

Written Question to the Leader of Dacorum Borough Council: protection of EU citizens' rights in Dacorum

In view of recent advice to the government, as outlined in House of Commons Library briefing paper No: 8772 (Annex 1 below) and the deadline for EU citizens to apply for settled status being just 18 months away (Annex 2 below), does the Leader agree that it is incumbent on all levels of government to take responsibility for assisting EU citizens who have built their lives in the UK?

Does the leader agree that DBC should be doing all we can to ensure those EU citizens resident in Dacorum can optimise their opportunities of successfully apply for settled status rights.

In particular:

1. Will the Leader ensure that Dacorum Borough Council will take all reasonable and necessary steps to assist EU citizens resident here, particularly the vulnerable, with applications for settled status?
2. In particular, will he pledge to introduce the following measures:
 1. Immediately provide easily accessible information and support to EU citizens on the DBC website. This would include a letter from the Leader to EU citizens outlining in plain language that EU citizens are welcome in Dacorum and the support that they can access in applying for settled status (such as the example set by the leader of Vale of White Horse District Council Annex 3) and links to government information.
 2. Take immediate steps to publicise across Dacorum the risks that EU citizens face if they do not apply for settled status and the steps they should urgently take to do so.
 3. Set up an urgent review of services to consider how DBC can further offer support to EU citizens in Dacorum in terms of:
 1. Helping with process
 2. Providing additional resources necessary, such as computer terminals in libraries for those who do not have the app
 3. Fast tracking requests for evidence of residence in Dacorum to support Settled Status applications and training staff to proactively assist such applicants
 4. Training staff to generally support and advise residents making such applications
 5. Commit to providing the funding necessary to reach out to vulnerable groups, such as
 1. providing grants to outreach groups and
 2. ensuring all DBC staff who work with the elderly, the homeless and residents with other vulnerabilities are trained in proactively offering appropriate support and identifying and supporting those at risk of failing to apply for settled status

ANNEX 1

Extract 1 from Briefing Paper No:8772 House of Commons Library Commons Library Briefing, 3 January 2020

“The Home Office is undertaking a range of outreach and communications activities targeted towards EUSS applicants. But it has been estimated that about 30% of EU citizens may struggle with the EUSS application process, whether due to a lack of awareness of the scheme or difficulties making an application or proving their eligibility. They are therefore particularly vulnerable to losing their status and entitlements in the UK. Groups identified include the elderly, people with limited English, children and young people in the care system, homeless people, people who arrive soon before the deadline and people in casual employment.⁸

Another major concern the 3 million have is that the government has rejected calls to issue physical proof of status documents to people who successfully apply to the EUSS. Instead, they receive a digital status”

ANNEX 2

Extract 2 from Briefing Paper No:8772 House of Commons Library Commons Library Briefing, 3 January 2020

2.3 Deadline for applying to the EUSS

Clause 7 allows Ministers to make regulations specifying a deadline for applications to the EUSS. The WA states that the deadline cannot be less than six months after the end of the transition period (therefore, 30 June 2021, unless extended). The government has been criticised for not setting out in any detail its intended approach towards people who miss that deadline

ANNEX 3

Sample letter from Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council



135 Eastern Avenue
Milton Park
Milton
Oxfordshire
OX14 4SB

An open letter from Cllr Emily Smith to residents and businesses in the Vale of White Horse

Dear Resident

The deadline for the UK to leave the EU has changed, but the country continues to prepare for this event. I am writing to you all on behalf of the Vale of White Horse District Council about issues related to Brexit - in particular we want to make sure affected EU nationals from countries outside the UK who live in our district know what they need to do to protect their rights to remain in the country.

The new deadline to leave the EU is 31 January 2020 at the latest, but it's still not clear exactly when we will leave or how we will leave, especially now there will be a general election in December. We share many of our residents' frustrations about this uncertainty, particularly over the future immigration status of affected EU nationals.

If you live in the UK but are a citizen of another EU country, it's very important you know what you need to do to be able to stay here after we leave the EU. You might need to apply to the government for "settled" or "pre-settled status" in the UK – if you do not do this as soon as possible, you might not be able to stay in the UK in the long term. We have put lots of information on our website to help, including links to the right pages on the government's website. You can find this at www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/brexit.

If you don't have access to a smartphone or tablet to carry out your identification verification, you can do this at the libraries in Abingdon, Botley, Wantage and Didcot.

Like all of our residents, you make an important contribution to our district and our communities – you are most welcome in the Vale of White Horse, and I want to let you know you have the Council's continued support.

I also want to reassure all our residents that Council officers are working hard on Brexit preparations to make sure our services are not affected.

The Council also remains committed to supporting our local economy and we are here to advise or guide any local businesses that could be affected by Brexit. There's lots of information, guidance and support on our dedicated South and Vale Business Support website at www.svbs.co.uk.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily Smith".

Cllr Emily Smith

Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council