



Report for:	Audit Committee
Date of meeting:	24th June 2020
Part:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Strategic Risk Register Update.
Contact:	Sponsor: James Deane, Corporate Director Finance and Operations Author: Nigel Howcutt, Assistant Director Finance & Resources.
Purpose of report:	1. Inform and receive feedback from the Audit Committee of an addition to the Strategic Risk Register.
Period Review.	The Strategic Risk Register is monitored Quarterly by the AC.
Corporate objectives:	Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery.
Implications:	<u>Financial</u> No direct financial impact of the monitoring of an additional strategic risk.
'Value for money' implications	<u>Value for money</u> It is good practice to monitor and report on the effects of major risks to the council and allows for good early financial assessment and decision making
Risk implications	Failure to recognise risks and react to their outcome would result in significant financial and reputational damage.
Community Impact Assessment	Community Impact Assessment not applicable.
Health and safety Implications	N/A
Consultees:	Cabinet. Chief Officer Group Monitoring Officer Assistant Director Finance and resources.
Background papers:	Procurement Tender evaluation and scores can be provided as requested.

Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	

Risk Owner: Sally Marshall	Portfolio Holder: Andrew Williams	
Strategic Risk for inclusion in the Council's Strategic Risk Register – Outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic would result in the Council facing additional demand for services in the short to medium-term; significant financial implications from lost revenue streams and increased service demand; and potential for a reduced workforce due to staff being illness or self-isolating. It will also have an impact to the local Dacorum economy in the short, medium and possibly long-term.		
Inherent Impact	Inherent Probability	Inherent Risk Score
5	4	20
Mitigated Impact	Mitigated Probability	Mitigated Risk Score
4	3	12
Label Impact Title		
<p>Failure to respond to a COVID 19 pandemic outbreak of infectious disease incident involving death, harm or injury (or potential to cause these) could have catastrophic consequences to individuals, communities, businesses and the environment. A COVID 19 outbreak would spread further unmitigated through local communities and wider afield to cause a serious health risk if uncontrolled.</p> <p>Failure of service continuity, control of authority finances, methods of communication, ICT and staffing levels.</p> <p>On 15 March 2020 based on epidemiological forecasts, the UK government said everyone should avoid all "non-essential" travel and contact with others, avoid crowds, and work from home if possible. Those with symptoms, and their household, were asked to self-isolate. Pregnant women, people over 70, and those with certain health conditions were asked to self-isolate for longer.</p> <p>On 20 March 2020, the UK governments closed all schools, restaurants, pubs, indoor entertainment venues and leisure centres, with some exceptions. On 23 March 2020, the government imposed a lockdown on the whole population, banning all "non-essential" travel and contact with people outside one's home, and shutting almost all businesses, venues, facilities, amenities and places of worship. People were told to keep apart in public. Police were given power to enforce the lockdown, and the Coronavirus Act 2020 gave the government emergency powers including local authorities.</p> <p>As soon as legislation was enacted to allow virtual meetings the Council has introduced virtual member meetings via MS Teams to ensure that the democratic decision making process could be maintained.</p> <p>This unprecedented set of circumstances poses a significant threat to the Council</p>		

both in terms of its ability to deliver core services in the short to medium term, and the impact of potential reduced Council income and increasing expenditure in the short to medium term. It is also likely to have a significant impact to the local economy in the short, medium and possibly long-term.

A report was presented and approved by Council on 15 April 2020, this report set out arrangements put in place emergency measures and delegations as required to deal with the COVID-19 crisis.

Financial Impact

The impact of the pandemic will have short, medium and potentially long term financial ramifications on the Council.

In the short term Covid 19 restrictions imposed by government will have impact on income generating services where these services are impacted by either a requirement to close or an inability to trade/operate during Covid 19 restrictions. The Council is also expecting to incur additional expenditure related to supporting strategic partners, increased staffing costs resulting from shielding and isolation, and costs incurred in facilitating and operating new ways of working.

In the medium and longer term the economic impact on Dacorum is likely to impact major funding streams to the Council such as Council tax and business rates levels.

Controls to manage the risk

Ensure there is sufficient resilience and expertise within the Authority to manage an incident and control the risks. Training carried out on a regular basis which covers roles and responsibilities.

There are arrangements in place for other local authority mutual aid to provide cover in emergency. Any incident would be managed by the Incident Management Team (IMT) chaired by a member of Chief Officer Group.

IMT to follow and implement Government and Public Health England legislation and guidance where required or appropriate.

Ability to deliver services

Each of the service areas undertook a risk assessment to identify how statutory services could continue to be provided and what modifications to other services would be needed. These are held in the operational Risk Registers.

From 23 March 2020, all staff that were able to, where possible to work from home, this was achieved immediately due to technology infrastructure changes already made by the move into The Forum.

Over 450 staff have been regularly working from home and continuing to deliver services, however face to face services have been suspended as the Forum has been closed to the public since 23 March 2020.

Some staff are unable to deliver services from home particularly those from Neighbourhood Delivery who are based in the Cupid Green Depot, as well as staff who work in the Council's Adventure Playgrounds. Where possible staff have been redeployed to support core services. However there are a small number of staff that are unable to work from home and cannot go to their normal employment due to Covid-19 health restrictions.

All core strategic service delivery is being achieved by working remotely, making use of the newly introduced MS Teams for collaborative working and meeting and people covering for each other as we have had approximately 9% less staff due to self-isolation or sickness attributed directly to COVID-19.

Financial Controls.

The following controls aim to reduce the probability of there being a variance in the General Fund Revenue Budget by ensuring that there is strong challenge put to Budget Holders on the robustness of their assumptions, from a range of audiences.

It is intended that these controls will increase and incorporate the strong culture of financial management already in existence across the Council leading to continuous improvement in the setting of accurate budgets.

The ongoing monthly budget monitoring processes and quarterly reporting to members and scrutiny groups will continue with additional reports to members provided if the financial position has materially changed, or key decisions are required.

The Council is budgeted to hold reserve balances in excess of £17m in 20/21 and would be appropriate in the short term, to draw down on these reserves once all other revenue streams have been fully utilised.

The annual Medium Term Financial strategy (MTFS) will be updated in year, and the MTFS will include the projected financial impact of Covid 19 on the Council.

The budget-setting process consists of an ongoing scrutiny process and is augmented by the Budget Review Group (BRG), consisting of Chief Officer Group and representatives from the Portfolio Holder group, which provides early member-level challenge to ensure a robust budget is proposed to Council.

The Council's Financial Regulations provide a guide to all budget-holders and are subject to annual review.

Business Survey (Up to end April)

192 businesses from a cross section of sectors, sizes and locations within Dacorum have completed surveys (11 ambassadors) to gather intelligence to inform our recovery strategy to date.

- These businesses account for 4,365 jobs and 1,069 employees have been furloughed, with just 7 made redundant.
- Businesses that also rely on self-employed or agency staff reported that a total of 264 have been let go, with little knowledge of whether these staff did not qualify for financial support.
- The majority of businesses describe themselves as ticking over, but 22% are in crisis and 19% concerned about the potential closure of their business.
- Only 6.5% describe themselves as thriving.
- The most common reported concerns were cashflow & loss of productivity (c70%) and obtaining financial support (c54%). Of least concern were possible redundancies (13%) and only 9% do not see themselves returning to full staff numbers.
- 51.5% are able to work from home, 17.5% partially work from home and 30% are unable to work from home. Of those able to, 44% think they will continue to do so to some extent.

- 43% of business have been able to adapt their business model to some degree to meet the demands of the situation and around 64% of these businesses expect to incorporate these changes permanently to some degree going forward.
- Most businesses are finding it difficult to identify what support they would find beneficial in the future, other than general business advice.
- A common difficulty when answering questions is that businesses do not know when or how they will be able to start trading again.

Corporate Health & Safety

Corporate Health and Safety Team take a lead in supporting business continuity measures in the event of a pandemic including assisting with managing the PPE stock levels.

Evidence the risk is being managed

Mass COVID fatalities and cases are covered by centralised emergency plans. Local emergency plans tested on an annual basis.

Daily meetings of IMT for decision making and monitoring service delivery. Daily meetings were reduced to three times a week during late May, to reflect the measures put in place to manage the impact of the crisis, this will be kept under review and will increase to daily if required.

IMT to monitor all services, finance, ICT, communications, staffing levels and report to Council, Cabinet and appropriate Committees

In order to manage this strategic risk, on 17 March 2020 the Council established IMT meetings and these are held on a daily basis (now three times a week). The membership is composed of Chief Executive (Chair of IMT), both Corporate Director (Finance and Operations) - (Finance and Service Lead for Operations), Corporate Director (Housing and Regeneration (Service Lead for Housing/Homelessness and Economic Recovery) Assistant Director Corporate and Contracted Services (Monitoring Officer), Interim Assistant Director Neighbourhood Delivery, Group Managers of Environmental and Community Protection (Health and Safety Leads), Group Manager People and Community (Human Resources Lead), Group Manager Technology and Digital Transformation (ICT lead) and the DBC Operation Shield/Sustain Lead Officer

There is a set agenda to cover all the services of the Council and the Group Manager Environmental and Community Protection provides an update from the Strategic Co-ordinating and the Tactical Co-ordinating Groups.

In addition to the IMT meetings the Chief Executive also attends the following meetings to ensure that Dacorum is aware and able to contribute to at a national, regional and county level:

- Secretary of State Teleconferences
- DCN Coronavirus conference calls – Leaders and Chief Executives
- East of England Chief Executive conference calls
- Hertfordshire Chief Executive Co-ordinating Group and Recovery Cell Group
- The Chief Executive and Group Manager Environmental and Community Protection also receive written briefings from Local Resilience Form and associated operational cells