

From: Dan Watkins, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health
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To: Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee – 5 March 2024

Subject: **Risk Management: Health Reform and Public Health**

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This paper presents the strategic risks relating to health reform and public health which currently feature on either Kent County Council's Corporate Risk Register or the Public Health Risk Register. The paper also explains the management process for review of key risks.

Recommendations: The Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **COMMENT** on the risks presented.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Risk management is a key element of the council's Internal Control Framework and the requirement to maintain risk registers ensures that potential risks, which may prevent the authority from achieving its objectives, are identified and controlled.
- 1.2 The process of developing the Risk Registers is important in underpinning business planning, performance management and service procedures. Risks outlined in Risk Registers are taken into account in the development of the Internal Audit programme for the year.
- 1.3 Directorate risks are reported to Cabinet Committees annually and contain strategic or cross-cutting risks which potentially affect several functions. These often have wider potential interdependencies with other services across the council and external parties. The Public Health Risk Register is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.4 Corporate Directors also lead or coordinate mitigating actions in conjunction with other Directors across the organisation to manage risks featuring on the Corporate Risk Register.

- 1.5 A standard reporting format is used to facilitate the gathering of consistent risk information and a 5x5 matrix is used to rank the scale of risk in terms of likelihood of occurrence and impact. The current level of risk is assessed, taking into account any controls already in place to mitigate the risk. If the current level of risk is deemed unacceptable, a 'target' risk level is set and further mitigating actions introduced with the aim of reducing the risk to a tolerable and realistic level.
- 1.6 The numeric score in itself is less significant than its importance in enabling categorisation of risks and prioritisation of any management action. Further Information on risk management methodologies can be found in Kent County Council's (KCC) Risk Management Strategy.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 Many of the strategic risks outlined have financial consequences, which highlight the importance of effective identification, assessment, evaluation and management of risk to ensure optimum value for money.

3. Policy Framework

- 3.1 Risks highlighted in the Risk Registers relate to strategic priorities and outcomes featured in Framing Kent's Future as well as the delivery of statutory responsibilities.
- 3.2 The presentation of Risk Registers to Cabinet Committees is a requirement of KCC's Risk Management Policy.

4. Public Health Led Corporate Risks

- 4.1 The Director of Public Health is the designated risk owner for the corporate risk relating to preparedness and response to Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive (CBRNE) incidents, communicable diseases, and incidents with a public health implication. The risk has been in the context of Coronavirus response and recovery and was escalated to corporate level in early 2020.
- 4.2 In March of 2023 it was reported to this Committee that because of a reduction in the prevalence of covid-19 cases in Kent and nationally, the relatively low severity of infections, and the effectiveness of the national vaccine programme the risk rating been reduced from high rated risk of 20 to the target level rating of 15, a medium rated risk. The risk remained on the Corporate Risk Register for monitoring purposes. Following the annual review and refresh of the Corporate Risk Register at the end of 2023 it was proposed that providing there are no further concerns regarding communicable diseases over the winter period, that this risk be deescalated to the Public Health Risk Register in April 2024. The risk will continue to be monitored by the Director of Public Health and can be escalated to the Corporate Risk Register should the risk profile change.

4.3 The Corporate Risk Register is presented for comment in Appendix 2.

5. Public Health and Health Reform risk profile

5.1 There are currently nine risks featured on the Public Health Risk Register, three of which are rated as 'High' (Appendix 1). There are three new risks added since last reported in year, while one risk has been withdrawn. Many of the risks are discussed as part of regular items to the Cabinet Committee.

5.2 There have been a number of changes to the Public Health Risk Register, which are summarised below.

New risks are:

- PH0120 – Cost pressure to Public Health Budget
- PH0122 – Public health service transformation
- PH0123 – Provider selection regime.

Withdrawn risk is:

- PH0121 – ongoing disruption following Strategic Commissioning's redesign.

5.3 Inclusion of risks on this register does not necessarily mean there is a problem. On the contrary, it can give reassurance that they have been properly identified and are being managed proactively.

5.4 Monitoring and review – Risk Registers should be regarded as 'living' documents to reflect the dynamic nature of risk management. Directorate Management Teams formally review their Risk Registers, including progress against mitigating actions, on a quarterly basis as a minimum, although individual risks can be identified and added to the register at any time. The questions to be asked when reviewing risks are:

- Are the key risks still relevant?
- Have some risks become issues?
- Has anything occurred which could impact upon them?
- Are the controls in place effective?
- Has the current risk level changed and if so, is it decreasing or increasing?
- Has the "target" residual level of risk been achieved?
- If risk levels are increasing what further actions might be needed?
- If risk levels are decreasing can controls be relaxed?
- Are there risks that need to be discussed with or communicated to other functions across the council or with other stakeholders?

5. Recommendation

5.1 Recommendation: The Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **COMMENT** on the risks presented.

6. Background Documents

Risk Management Strategy
[Risk management strategy - Kent County Council](#)

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