



Report to Audit and Governance Committee

Date:	27 November 2023
Title:	Risk Management Group Update
Relevant councillor(s):	N/A
Author and/or contact officer:	Maggie Gibb - Head of Business Assurance (& Chief Auditor)
Ward(s) affected:	N/A
Recommendations:	Members are recommended to note the report.
Reason for decision:	N/A

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the Risk Management Group (RMG) meeting held on 22 September 2023.
- 1.2 The Council's Risk Management Framework, including the Terms of Reference for the Risk Management Group, was approved by the Audit and Governance Committee in June 2021.

2. Content of report

- 2.1 For the Risk Management Group meeting held on 17 July 2023, the group considered the Deputy Chief Executive (DCE) Risk Register. This was presented by the Deputy Chief Executive, the Service Director for Legal and Democratic Services and the Head of Finance for DCE.
- 2.2 Since DCE last attended RMG, Service Improvement had moved under Partnerships, Policy and Communications, and Business Intelligence and Community Support now comprised of the following teams; Asylum and Migration (Afghan and Ukraine teams); Business Intelligence; Community Support (Helping Hands team);

Community Opportunities; and Engagement and Development (including Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) team).

2.3 The key risk themes were as follows:

2.4 **DCE-LD-17 Democratic and Electoral Services – Elections Act 2022**

Act now in place. No elections took place in Buckinghamshire in May 2023, but frequent parish/town by elections and neighbourhood planning referenda are taking place and Act's new requirements (such as Voter ID) now apply to such elections too. Parliamentary Elections can now be called at any time of the Government's choosing (next one has to be by January 2025) which places significant pressure to deliver the 5/6 parliamentary constituency elections in Buckinghamshire within the very short 25-day timescale.

There is a risk of increased difficulties recruiting sufficient staff for polling duties due to increased responsibilities arising from Voter ID and the handling of postal votes at polling stations.

There is a risk of increased volumes of overseas registrations and absent votes placing greater pressure on the electoral core team during the already very short election timetable.

IF there is insufficient awareness of the changing voting and candidacy rights of European Citizens from June 2023 THEN there is a risk of increased pressure on electoral services and polling staff arising from newly disenfranchised electors attempting to vote. If there is insufficient awareness of the strengthened laws on intimidation, undue influence, postal vote handling by electors and campaigners then there is a risk of electoral offences being committed.

2.5 **DCE-BICS-03 Managing the demand for Community Support Provision** – IF the Welfare/Economic impacts of COVID and cost of living crisis continue to develop THEN there will be an increasing Financial Vulnerability issues faced by residents which is likely to result in increasing demand for Community Support / Local Emergency Support (LES) provision and if not effectively managed and resourced could result in increased demand and costly intervention from other Local Authority support services.

2.6 **DCE-BICS-04 Utilisation of Government Grants** - IF there are not robust procedures to ensure effective utilisation of Government Grants THEN a significant financial risk will develop within the Community Support Service which will impact on its ability to provide the necessary support required.

- 2.7 **DCE-BICS-06 Engagement with the Opportunity Bucks programme** - If there is insufficient senior-level support for the programme across the Council and partners, and collective resources are not used to drive and deliver the programme in target areas, including the alignment of existing initiatives; then the impact of the programme will be reduced, outcomes for residents in these areas will not be sufficiently improved and demand on Council and partner services will continue to increase.
- 2.8 **DCE-BICS-09 Increase of demand on services providing support to Asylum Seekers and Refugees** - IF the increase of asylum seekers and refugees, and associated projects, is not managed, THEN there may be an increase in demand across a range of council services which limits the ability to provide services to other groups and increases the service delivery costs to the council. These services include but not limited to - School admissions and transport, Private fostering team, Housing, Property services, Legal services, Adult social care, Children's social care, Environmental Health, Community Safety.
- 2.9 **DCE-KF-01 Fluctuations in Legal Services activities** - IF there continues to be an increase in Legal Services activity due to an increase in Legal Services commissioned across all directorates OR if there continues to be a slow down in the housing market which will result in a reduction in Land Charges income or developer funded income THEN this could have an adverse impact on the outturn within Legal Services.
- 2.10 **DE-KF-04 Homes for Ukraine Grant** - IF there is a Homes for Ukraine Grant funding gap for future years 2023/24 and 2024/25 THEN this could place budgetary pressures across all services. The Homes for Ukraine scheme was launched on 14 March 2022 by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Guests will be able to live and work in the UK for up to 3 years and access benefits, healthcare, employment, and other support. The scheme allows individuals to sponsor named people from Ukraine. Local Authorities are responsible for initial checks, including at least one in person visit, payments to sponsors, ongoing support, school places, and information about the local area.
- 2.11 **DCE-KF-05 Increase in Insurance Premiums and Claims driven by demand** – - IF demand continues to increase and /or there are unusually high claims e.g. pothole claims, or IF there continues to be high levels of teaching strikes and rising energy and other costs THEN insurance premiums will increase. Also, IF housing purchasing continues to increase THEN insurance premiums will increase.
- 2.12 The risks were discussed in detail, as well as the mitigating actions being challenged by the members.

2.13 New risks, risks which had been de-escalated or closed and a sample of non-escalated risks were included in the report from the DCE directorate.

3. Other options considered

3.1 N/A.

4. Legal and financial implications

4.1 None.

5. Corporate implications

5.1 None.

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 The last meeting of the Risk Management Group was held 20 November 2023. The next meeting of the Risk Management Group is to be held on 18 December 2023. Updates from these meetings will be provided at the next Audit and Governance Committee meeting.

9. Background papers

9.1 None.

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone 01296 382343 or email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.