




Audit and Governance Committee

Date:	30 November 2021
Title:	Full Council Motion – Climate Change Risk Management
Cabinet Member(s):	N/A
Contact officer:	Maggie Gibb, 01296 387327, Maggie.Gibb@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Ward(s) affected:	N/A
Recommendations:	To approve the approach to Climate Change risks in the Council’s Risk Registers as outlined in the report.
Reason for decision:	To provide a response to the Full Council Motion for the inclusion of climate change risks in all risk registers.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The following motion was tabled by Councillor Gemmell at the Full Council meeting on 15 September 2021:
- 1.2 *"The Council notes that the effects from Climate Change are widespread, rapid and intensifying and are affecting all areas of the Earth in multiple ways as stated by representatives of the IPCC on 9 August 2021. These rapid and intensifying effects are already affecting the UK and Buckinghamshire in multiple ways which will only get worse as the global temperature rapidly approaches, and likely surpasses, 1.5 degrees in the early 2030s. In recognition of the risks associated with such effects the Council proposes that all risk registers for the council, all departments within the council and in all associated bodies over which the council has influence should be updated to include "climate risk" or "risk from climate change".*
- 1.3 The Council voted to refer the motion to the Audit and Governance Committee.

2. Content of report

- 2.1 The Audit and Governance Committee commissioned a report by the Head of Business Assurance (& Chief Auditor) to include the current recording and reporting of climate change risks across the council, benchmarking against other local authorities and recommendations for the future development of climate change risk management.
 - 2.2 Buckinghamshire Council maintains a Strategic Risk Register which is owned by the Corporate Management Team (CMT). A risk relating to Climate Change is included in the Strategic Risk Register, with mitigating actions identified. The risk and related actions are reviewed and updated by CMT on a six-weekly basis and reported to the Risk Management Group as a standing agenda item.
 - 2.3 A key mitigating action is the Council's Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy which was recently adopted by Cabinet. The Strategy sets out the approach to addressing climate change and air quality across Buckinghamshire, including targets for emissions reduction from the Council's direct operations.
 - 2.4 Each of the Council's six directorates have an established risk management process in place, with key service risks escalated to directorate leadership teams for consideration. At present the Resources directorate has identified two risks relating to climate change, and the Communities directorate has identified one risk relating to climate change.
 - 2.5 Directorate and service risk registers tend to contain risks which may crystallise over the next couple of years, whereas the Strategic Risk Register will detail more long-term risks such as climate change.
 - 2.6 We have worked with risk colleagues across networking groups, and Buckinghamshire Council's climate change risks broadly align to those identified in other organisations.
 - 2.7 Local authorities within our risk network are generally capturing one strategic risk relating to climate change at this time. We will continue to benchmark with other authorities as well as follow guidance from professional bodies such as the Association of Local Authority Risk Management (ALARM).
 - 2.8 The Council cannot dictate the contents of the risk registers of other organisations. However, members who represent this authority on the governing bodies of other organisations will be aware of their responsibility to ensure that there is good governance of those bodies. This will include a risk register which will address climate change as appropriate for that organisation.
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2.9 We understand that climate change is a significant risk faced by Buckinghamshire Council, and we will continue to identify directorate related risks through our corporate risk management process. It is not proposed that we insist on all services/directorates including climate change risks within their risk registers, however officers will be reminded to give this risk area consideration when identifying new risks and updating current risks.

2.10 The Corporate Risk Lead has identified a number of potential climate change risks for consideration by directorates going forward. These risks may potentially be included in the strategic or directorate risk registers:

Risk	Description
Policy and Regulation	IF there are future changes to government policy THEN there could be a significant impact on the way the Council needs to operate, for example tighter regulation or environmental tax measures. There is also an increased risk of irregular spending if additional policy or regulatory requirements are enforced to mitigate climate change.
Weather-related events	IF there are specific weather-related events such as floods THEN this will have a significant impact on infrastructure, causing damage to buildings and wide-scale disruption to service delivery. Extreme weather events could also have a direct impact on disrupting supply chains, and the financial risks of maintaining and protecting supply chains could increase.
Productivity	IF temperatures increase THEN this could cause reduced workforce productivity. The Council may need to consider how it adapts to manage this risk.
Reputation	IF the Council fails to adapt quickly to the threats posed by climate change and the transition to net zero THEN they may suffer reputation damage. Government is aiming to reduce public sector emissions by 50% by 2032 against 2017 levels.
Value for Money	The costs of the transition to net zero by 2050 are increasing. IF there is insufficient or ineffective action and decisions are not being made quickly enough to address the net zero challenge THEN costs could increase exponentially in the long term.
Accountability	IF the Council's overall climate change strategies do not align to the plans of government THEN there is a risk that statutory targets may not be achieved.
Co-ordination and collaboration	IF the Council and local businesses do not effectively or efficiently co-ordinate or collaborate THEN there is a risk this could lead to increasing social or economic costs, failing to share lessons learned and failure to achieve statutory or strategic targets.

Technology	Changes in technology to support the transition to net zero could have a significant impact on the Council and how it operates. There is likely to be a financial and cost impact as markets adapt to new technologies which support the transition to a lower-carbon economy, and organisations will be required to keep pace with these changes.
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2.11 Buckinghamshire Council has already acknowledged the importance of climate change. The Council's Risk Register already reflects the risks to the Council's responsibilities associated with climate change. The risk register will continue to be regularly updated by directorates and CMT as the risks change and evolve, and as controls and countermeasures can be improved. The Risk Management Group will continue to review and identify new risks on a bi-monthly basis. It will also continue its rolling programme of reviewing the strategic and directorate risk registers.

3. Other options considered

3.1 N/A

4. Legal and financial implications

4.1 N/A

5. Corporate implications

5.1 N/A

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

6.1 N/A

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

7.1 N/A

8. Next steps and review

8.1 Climate change related risks to be considered as part of ongoing risk management processes and reported to the Risk Management Group for review.

9. Background papers

9.1 None



10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

10.1 None

