



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and Date of Committee	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE – 28 SEPTEMBER 2023
Subject	STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER
Wards Affected	ALL
Accountable Member	Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Giles Hughes – Chief Executive. Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Cheryl Sloan – Business Manager, Governance, Risk and Business Continuity Email: Cheryl.sloan@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To update Members on the Strategic Risk Register, for information and assurance, that risks to the Council are being managed and appropriate actions are being taken to mitigate risk.
Annexes	Annex A – Strategic Risk Register
Recommendation(s)	<i>That Committee Resolves to:</i> <i>1. Note the update to the Strategic Risk Register.</i>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Putting Residents First• A Good Quality of Life for All• A Better Environment for People and Wildlife• Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency• Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Nil.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The strategic risk register is presented to the Audit Committee to provide assurance that risks to the Council are being managed and appropriate actions are being taken to mitigate risk.
- 1.2** Presentation of the risk register also provides an opportunity for members of the Audit Committee to raise questions and highlight any risks which they feel should be referenced and mitigated.

2. RISK REGISTER

- 2.1** Risk Management is the process used to identify, evaluate, and manage the whole range of business risks facing an organisation.
- 2.2** A risk can be defined as the potential of something happening which may have a negative impact on a council's ability to deliver services or projects and achieve its objectives. By being alert to this and putting in place mechanisms to manage risks, a council will be in a better position to continue to deliver services, remain viable, continue to innovate and use resources more efficiently.
- 2.3** Risk Management is not necessarily about being 'risk averse', it is about being 'risk aware'. Through Risk Management we proactively identify potential risks to our businesses, which could include service delivery risks, financial risks, people risks or projects risks, and then assess what the impact would be should that risk happen, what the likelihood is of that risk occurring and what we can do to manage or mitigate that risk. As a council, we then have to consider whether that risk is worth taking and if yes, do we accept it, put in place mitigations to lower the risk, pass or share the risk e.g., outsourcing the risk, or avoid the risk.
- 2.4** The risk register presented to the Audit Committee is the Strategic Risk register for the Council. This captures the high-level risks that the council is currently facing. All Council partners such as Publica have their own Strategic risk register, along with individual services areas and project risk registers, which feed into this high-level strategic risk register.
- 2.5** To ensure risks are captured, mitigated, and clearly reported, the WODC Risk Register has been recently reviewed and a new Risk Register is reported to this Audit Committee.
- 2.6** This new template should be clearer and easier to see the high-level risks for the Council, the mitigations which are currently in place and the direction of travel. This will continue to be developed over the next few months, and any feedback from the Audit Committee is welcomed.
- 2.7** The risk register includes a scoring based on impact and likelihood of the risk occurring before mitigation and then the residual risk after mitigation. The arrow shows the direction of travel since the last time the risk was reviewed and reported.

2.8 The main risks to note as part of this review are as follows: -

- **R1 Financial Stability of WODC.** This remains one of the highest risks for the Council, as it will be for most councils across the UK. Local Government is facing significant financial challenges, with uncertainty and volatility around future Council funding. WODC has a robust MTFS in place, with healthy reserves and therefore the shorter-term position for the Council remains positive, however, the risk remains high as future Council funding remains uncertain.
- **R5 Shareholder Review of Publica** - this is a new risk added this month to reflect the joint shareholder commissioned review of Publica. This will consider the future delivery options for a number of the Council services and consider the current Governance arrangements which are in place. Any recommendations cannot increase the overall cost of services, though alternatives can be proposed. The outcome from this review is due October / November.
- **R6 Cyber Attack** – whilst a lot of work has already been undertaken and continues to ensure we have a robust ICT network; the impact of a successful cyber attack could be significant. This risk therefore remains high.
- **R12 Partnership Failure (Publica).** This risk has been increased to reflect the joint shareholder commissioned review, as the recommendations from this review, are currently unknown at this time.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1 This report relates to the Council's management of risk and identifies the current strategic risks, as such no separate risk assessment has been completed.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

6.1 An equalities impact assessment is not required for this report.

7. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no climate or ecological emergency implications arising directly from this report.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1** The following documents have been identified by the author of the report in accordance with section 100D.5(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are listed in accordance with section 100 D.1(a) for inspection by members of the public:
- Previous version of the West Oxfordshire District Council Strategic Risk Register presented to the Audit and Governance Committee on 30 March 2023.
- 8.2** These documents will be available for inspection online at www.westoxon.gov.uk or by contacting democratic services democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk for a period of up to 4 years from the date of the meeting.

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