

By: Brian Collins, Deputy Leader
Amanda Beer, Chief Executive Officer

To: Governance and Audit Committee – 25th March 2026

Subject: **Review of KCC’s Risk Management Policy, Strategy and Programme**

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

The Governance and Audit Committee reviews the Council’s Risk Management Policy & Strategy and Programme annually.

The Governance and Audit Committee is asked to **approve** the Risk Management Policy & Strategy and **note** the review of the risk management programme.

FOR DECISION

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 As part of the Governance & Audit Committee’s terms of reference, KCC’s Risk Management Policy & Strategy is reviewed annually to ensure that it remains up to date and relevant.
- 1.2 The document usually covers a rolling 3-year period to reflect the medium-term nature of the strategy. However, due to current local government reorganisation timelines, the document lifespan has been shortened to two years. This has not affected the requirement for the Policy & Strategy to be reviewed and approved annually.
- 1.3 KCC’s Risk Management Policy & Strategy draws on best practice from several sources, in particular the UK implementation of the international standard for risk management, *ISO 31000:2018 Risk management - Guidelines*; the HM Treasury and Government Finance Function’s “*Orange Book: Management of risk – Principles and Concepts*”; and examples from other organisations. The document is attached in appendix 1.
- 1.4 As part of the most recent Internal Audit of KCC Risk Management arrangements, an analysis of the structure and clarity of the risk management framework and policy was conducted. The overall audit assurance opinion was “High” with “Very Good” prospects for improvement.
- 1.5 The Council’s Risk and Delivery Assurance Team acts as corporate advisors of risk at a strategic level and has day-to-day responsibility for developing and co-ordinating risk management across the Council, providing advice, support

and training and contributing to the ongoing reporting and analysis of risks. This also includes reinforcing KCC's risk management framework throughout major change activity across the Council. The team looks to continually improve and update corporate risk management procedures based on current best practice and lessons learned and has aligned its work plan with the objectives set out in the Policy & Strategy.

2. Supporting Procedures, Communication and Review

- 2.1 The Risk Management Policy & Strategy is supported by a Risk Management Toolkit containing more detailed advice and guidance for managers, including a breakdown of risk management processes and other parts of the framework.

3. Review of Risk Management Work Programme 2025/26

- 3.1 The annual review of the KCC Risk Management Programme, set against the objectives and priorities laid out in the Risk Management Policy & Strategy, is outlined below:

Objective / Action from Strategy	Current Position and Latest Developments
<p>Integrating risk management practices into the Council's decision making, business planning, performance and management activities, particularly focusing on robust analysis, scrutiny and evaluation of mitigating controls and further actions.</p>	<p>The Risk and Delivery Assurance Team engages regularly with senior and middle managers, at an individual level and with management teams at corporate, directorate, divisional and service level. This involves facilitation, including challenge, regarding suitability and effectiveness of controls, upcoming actions and risk ratings. Services are encouraged and supported to add risk registers to our risk management database to help provide improved visibility of more service based, operational risks.</p> <p>Work has progressed through 2025/2026 to further develop the organisational risk taxonomy, including key risk indicators and establishing a key control assessment framework. A pilot is planned for Q1 2026/2027 to trial this framework.</p> <p>Risk Management messages are aligned with business planning processes and timelines. The Risk and Delivery Assurance function has been involved with preparations for the 2026/27 business planning approach for the Council, ensuring visibility of key objectives for which material risks can be identified.</p> <p>Behavioural factors important for effective risk</p>

	<p>management are embedded in KCC values and cultural attributes – for example, effective risk management features as part of the list of corporate responsibilities outlined for all managers at grade KSJ and above.</p> <p>The Council's Quarterly Performance Report, reported to Cabinet quarterly and County Council annually, contains a section on the Corporate Risk Register, including progress against mitigating actions.</p> <p>The Risk and Delivery Assurance Team is contributing to work relating to the telecoms industry-led Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) switchover, assessing progress to date.</p> <p>Members of the Team, along with colleagues across the Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance division, acted as 'critical friends' to review the KCC Options Appraisal relating to local government reorganisation, as part of the process leading to presentation of the information to the Devolution and LGR Cabinet Committee in July 2025.</p> <p>The Risk and Delivery Assurance Team has been providing project management briefing sessions to support those looking to attain Association of Project Management (APM) qualifications, helping to build capacity across the organisation to manage significant projects. This has included colleagues in the Strategic Reset Programme Team.</p>
<p>Utilising available business technology to aid visibility and analysis of key risk information across the organisation, including connectivity between risks.</p>	<p>The Council's Risk Management database is used to capture business risks across the Council, improving visibility and enabling better corporate oversight. As at 03 March 2026, there were 627 open risks on the system, which is similar to the previous year. Internal Auditors can view the system to aid their audit activity.</p> <p>The Risk and Delivery Assurance Team uses Microsoft Power BI to aid facilitated risk sessions with management teams, including highlighting any overdue risk reviews and actions for follow up by managers.</p> <p>Thematic analysis takes place on cross-cutting risks, acting as a prompt for discussions around risk and control ownership and effectiveness of mitigations.</p> <p>MS Teams sites are established for key networks relating to risk management, to offer a platform for people in those areas to share information, dilemmas</p>

	<p>and collaborate.</p> <p>Early work has commenced to consider harnessing Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to support organisational users by developing a Risk Agent. Scope of the tool, and its potential benefits, will be explored further during the first half of 2026/2027.</p>
<p>Providing a varied risk management training and development offer for both officers and elected Members, as part of KCC's broader Leadership and Management Strategy.</p>	<p>A universal eLearning package relating to risk management is available to staff across the organisation, which is complemented by several webinars relating to different aspects of how risk is managed at KCC that are available to view on the Delta learning hub:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing Risk at KCC overview. • Project and Programme Risk. • Tools and Techniques for identifying risks. • Risk Assessment and Evaluation. • Risk Appetite, Tolerance and Escalation. • Risk Treatment. • Risk Monitoring, Review and Reporting. <p>Bespoke risk management briefings / training sessions are provided either on request, or where the Head of Risk & Delivery Assurance feels it would be beneficial.</p> <p>Risk Management was part of the Member induction programme post county council elections in 2025. A session was held in July 2025, open to all Members. Risk Management was also part of the mandatory training sessions for Governance & Audit Committee members in the summer and autumn 2025. A briefing session on the Corporate Risk Register was also provided to Governance & Audit Committee, ahead of its meeting on 28th January 2026.</p>
<p>Embedding risk management arrangements within major change activities across the council and developing an integrated approach to their assurance.</p>	<p>The Risk and Delivery Assurance Function works closely with the Strategic Reset Programme (SRP) Team to understand key risk themes, mitigate risks and improve delivery confidence to get programmes working in the right way to deliver successfully. Delivery confidence recommendations are provided on business cases whilst in development.</p> <p>The team also has an open invitation to attend the Corporate Management Team SRP Programme</p>

	<p>Board items where there could be significant risks discussed.</p> <p>The SRP, Risk and Delivery Assurance and Internal Audit teams also take an integrated assurance approach, working together on risk management, business case development and programme governance.</p> <p>There is regular cross-referencing between programme risks and mitigations with the Corporate Risk Register.</p>
<p>Reviewing the Council’s risk appetite to ensure it remains aligned with strategic objectives, while promoting a wide understanding of how it translates into tolerance levels within service or programme settings.</p>	<p>The Council’s overarching risk appetite statement is outlined in the KCC Risk Management Policy & Strategy.</p> <p>This is supported by practical guidance for managers regarding risk appetite and tolerance within the Risk Management toolkit. The setting of ‘Target’ residual ratings for each risk also prompts discussion regarding risk appetite with Risk Owners, with the context taken into consideration.</p> <p>It is important that conversations about risk appetite continue as our risk environment evolves, as integral aspects of strategy development, budgeting and decision-making on an ongoing basis.</p>
<p>Intelligence sharing and collaboration between risk management and assurance disciplines across all Council activities, consolidating ongoing learning, experience, and knowledge. This includes ensuring understanding of how each of the “three lines of assurance” contributes to the overall level of assurance required and how these can be best integrated and mutually supportive.</p>	<p>The Risk and Assurance Function has a positive, collaborative working relationship with the Internal Audit and Counter-Fraud function, sharing intelligence on findings from risk reviews; on activities such as assurance mapping; as well as liaising to prevent duplication and complement each other’s work in instances where the Internal Audit function is offering consultancy-type services.</p> <p>The Risk and Delivery Assurance function now routinely attends Internal Audit’s Relationship Management meetings for each directorate, to enable joint liaison with Corporate Directors regarding emerging risks, as well as audit activity. The team also attends Internal Audit team meetings to input on key items, for example an initial meeting on the audit plan for 2026/27.</p> <p>The Head of Risk and Delivery Assurance is a recipient of finalised audit reports to enable reviewing of issues and consideration of the associated risks and potential controls, including how they feature in the risk profile.</p>

	<p>As part of a KCC Risk Management network the lead officers for risk specialisms i.e., Health & Safety, Resilience and Emergency Planning, Information Resilience and Transparency, Insurance, Commercial and Procurement, as well as Internal Audit and Counter Fraud meet to share intelligence and align activities where possible.</p> <p>Representatives from the Risk and Delivery Assurance Team are assigned to working groups associated to key risk areas for oversight and to offer a corporate perspective. Examples include involvement in cross directorate groups relating to information governance, business continuity / resilience. commissioning and procurement and the PREVENT agenda, as well as Serious and Organised Crime.</p> <p>Risk management support and guidance has been given to the Serious Organised Crime (SOC) team at KCC, including reviews of associated risks across organisational risk registers, meeting with officers across all directorates to discuss SOC related risks and ensuring mitigating controls are in place.</p>
<p>Operating sound and transparent risk management arrangements with our partners and providers, underpinned by a culture that supports collaboration and the development of trust, ensuring clarity of risk and control ownership and striking a proportionate balance of oversight of partner / provider risks without being over-constrictive.</p>	<p>Many of our corporate / strategic risks involve working with partners and providers to mitigate risks. For example, members of the Risk and Delivery Assurance Team have been liaising with KCC senior management and partners on risks relating to the SEND agenda, as well as those involving market pressures / forces e.g. in social care settings.</p> <p>The Team has been liaising with the Council's Commercial and Procurement function, as well as Commissioning teams in directorates, to ensure continued visibility of key risks, such as those related to the recommissioning of several key contracts in ASCH directorate. Risk Management Advisory Groups chaired by the Risk and Delivery Assurance Manager have been set up for key programme change activity. The Group is an internal KCC group that provides assurance and quantification of risk within the programmes, as well as advice, guidance and challenge on the risk management approach</p> <p>The Team supported the recent ISO14001 Environmental Management Audit in which KCC was awarded full certification. Highly positive feedback was</p>

	received of sound practice of risk management being embedded within the environmental management framework and processes.
Communicating relevant risk messages to the organisation in a timely manner, listening and responding to feedback received.	<p>Key messages are communicated via regular engagement with management teams at corporate, directorate, divisional / service levels.</p> <p>Messages are sent out to promote new initiatives or training and Microsoft Teams sites are also being used to communicate targeted messages to Risk or Project Management networks.</p>
Subjecting KCC's risk management arrangements to regular review to determine their continued adequacy and effectiveness.	<p>An audit of Risk Management was performed during 2025 and presented to Governance & Audit Committee September 2025. No Issues were raised as a result of this audit, and a 'High' opinion with 'Very Good' prospects for improvement were given.</p> <p>The Head of Risk and Delivery Assurance chairs a regional Risk Management Network where good practice and ideas are shared, allowing for informal benchmarking of corporate / strategic risks against other local authorities. This is also a useful forum for horizon scanning.</p> <p>During the past year the team has analysed risks outlined by Government departments to look for relevant connections to risk profiles at local level.</p> <p>The Risk and Delivery Assurance Team has membership of the national Association of Local Authority Risk Managers (ALARM), with access to resources, training events and best practice.</p>

3.2 Work against these medium-term objectives will continue to be built into the Risk and Delivery Assurance function's work plans for 2026-27, as it looks to target its resources on areas of greatest value.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Members of the Governance and Audit Committee are asked to:

- a) **APPROVE** the Risk Management Policy & Strategy 2026-2028; and
- b) **NOTE** the report on the Risk Management Programme for assurance.

Report Author:

Mark Scrivener
Head of Risk and Delivery Assurance
mark.scrivener@kent.gov.uk

Relevant Director:

David Whittle, Director of Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance
david.whittle@kent.gov.uk