

WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Purpose of strategy

The purpose of the strategy is to embed risk management in the Authority by establishing a risk management framework that provides:

- n an efficient control environment
- n the overt allocation of accountability for risk management throughout the organisation
- n a well-established risk assessment process
- n performance monitoring of risk management activity
- n communications process to support risk management

An action plan to advance risk management in the organisation is set out as Annexe 1.

Definition and scope of risk management

The Council has adopted the Audit Commission's definition of risk and risk management as contained in its Management Paper, 'Worth the risk: improving risk management in local government'. Although the Audit Commission has been recently abolished its definition of risk is still relevant and relied upon by many organisations.

Risk is the threat that an event or action will adversely affect an organisation's ability to achieve its objectives and successfully execute its strategies. Risk management is the process by which risks are identified, evaluated and controlled. It is a key element of the framework of governance together with community focus, structures and processes, standards of conduct and service delivery arrangements.

The overall process of managing risk can be divided into:

- § *Risk analysis, or assessment, which includes the identification, estimation and evaluation of the risks; and*
- § *Risk management that encompasses the planning, monitoring and controlling activities based on the information derived from risk analysis.*

Aims and objectives

The risk management policy of Warwick District Council is to adopt best practices in the identification, evaluation, and cost-effective control of risks to ensure that they are eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level.

It is acknowledged that some risks will always exist and will never be eliminated. All employees must understand the nature of risk and accept responsibility for risks associated with their area of authority. The necessary support, assistance and commitment of senior management will be provided.

The risk management objectives of the Council are to:

- § integrate risk management into the culture of the Council
- § manage risk in accordance with best practice
- § consider legal compliance as a minimum standard
- § anticipate and respond to changing social, environmental and legislative requirements
- § prevent injury and damage and reduce the cost of risk
- § raise awareness of the need for risk management.

These objectives will be achieved by:

- § establishing a risk management organisational structure to act in an advisory and guiding capacity which is accessible to all employees
- § including risk management as an agenda item at meetings as appropriate
- § continuing to demonstrate the application of risk management principles
- § providing risk management awareness training
- § maintaining documented procedures for the control of risk and the provision of suitable information, training and supervision
- § maintaining an appropriate incident reporting and recording system, with investigation procedures to establish cause and prevent recurrence
- § preparing contingency plans in areas where there is a potential for an occurrence having a catastrophic effect on the Council and its service delivery capability
- § maintaining effective communication
- § monitoring arrangements on an ongoing basis

Definition of the Council's risk appetite

An organisation's risk appetite is the amount of risk that it is prepared to take in order to achieve its objectives. Defining the organisation's risk appetite provides the strategic framework for effective decision-making. Risk appetites for local authorities will also be lower due to the regulatory nature of most services and because of their stewardship obligations for public resources. However, local authorities may be forced to take risks beyond their choosing to comply with

central government directives or to satisfy public expectations of improved services.

Warwick District Council's risk appetite is determined by individual circumstances. In general terms, the Council's approach to providing services is to be innovative and to seek continuous improvement within a framework of robust corporate governance. This framework includes risk management that identifies and assesses risks appertaining to actions being considered or proposed. Decisions on whether to proceed with such actions are only taken after the careful assessment of the identified risks and an analysis of the risks compared to the benefits.

However, in all circumstances:

- § The Council would wish to manage its financial affairs such that no action will be taken that would jeopardise its ability to continue to provide services within its available resource; and
- § The Council would wish to secure the legal integrity of its actions at all times.

Roles and responsibilities

The following groups and individuals have the following roles and responsibilities for risk management within the Council.

Executive

To oversee the effective management of risk throughout the Council; to hold the corporate management team accountable for the effective management of risk by officers of the Council.

Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee

To scrutinise and review the management of risk on behalf of Executive.

Elected Members

To promote the importance of risk management in all that the Council does; to champion the cause of risk management.

Chief Executive

To be the clear figurehead for implementing the risk management process by making a clear and public personal commitment to making it work.

Senior Management Team

To ensure that the Council manages risk effectively through the development of a comprehensive risk management strategy; to monitor delivery by receiving reports from the risk management group.

Risk champion¹

To champion the cause of risk management within the Council, particularly at the strategic level; to take personal responsibility for ensuring that the risk management objectives as set out in the policy are achieved.

Risk manager²

To support the Council and its departments and services in the effective development, implementation and review of the risk management strategy.

Risk management group

To determine, implement and review the Council's risk management policy and its risk management strategy. The risk management group is responsible for developing specific programmes and procedures for establishing and maintaining risk management activities. This group will ensure the dispersal of vital information and, where appropriate, provide guidance, interpretation and understanding of the systems involved.

The terms of reference of this group are set out as Annexe 2.

Departmental management teams

To ensure that risk is managed effectively in each service area within the agreed risk management strategy; to report to the Risk Management Group on how hazards and risks have been managed within their service area.

Service managers

To manage risk effectively in their particular service areas; to report on how hazards and risks have been managed to their Departmental Management Team or directly to the Risk Management Group.

Employees

To manage risk effectively in their jobs and report hazards and risks to their service managers

Insurance & Risk officer

To advise on practices which will minimise the likelihood of adverse events occurring and arrange insurance cover where necessary and appropriate.

The responsibilities of the various groups and individuals are summarised in the table that is included as Annexe 3.

¹ This officer is the Deputy Chief Executive (AJ)

² This officer is the Audit and Risk Manager.

Methodology for identifying and assessing risk

Risk Identification and Categorisation

Risks can be categorised under strategic and operational.

Strategic risks are those risks identified as potentially damaging to the achievement of the Council’s objectives. These can be sub-classified into:

- Political
- Social
- Legislative
- Competitive
- Economic
- Technological
- Environmental
- Customer/citizen

Operational risks are those risks that should be managed by departmental officers who will be responsible for operating and maintaining the services. These can be sub-classified into:

- Professional
- Legal
- Contractual
- Environmental
- Financial
- Physical
- Information

Risk Assessment

For risk registers, the following definitions are applied for the measurement of risk in respect of probability and consequences:

Probability of Occurrence

Estimation	Description	Indicators
5: High (Probable)	Likely to occur each year (e.g. considered as more than 50% chance of occurrence in any year).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential of it occurring several times within the specified period (for example - ten years). • Has occurred recently.
4: Medium to High	Apply judgement	Apply judgement
3: Medium (Possible)	Likely to occur during a 10 year period (considered as between 5% and 25% chance of occurrence in any year).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could occur more than once within the period (for example - ten years). • Could be difficult to control due to some external influences. • There’s a history of occurrence.
2: Low to Medium	Apply judgement	Apply judgement
1: Low (Remote)	Not likely to occur in a 10 year period (considered as less than 2% chance of occurrence in any year).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has not occurred. • Unlikely to occur.

Consequences

Estimation	Description
5: High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial impact on the organisation is likely to exceed £500K Significant impact on the organisation's strategy or operational activities Significant stakeholder concern
4: Medium to High	Apply judgement
3: Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial impact on the organisation likely to be between £100K and £250K Moderate impact on the organisation's strategy or operational activities Moderate stakeholder concern
2: Low to Medium	Apply judgement
1: Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial impact on the organisation likely to be less than £10K Low impact on the organisation's strategy or operational activities Low stakeholder concern

Annexe 1: Risk Management Strategic Action Plan

Through the CIPFA Risk Management Benchmarking Club the Council’s risk management arrangements were appraised. Areas for improvement were identified from the analysis and these formed the components of a comprehensive action plan.

The benchmarking is based on ALARM’s National Performance Model for Risk Management in Public Services published in 2009. This in turn is based on the “Risk Management Assessment Framework”, developed by HM Treasury in 2002, itself having its genesis in the EFQM approach.

It breaks down risk management activity into seven strands:

- Leadership and management
- Strategy and policy
- People
- Partnership, shared risks and resources
- Processes and tools
- Risk handling and assurance
- Outcomes and delivery

Under each strand the level of maturity the organisation has reached is identified.

The level of maturity is assessed as being at one of the following five levels (in ascending order of maturity):

- Level 1: Risk management is **engaging** with the organisation
- Level 2: Risk management is **happening** within the organisation
- Level 3: Risk management is **working** for the organisation
- Level 4: Risk management is **embedded and integrated** within the organisation
- Level 5: Risk management is **driving** the organisation

In overall terms the review has assessed us at the middle level of maturity, “Working”.

The typical organisational behaviours associated with the “Working” level of maturity are as follows:

Management Activity	Typical Organisational Behaviours
Leadership and Management	Senior managers take the lead to apply risk management thoroughly across the organisation. They own and manage a register of key strategic risks and set the risk Appetite.
Strategy and Policy	Risk management principles are reflected in the organisation’s strategies and policies. Risk framework is reviewed, developed, refined and communicated.

People	A core group of people have the skills and knowledge to manage risk effectively and implement the risk management framework. Staff are aware of key risks and responsibilities
Partnership, Shared Risks and Resources	Risk with partners and suppliers is well managed across organisational boundaries. Appropriate resources are in place to manage risk.
Processes	Risk management processes used to support key business processes. Early warning indicators and lessons learned are reported. Critical services supported through continuity plans
Risk Handling and Assurance	Clear evidence that risk management is being effective in all key areas. Capability-assessed within a formal assurance framework and against best practice standards.
Outcomes and Delivery	Clear evidence that risk management is supporting the delivery of key outcomes in all relevant areas.

In many ways, this level of assessment is not surprising; embedding risk management fully in any organisation will always be a journey rather than an arrived destination and to achieve near-full compliance would require bureaucratic processes and a level of staffing that is not desirable, or even feasible, in an organisation of Warwick District Council's size.

Nevertheless, addressing the areas that have been identified for improvement will help the Council improve its practices significantly.

The action plan overleaf summarises the findings and recommendations from the review and sets out the actions planned to address them together with target dates for completion.