

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Strategic Lead – People & Technology

Audit Committee: 18 November 2020

Subject: Strategic Risks 2017-22

1. Purpose

1.1 To provide an update on the COVID-19 and EU Exit strategic risks.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee note:

- The draft risk outline for SR012 Pandemic as detailed in Appendix 1;
- The revised EU Exit Assurance Plan, contained within Appendix 2; and
- The revised EU Exit Assurance Plan for HSCP services, in Appendix 3.

3. Background

3.1 Following discussions and feedback from the 'Bi-annual Strategic Risk Report' to the September Audit Committee, it was felt prudent to bring forward this update report (scheduled for March 2021).

3.2 The COVID-19 detail was reported to the September meeting of Council and will be managed by way of the operational risk register and by the Operational Resilience Group members.

3.3 The EU Exit Assurance Plan was last reported to the February meeting of the Corporate Services Committee. As a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was little activity (directly affecting Local Government) in this area and as such, the plan remained as reported. Recent national developments have prompted a further review and subsequent revisions to the Council's response and this is now available. As before, the plan is published on the Council website.

4. Main Issues

Strategic Risk

4.1 In line with the Council's Risk Management Framework, each risk is managed through internal controls, linked actions and associated milestones with the objective being to reduce or stabilise the level of risk through completion of linked actions over a period of time and / or ensure mitigation factors are adequate should the risks actually materialise. In both areas covered by this report, pandemic and EU Exit, these are live issues and being actively

managed by the organisation. These risks, along-with the concurrent risks posed by disruptive weather as winter approaches and potential power outages, are being exercised at national, regional and local levels.

Service Risk

- 4.2** In addition to the above, each service has operational risk registers and these are monitored and appropriate mitigating actions taken by the relevant teams and reported through the service planning process.

COVID-19

- 4.3** As previously reported, the impact of COVID-19 resulted in the development of a significant number of procedures, assessments and mitigations to support the various initiatives, restrictions and measures to reduce the spread of the virus. This work continues as the landscape changes yet again as we approach the winter and face concurrent risks with potential disruptive weather, seasonal influenza and EU Exit ahead.

- 4.4** In respect of the strategic risk “SR012 - COVID – Significant Service and Workforce Disruption” and consequent operational sub-risks, the four key areas are workforce, service delivery, protection and public uncertainty. Given the ongoing fluidity of the response and recovery landscape, the operational risks are key to mitigating impact. Appendix 1 provides details of this strategic risk.

EU Exit

- 4.5** Strategic Risk “SR011 - EU no deal Exit” has been assessed as high risk. The key risks to the Council have been identified as disruption of services, workforce, and congestion at sea and air ports, concerns around the supply of medicines, all potentially impacting locally. Finally there is concern around the supply of and consequently, a rise in the cost of food.
- 4.6** The Council’s Strategic and Operational Resilience Groups continue to work with the Civil Contingencies Service (CCS) in examining risks and potential impact on services associated with the UK’s exit from the EU and seeking appropriate mitigation where available. To compliment this, there is frequent liaison with multi-agency partners to ensure a shared understanding of the risks arising locally, regionally and nationally. The Council’s EU Exit Assurance Action Plan is based on the National Planning Assumptions of reasonable worst-case scenarios and has been revised to take account of the developing landscape. This plan is attached as Appendix 2 and is available on the Council website.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** There are no people implications directly associated with this report. However, there are risks to workforce and communities associated with risks outlined above and detailed in the appendices.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** There are no direct financial and/or procurement implications associated with this report. However, there are risks to financial stability and supply associated with risks outlined above and detailed in the appendices.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** Failure to progress on risk management is likely to result in the Council being criticised by External Audit for not having an integrated approach to embedding risk management within the authority with the result that a “no scrutiny required” status will be jeopardised.

- 7.2** Progressing with risk management will demonstrate that the Council is taking ownership of risk management so that effective measures will be put in place for the management of risk. The ability to demonstrate risk ownership should benefit the Council in terms of:

- Understanding risk and its potential impact on the Council’s priorities and objectives;
- Reducing insurance premiums going forward by recognising that a mature approach to risk management will contribute to a reduction in the number and value of claims across a range of insurance classifications;
- Contributing towards incident prevention based upon post-incident investigation;
- Meeting statutory/regulatory requirements; and
- Ensuring better partnership working with external and internal partners.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1** No equalities screening was required.

9. Consultation

- 9.1** The strategic risks have been discussed with the Strategic Leadership Group and the Operational Resilience Group.

10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** At its meeting on 25 October 2017, the Council agreed that its five main strategic priorities for 2017 - 2022 are as follows:

- A Strong local economy and improved employment opportunities;
- Supported individuals, families and carers living independently and with dignity;
- Meaningful community engagement with active empowered and informed citizens who feel safe and engaged;
- Open, accountable and accessible local government; and
- Efficient and effective frontline services that improve the everyday lives of resident

10.2 The strategic risks have been identified to complement the main strategic priorities.

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Appendices: Appendix 1: Pandemic Strategic Risk
Appendix 2: EU Exit Assurance Plan
Appendix 3: EU Exit Assurance Plan (HSCP)

Background Papers: Report to Council on 30 September 2020 'COVID-19 update'
Report to Audit Committee on 16 September 2020 'Strategic Risk Bi-Annual Update'

Report to Council on 25 October 2017 'West Dunbartonshire Council Strategic Plan 2017-22 Risk Management Framework'