groups might well be writing their letters. Are they sharing those with you? In this world of information, no one really wants to show their hand for all sorts of reasons. Where are we?

John Hetherington (Head of London Resilience, London Fire Brigade): As the report sets out, we have a thirst for further information from the Government and so part of the letter is to put that on an official record. All of the points raised in here we will summarise into the letter so that we seek clarity. On Tuesday [23 October 2018] we met with the Brexit Programme Working Group and we have put out to all of the agencies that are represented there to feed in further specific questions that they want raised so that we can have a documented record going forward to central Government requesting that information. Yes, we are going out to all of the partners and we will summarise all of our concerns from the report into a constructive letter that goes from the LRF so that it is in an official form to central Government to request more information.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): I have not spoken to my colleagues, but I ought to give you notice that in January [2019] this will be one of the areas that we are going to be homing in on. We will want to see as far as possible. I am not into shroud waving and I do not want to create a fear of coming, but it is important that we understand what you professionally are asking and requesting to do your work and how far you have received that that enables you to do that job. At some stage, I do not particularly want it redacted and I do not particularly want to stray into the confidentiality, but at the moment I do not feel I need this urgently. You are the best people to do that and pursue that, but in January [2019] I will want to know how far you have got and the response you have had back. I think my colleagues would share that. We would want to come back and look at that very closely. I thought it would be fair to raise that.

Look, can I thank you? As in the past, we cannot thank you and your teams in different bits enough for this hidden but important piece of work for Londoners, to be honest, in terms of resilience planning in its many forms. Can you pass that back through your forums around that?

There may well be some issues that we might wish to follow up once we have reflected further about what you have said and we have cross-checked that in terms of the Mayor. If there are issues in terms that you feel able or that you think is important for us to follow, we would like you to talk to our officers in the Secretariat. At this stage, if it is confidential it remains confidential, but of course we think it is important that people are sharing this information because it is important in terms of the nature of some of your resilience work.

We are conscious and, to reinforce what the Mayor says, we do not want people to start having a fear of this. It is a question of planning in an orderly way and dealing with problems as they arise or before they arise. Thank you for that. We will come back to you.