

Report to:	Audit and Governance Committee	Date of Meeting:	Wednesday 13 December 2023
Subject:	Corporate Risk Management		
Report of:	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

The Corporate Risk Register is presented to each meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee. Since the last Committee meeting in September 2023, the Corporate Risk Register has been reviewed and updated.

The ownership of the content of the Corporate Risk Register lies with the Strategic Leadership Board in accordance with the Corporate Risk Management Handbook approved by the Committee.

No new risks have been added or escalated to the Corporate Risk Register in the current quarter. However, following a comprehensive review that sought to remove any duplication and place a clear focus on the key risks facing the Council, 15 risks were identified for de-escalation after rescoring and moved to the relevant Service Risk Registers as appropriate or removed as they are covered elsewhere.

- Sandway Homes - Financial sustainability beyond 2023/24
- Failure to adequately invest in the Highway network and associated assets.
- Condition of Assets
- Impact of Cost of Living crisis on residents and demand for Council services
- Market failure of Social Care provision across Adult and Children's
- Inflation and cost of care (ASC) impact on budget availability
- Climate Emergency- Strategic Risk
- Lack of SEND specialist placements for children and young people.
- Requirement to work collaboratively with Sefton New Directions to review delivery model, in order to meet market requirements and promote financial sustainability; identify opportunities and future risk mitigation.
- Education service not being able to meet statutory compliance at an acceptable level.
- ASC contracted rates are no longer sufficient to secure placements.
- School debts transferring back to the Council in the event of them being forced into academy status or closing.

- Inability to recruit required ASC staff and retention of current workforce.
- The provision of Children's Social Care is not financially sustainable.
- Failure to adequately maximise the benefits of digital growth to the local community and businesses.

A presentation on one of the risks from the Corporate Risk Register will be provided to Members at the September meeting.

There are other on-going initiatives to embed risk management within the Council including Assurance Mapping and implementing the three lines model.

The Institute of Internal Auditors Risk in Focus papers provides an insight in risks across Europe in the public and private sector. The Council's risks are broadly in alignment with the risks identified in the paper. The paper highlights the "poly crisis's" that are occurring in the external environment providing a unique set of challenges regardless of whether organisations and or companies operate at local, regional, national, or international basis.

Recommendation(s):

(1) Consider the updated Corporate Risk Register, noting the nature of the major risks facing the Council, and the controls and planned actions in place to mitigate these risks.

(2) Note the progress on the embedding of risk management within the Council.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

A robust system of risk management will assist the Council in meeting its identified objectives.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

None.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs - There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, the Council benefits from the work of the section in reducing the impact and likelihood (and so the cost) of risk.

(B) Capital Costs - There are no direct capital costs arising from the report.

Implications of the Proposals:

<p>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): There are no direct resource implications.</p>
<p>Legal Implications: There are no legal implications.</p>
<p>Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.</p>
<p>Impact on Children and Young People: Yes There are a number of Children's Services related risks in the Corporate Risk Register.</p>

There are no direct implications as the existing controls and further actions are a summary of what has already been agreed. Where risks are managed effectively the achievement of the Council's objectives in this case for Children's Services will more likely be achieved.

Climate Emergency Implications:

The recommendations within this report will

Have a positive impact	Yes
Have a neutral impact	No
Have a negative impact	No
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes

The report provides a summary of the risks identified and managed that will impact on the delivery of the Council's purpose. The Corporate Risk Register includes a Climate Change Emergency risk with actions to mitigate its impact and likelihood.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Positive.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Positive.
Commission, broker and provide core services: Positive.
Place – leadership and influencer: Positive
Drivers of change and reform: Positive
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Positive.
Greater income for social investment: Positive
Cleaner Greener: Positive

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD7451/23) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5551/23) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

None

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

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Appendices:

- Corporate Risk Register December 2023
- Institute of Internal Auditors Risk in Focus publication

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Risk Management is defined as 'systematic application of principles, approach and processes to the task of identifying and assessing the risk and the planning and implementing of risk responses.'
- 1.2 The Risk Management Strategy included in the Corporate Risk Management Handbook, which is presented to the Audit and Governance Committee on an annual basis for approval, states that:
- 1.2.1 "Risk Management is to be an integral part of the planning and decision-making processes of the Council and that the Strategy is intended to ensure that Risk Management is embedded in the overall planning process.
- 1.2.2 Risk management is a central part of Council's strategic management and its corporate governance. Effective risk management makes sound business sense and is a good management tool as it helps to ensure that the corporate strategic objectives, in this case Sefton 2030, are achieved. The focus of good risk management is the identification and treatment of risks that could affect the delivery of these objectives.
- 1.2.3 Risk management should be a continuous and developing process which runs throughout the Council's activities. A systematic approach to identifying and analysing risks is an integral part of all management processes and day-to-day working, rather than a separate initiative."
- 1.3 The responsibilities for risk management within Council are detailed in the Constitution within the Financial Procedural Rules. Selected extracts include:
- 123 The Council's approach to Risk Management is that it should be embedded throughout the organisation at both a strategic and an operational level, through integration into existing systems and processes.
- 124 The Section 151 Officer develops the strategy and supporting framework on behalf of Executive Directors and Heads of Service (Now referred to as Assistant

Directors). The Audit and Governance Committee scrutinise the risk management process ensuring the Council's risks are managed effectively.

125 Executive Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring the Risk Management Strategy is implemented and that the full risk management cycle operates within their Service.

128 Executive Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring risk management is carried out at both an operational and strategic level in accordance with the agreed guidance and procedures.

129 Executive Directors and Heads of Service will take account of, and address, corporate risks and inform the Chief Internal Auditor of any service risks that should be considered significant enough to rise to the corporate risk register level.

130 Service and operational risk registers, and associated actions, should be reviewed on a regular basis (at least quarterly) as part of the performance management process.

- 1.4 Whilst the process of risk management is routinely undertaken within the Council in a number of areas, both at a strategic level and operationally, it is recognised that there is still scope, to develop a more integrated risk management approach. This report seeks to continue the process of formalising a system of robust Corporate Risk Management and embedding this further into the organisation. The Corporate Risk Management Handbook (CRMH) outlines that there should be three tiers of risk registers in place across the organisation which are identified through the scoring of the risks:
- Corporate Risk Register (CRR)– risks scored at 16 plus and these are the key risks affecting the Council.
 - Service Risk Registers (SRR)– risks scored between eight and 15 which are owned and managed by the Head of Service.
 - Operational Risk Registers (ORR) – risks scored at seven and below which are owned and managed by Service Managers.
- 1.5 An updated CRR is presented at each meeting of this Committee for Members to consider. The ownership of the content of the Corporate Risk Register lies with the Strategic Leadership Board. The CRR has been shared with and reviewed by senior officers to ensure that the risk register reflects the most significant risks facing the Council. The completion of a risk register also demonstrates that the Council has set out an approach to mitigate the risks that have been identified. The updated CRR is set out at Appendix A, using the revised scoring approved by Members in September 2022, for noting by the Committee.
- 1.6 The SRRs are owned and should be reviewed by the Assistant Directors (previously known as Heads of Service) on a quarterly basis and provided to the Risk and Audit team for information. The completed Service Risk Registers are used by Audit as an agenda item in the formal six-monthly meeting with the Assistant Directors and are also used for the monthly budget meetings that are held by Financial Management with the Service Management teams.

1.7 The Operational Risk Registers are owned and revised by Service Managers. Members may remember that the Risk and Resilience Team assisted by the Internal Audit Team completed an exercise in 2018/19 to fully implement this tier of risk registers across the organisation facilitating the completion of over 70 risk registers. This exercise was completed in March 2019. The Risk and Resilience Team, assisted by the Internal Audit Team, work with the individual teams to facilitate regular reviews of the risk registers which will help to embed risk management at the centre of the Council's activities.

2. Key Developments

2.1 External operating environment

2.1.1 The external operating environment has continued to evolve over the past quarter building on a number of significant external events occurring in the previous 24 months. These events can affect existing risks by potentially increasing the impact and/or likelihood as well as create new risks which could potentially detrimentally impact on the achievement of the Council's strategic objectives.

2.1.2 Some of the events that have occurred and still impacting include.

- UK inflation although falling has been substantially greater than originally planned impacting on organisations and individuals.
- Energy costs whilst lower than 12 months ago are higher than before the invasion of Ukraine.
- Combination of significantly higher than planned inflation, food cost inflation and increased energy costs leading to a cost of living impact to households.
- Supply chain issues continuing post Covid-19 and complicated by Ukraine invasion.
- Geopolitical tensions in the Middle East
- Bank of England interest rate increases raising bank lending interest rates higher than originally perceived and potentially at a faster rate.
- Heightened cyber security risks remaining following invasion of Ukraine.

2.2 Corporate Risk Register (CRR)

2.2.1 Since the September 2023 update to the Audit and Governance Committee, the CRR has been reviewed and updated. The main changes include:

2.2.2 No new risks have been added or escalated to the Corporate Risk Register in the current quarter.

2.2.3 During the current consultation, 15 risks were identified for de-escalation after a comprehensive review to ensure that there is no duplication, and the focus of the document is on those risks that are most critical to the council at this point. Sandway Homes - Financial sustainability beyond 2023/24

- Failure to adequately invest in the Highway network and associated assets.
- Condition of Assets
- Impact of Cost of Living crisis on residents and demand for council services
- Market failure of Social Care provision across Adult and Children's
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- Climate Emergency- Strategic Risk

- Lack of SEND specialist placements for children and young people.
- Requirement to work collaboratively with Sefton New Directions to review delivery model, in order to meet market requirements and promote financial sustainability; identify opportunities and future risk mitigation.
- Education service not being able to meet statutory compliance at an acceptable level.
- ASC contracted rates are no longer sufficient to secure placements.
- School debts transferring back to the Council in the event of them being forced into academy status or closing.
- Inability to recruit required ASC staff and retention of current workforce.
- The provision of Children's Social Care is not financially sustainable.
- Failure to adequately maximise the benefits of digital growth to the local community and businesses.

2.2.4 There have been several changes to the narrative within the CRR and a revised process has been agreed with the draft CRR being provided firstly to the Executive Leadership Team and then the Strategic Leadership Board for information before being provided to the Audit and Governance Committee for noting. The Corporate Risk Management Handbook will be updated with this revised process following the introduction of risk appetite on the Committee header sheet.

2.3 Service Risk Register (SRR)

2.3.1 The March 2021 update highlighted that the position on the completion of the quarterly updates on the SRRs, in line with the requirements detailed in the Corporate Risk Handbook, would be provided to the Committee indicating how many had been updated and shared with the Risk and Resilience Team on a rolling 12-month basis. A copy of the SRR from each Service Area is requested at the same time updates for the Corporate Risk Register are requested from members of Strategic Leadership Board. The following provides details of the outcome of the SRR response for a rolling five quarters.

2.3.2 A total of eight (80%) SRRs have been provided for Q3 2022/23.

2.3.3 A total of ten (100%) SRRs have been provided for Q4 2022/23.

2.3.4 A total of eight (80%) SRRs have been provided for Q1 2023/24.

2.3.5 A total of nine (90%) SRRs have been provided for Q2 2023/24

2.3.6 A total of nine (90%) SRRs have been provided for Q3 2023/24

2.3.7 We have worked with all Service Areas to ensure that there is an updated Service Risk Register for this quarter including the Service Area that has not provided their updated Service Risk register. We are aware that changes have been made to the content however the completed SRR has not been provided at the time of writing the report.

2.3.8 Focus on work during the next quarter will be on ensuring that the SRRs are updated taking into consideration the risks within the Operational Risk Registers as well as ensuring that there is a 100% response to the quarterly request for an

SRR. We are going to be looking qualitatively at the SRRs and provide feedback to the risk owners.

2.4 Operational Risk Registers (ORR)

2.4.1 The Risk and Resilience team continue to work with Service Managers and Assistant Directors from selected service areas to ensure the escalation process for risk is fully embedded and relevant risks are escalating from ORR to SRR and SRR to CRR where appropriate. It is noted that the escalation process does not appear to be embedded in every Service Area and in some cases SRRs appear to be completed without consideration of ORR content. Some ORRs are not being updated regularly in line with guidance and there are some outliers where ORRs are not routinely in place, and we are continuing to work with Teams to facilitate their completion.

2.5 Proposed actions from June 2021

2.5.1 In order to address the issues identified with the embedding of risk management in June 2021, all Assistant Directors were engaged, and the following actions identified and agreed to improve how risk management is embedded within the organisation. As previously reported a number of key actions have been completed with the exception of the following:

2.5.2 It is important that to properly embed risk management that risk is an agenda item on the Departmental Management Team in each of the Service Areas on at least a quarterly basis. *Guidance has been provided previously to Assistant Directors on the proposed agenda item and testing of agenda and minutes was undertaken in January 2023. Testing in June 2023 has confirmed a similar picture with all but one Service Area holding at least one formal agenda item each quarter on risk. Testing in September 2023 confirmed a similar position to June 2023 with the same Service Area not holding a formal agenda item on risk each quarter.*

2.5.3 The sharing of the SRR with the relevant Cabinet Member will take place on a quarterly basis. Assistant Directors were requested to provide evidence in March 2022 that in the last quarters evidence was provided that the SRR had been shared with the relevant Cabinet Member. *Testing in April/ May 2022 as previously reported to the June 2022 Committee update, noted that there had been progress although it was not a consistent picture across all of the Service areas. Testing in June 2023 has confirmed that all but one Service Area has shared their SRR with the relevant Cabinet Member. Testing in September 2023 confirmed that two Service Areas had not or were not sharing their SRR with their Cabinet Member.*

2.5.4 An e-learning package on risk management is to be launched across the Council during the next 12 months. *We had engaged a risk management provider to the Council, through the external Insurance Programme, to develop e-learning training content on risk management which was completed by end of November 2021. The e-learning content had been received and it was identified further enhancements were required to ensure that it was tailored for the right audience. We have refined the content, and the first part of the e-learning training was finished by the end of June 2022. We have road tested the contents with colleagues and are currently working with Learning and Development colleagues*

from November 2022 and it was envisaged to transfer the content to the e-learning library before wider rollout to Members and colleagues from January 2024. There are some further tweaks issues with the content to make it suitable.

2.6 Risk Appetite

- 2.6.1 Following the approval of the Council Risk Appetite Framework in March 2023 the Team has designed training for the Departmental Management Team members, in each Service Area, who normally completed the Committee papers. This training has been rolled out over the summer and concluded in September 2023. The Chief Internal Auditor is awaiting confirmation from the Chief Monitoring Officer on timetable for revising the format of Committee paper header to include risk appetite before it can be launched formally across the organisation.

2.7 Next steps

- 2.7.1 Following on from the approval of the Sefton Assurance framework is the consideration of implementing the three lines of defence model which outlines Internal Audit's role in assuring the effective management of risk, and the importance for delivering this of its position and function in the corporate governance. By mapping out the assurance activities from the various three lines of defence on each of the Corporate Risks this should provide better "comfort" to Members and Senior Officers that key risks are being managed effectively. A draft version has been developed and it is envisaged that the final version will be provided in December 2023.
- 2.7.2 The implementation of the three lines model will inevitably require some cultural change in the organisation as there will be the expectation that managers in the 2nd line of defence such as Health and Safety, Finance and Procurement amongst many have responsibility for their systems/policies should undertake active monitoring to determine if their policies/ procedures are embedded within the organisation.
- 2.7.3 The Internal Audit Team have been undertaking Assurance Mapping for the past 12 months pulling together mainly external and, in some cases, internal sources of assurance that is used to help shape the draft internal audit plan and inform the Annual Chief Internal Auditor's Opinion. Work will continue to take place to refine the approach including drafting an Assurance Map for the Corporate Risk Register however this has been on hold whilst the CRR has been significantly reviewed.
- 2.7.4 As part of the insurance tender two insurers have included risk bursaries to enable the Council to improve its risk management practices. We are proposing one of the insurers reviews and provides assurance on the Council's Risk Management Strategy during the 2023/2024 financial year. With the other insurer we are seeking to explore holding a horizon scanning session with Strategic Leadership Board to identify and assess longer term risks which may impact on the achievement of the Council's objectives over the next three to five years plus.

3. Institute of Internal Auditors "Risk in Focus"

- 3.1 Risk in Focus is an annual thought leadership research project analysing the top risks faced by organisations across Europe. It is a tool for internal auditors and

audit committees, and a barometer of what Chief Audit Executives (CAEs) and others perceive as their organisations' risk priorities for 2024 and beyond both in the public and private sector.

- 3.2 With the backdrop of economic uncertainty playing a key theme in this year's Risk in Focus, the report aims to support internal audit and risk management functions in navigating through a poly-crisis of high-impact interlocking risk that organisations are facing today. The term poly crisis reflects the multiple crisis that affecting the UK, corporations and organisations and include for example cost of living crisis, energy crisis and geopolitical tensions.
- 3.3 The publication is attached at Appendix B, and it is interesting note that there is a broad alignment with the risks outlined in the publication and the Council's risk register. Members are asked to note the key risks identified in the publication, the risk priorities and understand how they align to the current strategic risks identified for the Council.

4. Summary of the current position

- 4.1 Substantial work has been undertaken to attempt to embed risk management across the Council over the past six years through designing a risk framework, providing training, and facilitating the Service and Operational Risk Registers using resources across the Risk and Audit Team. Recent work has been drafting the Sefton Assurance Framework and undertaking Assurance Mapping to inform the Annual Chief Internal Auditor's Opinion and the Annual Internal Audit Plan.
- 4.2 There is clear evidence of engagement by the leadership team in terms of regularly reviewing the CRR. To demonstrate that risk management is embedded at this level engagement should be universal and consistent over time as highlighted in the update. Improvements required include the consistent regular updating of SRRs, considering the outcome of the ORR's when looking at SRR and sharing the SRR with the relevant Cabinet Member and the Risk team when requested.
- 4.3 There has been an improvement in the updating of SRRs over the past 12 months although it is not fully embedded. ORRs remain an area to be improved across the Council and we are continuing to work with teams to facilitate this across the organisation.
- 4.4 The implementation of the Council's risk appetite, will help to further embed risk management within the Council and should improve corporate decision making. We are awaiting the redesign of the Committee agenda before this can be finally rolled out across the organisation.
- 4.5 There is further work planned to improve risk management within the organisation through the adoption of Three Lines of Defence model and the Assurance Mapping of key risks as well as horizon scanning for risks over the next three to five years. Work will be undertaken to assess the Council's risk management arrangements during 2024/25 using the Council's risk management bursary.

5. Presentation to the Audit and Governance Committee Meeting

- 5.1 At the Audit and Governance Committee in December 2019 it was agreed that for each meeting a short presentation would be made by a risk owner on one of the risks from the Corporate Risk Register. The briefing, in line with good practice on risk management, should be on the background to the key risk, the current controls and the actions to mitigate the risk further.
- 5.2 A presentation will be provided to Members at the December 2023 meeting on one of the risks from the CRR.