Midlothian

Title of Report Risk Management Update, Quarter 2 2020/21

Report by Chris Lawson, Service Manager – Waste, Risk and Resilience

Report for Information

1 Recommendations

Audit Committee is recommended to note the current risk landscape and organisational responses to the most significant risk prevailing at this time.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

Audit Committee has requested regular reporting on the Council's Strategic Risk management approach and response.

The purpose of this report is to provide Audit Committee with an update on the risk responses Midlothian Council has had to implement during quarter 2 2020/21 to respond to the current risk climate.

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Report Contact:
Chris Lawson   Tel No 0131 271 3069
chris.lawson@midlothian.gov.uk

3   Background/Main Body of Report

3.1   Midlothian Council has deliver a wide range of services to the people of Midlothian throughout quarter 1 of 2020/21 against a backdrop of operating within a series of government directed constraints, associated with responding to a global pandemic. The Scottish Government response to the above resulted in sectors being instructed to close as part of a national lockdown response in March 2020, with a phased recovery plan to facilitate business restart.

3.2   While Midlothian Council responded to the initial lockdown in quarter 1 the focus during quarter 2 was on recommencing a range of services which were either considered non-essential and/or not permitted to resume until quarter 2.

3.3   As the Council has responded to the risks introduced by the pandemic it has become apparent that the public sector face a new challenge in the coming months. There are 3 significant factors which will all interplay over quarter 3 and into quarter 4. These are the concurrent risks of:
- COVID 19,
- UK Exit from the EU, and
- Winter

3.4   In addition to these new risks the Council continue to manage those risks recorded within the Strategic Risk Profile. The work required to maintain the necessary Corporate oversight over the broader strategic landscape continues, while there is a current focus on the particular set of external factors the organisation needs to prepare and respond to.

3.5   **COVID 19**
Midlothian Council have been responding to the global pandemic since February 2020. The Corporate Management Team established an Incident Management Team to respond to the incident as set out in the Council's Emergency response plan.

During this period the Council's Health and Safety team developed a series of risk assessment templates covering workplace risks, schools risks and employee risks to support re-establishing services. The team also carried out monitoring to confirm assessments were being carried out across the Council. There was a specific focus on school based monitoring visits to confirm the arrangements necessary to protect pupils, teachers and other support staff were in place.

During quarter 2, workplace COVID risk assessments were updated to reflect the requirements placed on the Council and to respond to guidance affecting different sectors within the Council and to support re-opening in a COVID safe manner. During the lockdown phase a number of employees had been taken out of the workplace as a result of having underlying health conditions, placing them at greater risk from the virus or where they were directed to stay at home due to Shielding requirements.

Employees in these categories where supported to return to work, where the default home working option, was not viable for their role. Staff roles were risk assessed with agreed risk assessments signed off by individual employees and their line managers, as part of the return to work process into a new COVID safe environment.

It has become apparent that the level of Community transmission has began to increase across Scotland and the rest of the UK since the initial lockdown period. In response the Scottish Government introduced a new tiered restriction model which was deployed in quarter 3 in response to the rise in infection rate.

Ahead of the new tiered model being deployed, the Council's Incident Management Team (CIMT) was re-established to co-ordinate and oversee preparations and planned responses to the implementation of the new tiered system. During this time the CIMT have maintained a COVID-19 risk assessment to track potential risk impacts, the risk controls in place and to record progress on actions being taken to mitigate potential or expected impacts.

3.6   UK Exit from EU

The UK stopped being a member of the European Union at 23:00 on 31 January 2020. The UK is continues in a transition period up to, but not beyond, the 31 December 2020 as the UK Government have legislated not to extend the transition period beyond this point.

In the period between 31 January 2020 and 31 December 2020 the UK government have sought to negotiate the future relationship with the EU including trade arrangements. There remains a risk of significant change from the current established approaches in many areas. The Council have continued to monitor progress by the UK Government.

The Council's EU Exit Working Group was reconvened in quarter 1 2020/21 to enable suitable planning to take place in response the emerging new relationship with the EU and any changes which may impact services or supplies. Midlothian Council are working with partners including CoSLA and the Local Authority Resilience Group to monitor developments in this area and plan accordingly.

The Council's EU exit risk register is being revised through the EU Exit working group, taking into account current government guidance and through appropriate use of the UK governments 'reasonable worst case scenario planning assumptions'.

3.7   Winter preparedness

The winter months always present a potential risk of winter weather and/or severe weather, with the associated risk of impacts across a range of sectors. In preparation for this winter, Midlothian Council's severe weather plan has been reviewed. This review has included an update of the Council's Roads Service response given the significant

contribution they play in keeping essential roads and pedestrian routes open during severe weather.

The challenge facing Council's across the UK going into this winter is the concurrent risks associated with COVID-19 and the potential for rise in community transmission during the normal winter flu season.

Going into any winter period anyone of the above risks could have created a significant impact in their own right, this year Council's across the country need to contend with the potential of impacts across a range of concurrent risks. This is requiring careful planning to ensure that in the event of winter impacts and/or EU exit impacts, against a backdrop risking COVID 19 community based transmission, the Council remains in a position able to deliver the essential services the people of Midlothian rely on.

3.8   Outlined above is an overview of the response to the most significant risk facing the Council going into quarter 3 2020/21 and should act to provide assurance that Midlothian Council is taking a proportionate and planned approach to prepare and respond to each of these risks at this potentially challenging time.

4   Report Implications (Resource, Digital, Risk and Equalities)

4.1   Resource

There are no direct resource implications indicated in this report, although, individual risks have associated resource implications.

4.2   Digital

None.

4.3   Risk

The risks reported in this report are understood with the Council able to demonstrate the measures it is taking in response to these.

4.4   Ensuring Equalities

There are no direct equalities issues arising from this report.

4.5   Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

APPENDIX A – Additional Report Implications

A.1   Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

This report provides an overview of the Strategic Risk profile of Midlothian Council at a defined point in time. The issues, risks and opportunities affecting or supporting delivery of the council priorities are set out within the Strategic risk profile

A.2   Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

☐ Holistic Working
☐ Hub and Spoke
☐ Modern
☐ Sustainable
☐ Transformational
☐ Preventative
☐ Asset-based
☐ Continuous Improvement
☐ One size fits one
☒ None of the above

A.3   Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

☒ One Council Working with you, for you
☐ Preventative and Sustainable
☐ Efficient and Modern
☐ Innovative and Ambitious

A.4   Delivering Best Value

The Council's commitment to best value and securing continuous improvement can best be delivered when decisions are made against a backdrop of understanding the risks and opportunities before an organisation. This report seeks to provide assurance that the current risk environment is understood and that Midlothian Council is taking appropriate action in response to those identified risks.

A.5   Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

This Strategic Risk Profile report has been compile with input from a range of internal key stakeholders.

A.6   Impact on Performance and Outcomes

This report seeks to provide an overview of the challenging risk environment within which the Council is operating at this time. Being in

a risk aware position helps to inform current and future decision making, with the intention of enhancing decision making and the associated performance and outcomes which flow from well informed decision making.

A.7   Adopting a Preventative Approach

The Risk Management approach being taken by the Council is founded on a preventative approach to managing risks, where appropriate and more generally to decision making with far greater risk awareness.

A.8   Supporting Sustainable Development

Senior Managers must ensure the sustainability of the Council, which entails identifying, understanding and managing Strategic and Service level Risks and Opportunities.