

Risk Management Update, Quarter 3 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 response to the most significant risks at this time.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

Regular reporting has been requested on the Council's Strategic Risks and the purpose of this report is to provide an update on the risk responses Midlothian Council has implemented during quarter 3 2020/21 to respond to the current risk climate.

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3 Background/Main Body of Report

- 3.1** Midlothian Council has delivered a wide range of services to the people of Midlothian throughout quarter 3 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 December 2020.

As the Council has responded to the risks introduced by the pandemic it has become apparent that the public sector faced a new challenge in quarter 3. There were 3 significant factors which had the potential to interplay over quarter 3 and into quarter 4. These are the concurrent risks of:

- COVID 19,
- UK Exit from the EU, and
- Winter

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 respond to.

3.2 COVID 19

During quarter 3, it became apparent that the level of Community transmission had began to increase across Scotland and the rest of the UK. The Scottish Government had introduced a 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.

Following the announcement made by the First Minister that additional level 4 restrictions were in place from midnight on Monday 4 January, 2021, in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, Midlothian Council moved to Critical Service delivery only, which means that as a Category 1 responder we now only carry out 3 essential functions:

- . Caring for the vulnerable
- . Co-operating with our Resilience Partners
- . Supporting Economic Recovery

The Stay at Home and Work at Home guidance remains appropriate and we have the workforce carrying out alternative duties, with the

Midlothian Community Planning Partnership Board convening regularly to discuss and address community resilience.

3.3 UK Exit from EU

The UK stopped being a member of the European Union at 23:00 on 31 January 2020. The UK continued in a transition period up to the 31 December 2020 when the UK formally left the European Union.

In the period between 31 January 2020 and 31 December 2020 the UK government had sought to negotiate its future relationship with the EU including trade arrangements. There remained a risk of significant change from the current established approaches in many areas going into quarter 3. The Council have continued to monitor preparatory guidance issued by the UK Government. The UK agreed a Trade and Cooperation agreement in December 2020 ahead of the exit date.

The Council's EU Exit Working Group had been reconvened by the Chief Officer Place 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 had the potential to impact services or supplies as Midlothian Council has a statutory obligation to deliver a range of core public services. The Council also provides valuable place leadership and therefore has an important role in supporting its communities and businesses while there exists a high level of uncertainty surrounding what and how severe any impacts will be.

Midlothian Council worked 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 was revised through the EU Exit working group, taking into account UK Government guidance and through appropriate use of the UK governments 'reasonable worst case scenario planning assumptions'. This was reported to Council on 15 December, 2020 and a detailed Resilience Briefing session was subsequently provided to elected members.

3.4 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 was reviewed. This review 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 had been 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 required careful planning to ensure that in the event of winter impacts and/or EU exit

impacts, against a backdrop rising COVID 19 community based transmission, the Council remained in a position able to deliver the critical services the people of Midlothian rely on and a detailed Resilience Briefing session was provided to elected members and subsequently to the Council's Leadership Forum.

- 3.5** Outlined above is an overview of the response to the most significant risk faced by the Council during quarter 3 2020/21 and should act to provide assurance that Midlothian Council took a proportionate and planned approach to prepare and respond to each of these risks at this 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.