

From: Roger Gough, Leader  
Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health  
Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community & Regulatory Services  
Michael Payne, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport

To: Cabinet, 21 September 2020

Subject: Winter Risks

Non-Key/Key decision – N/A

Classification: **Unrestricted**

**Past Pathway of Paper:** N/A

**Future Pathway of Paper:** N/A

**Electoral Division:** Countywide

**Summary:** There are several significant key areas of risk associated with the forthcoming Winter and the end of the EU/UK Transition period. It is important that the authority's Corporate Risk profile continues to present a reflective position, and that consideration is given to the possible individual and collective impacts of these risks to inform the Organisation's planning and preparedness and determine the required mitigations.

The Authority working with national Government and local partners continues to simultaneously plan for and manage the emergency response and recovery.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet is asked to:

- i) Consider the relevant Corporate Risk profile and agree whether the current risk levels associated with the Public Health, EU/UK transition and Winter weather risks are appropriate and whether further mitigations are required. A presentation will be provided to set out the risk profile
- ii) Discuss the possible cumulative impacts of the Public Health, EU/UK Transition and Winter weather risks. Presentations will be delivered to summarise each risk area.

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 Recently KCC's Corporate Risk profile has been significantly revised to reflect the impacts of Covid-19. The level of risk exposure for Kent County Council has increased because of Covid-19 and acceptable target risk levels (considering that not

all elements of the risks are within the Council's control) for each risk have been reviewed, revised accordingly and continue to be monitored.

1.2 It is timely that a review of the Winter risk profile is undertaken given the significance of the compounded risks associated with a potential second wave of the pandemic, an Influenza seasonal peak, the end of the EU/UK transition period on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 and the implications of possible adverse Winter weather.

1.3 Due to current uncertainties and the fast-evolving nature of the risks, it is essential that the organisation continues to regularly review and update its risk profile throughout the Autumn - early views from Cabinet Members about forthcoming Winter risks will help to inform this activity.

1.4 Whilst several challenges to KCC's objectives may be presented by the forthcoming Winter risks, it will be important to build upon the successful ways of working and lessons learned from the pandemic. Over recent months, the organisation's business continuity arrangements have held up well to the unprecedented situation presented by Covid-19. Although there will always be some areas for improvement, the preparations made by services have ensured that KCC continues to remain responsive to the needs of Kent's residents.

1.5 There has been a whole organisation-wide response to the Covid-19 emergency and this collective approach will continue to ensure the risks associated with the Winter period can be mitigated and managed within the resources available.

1.6 Evolving Government guidance and any future directives will impact Kent County Council's risk profile and therefore an agile approach to risk management must be taken.

## **2. Corporate Risk Profile**

2.1 Whilst this item seeks to focus on several specific key risks relevant to the Winter there are other Corporate Risks that are pertinent to this period.

2.2 Many risks continue to have a 'high' rating, and these have previously been reviewed by Cabinet Members and the Corporate Management Team and received by the Governance and Audit Committee for assurance purposes. Given the impacts of Covid-19 and the current uncertain backdrop this is not surprising, but it is important to note the significantly higher risk profile across the authority.

2.3 The forthcoming risk review will commence in late Autumn and will seek to determine whether current risk ratings should be retained or revised. Views will also be sought on whether any new risks should be added to the Corporate Risk Register.

## **3. Public Health Winter Risks**

3.1 A potential second wave of Covid-19 has been much publicised and it is important that the authority continues to plan and prepare on this basis. The rate of infection is increasing across the country, and this trend could continue throughout the Winter months.

3.2 The Kent and Medway Local Outbreak Control Plan is published and sets out the aim to protect the population by:

- preventing the spread of COVID-19
- identifying early and proactively managing local outbreaks
- coordinating capabilities across agencies and stakeholders
- communicating with and assuring the public and partners that the plan is being effectively delivered.

3.3 This plan is required under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and details how threats of communicable disease outbreaks which present a public health risk will be managed and responded to.

3.4 If an operational response is required the Kent Resilience Forum will co-ordinate the required action and this could include the implementation of local outbreak control measures such as a local lockdown, the facilitation of closures or quarantine. A Member Engagement Forum will also be convened on an ad-hoc basis or as required to ensure that clear communications and mitigating actions are put in place.

3.5 In addition to the risk of a possible second wave of Covid-19 there is also a Public Health threat attributed to Influenza and a national vaccine programme has been put in place to help mitigate this significant risk. Other viruses such as the Norovirus will also increase in prevalence over the colder months as in previous years.

3.6 There is a further Public Health risk associated with driver welfare during the transition period as drivers may be required to sit within vehicles for prolonged periods of time because of the freight traffic management plans that will be put in place.

3.7 Whilst Covid-19 currently remains the most significant Public Health emergency it is important to recognise that other viruses and the drop in temperature will compound the risk profile. There will be implications for our service users, Kent residents and workforce.

#### **4. EU to UK Transition**

4.1 KCC's preparations for a possible no deal scenario in the runup to anticipated Brexit dates in March and October 2019 have been reported previously to the County Council. Significant work has been undertaken with partner agencies and Government departments to minimise disruption in the county as far as possible and detailed planning for the end of transition on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 continues.

4.2 The previous business continuity activity undertaken for Brexit and now transition has also supported the emergency response to Covid-19. Considerable progress has been made to ensure that the Business Continuity Plans owned by KCC services are regularly reviewed.

4.3 Detailed preparations have been made to anticipate and mitigate the disruption which may be caused by post-transition border systems, new regulatory and permitting arrangements. Kent's geography in being home to the key international gateways of the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel add importance and complexity to these planning arrangements.

4.4. The proposed (and continually developing) traffic management scheme will impact Kent's road network. Early works to facilitate the traffic management scheme include the construction works at the MOJO site at M20 Junction 10a and Highways England putting works in place to install the moveable barrier on the M20 in preparation for the end of the transition period in December 2020. The traffic management scheme together with advice for local residents and businesses will be communicated widely over the Autumn and Member briefings will also be held.

4.5 Quite rightly we have had to plan for disruption and congestion so inevitably there could be disruption to travel plans and supply chains which could impact on all KCC services and the day to day lives of our staff, residents and businesses.

## **5. Winter weather**

5.1 We will continue to plan for severe weather events this Winter.

5.2 Kent County Council has a Winter Service Policy in place which enables the safe movement of highway users across the county and this is revised on an annual basis. A report recommending a series of minor changes will be considered by the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee at its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> September.

5.3 Over the last year several exceptional weather events including storms and associated significant prolonged rainfall have impacted Kent's residents and communities. These events have placed extreme pressure on highways infrastructure and drainage systems leading to widespread flooding across the county. Cabinet were appraised of KCC's operational response to the 2019/20 storms earlier this year.

5.4 Homes within Kent have been flooded and sometimes evacuation by the emergency services has been required. Instances of power loss, loss of heating for protracted periods and disruptions to communications have also been experienced placing pressure on residents and the emergency response resources of KCC and partners. This type of situation significantly impacts communities and specifically the vulnerable. Preparedness, alerting and response messaging continues to be promoted by KCC, the Environment Agency and our other partner agencies.

5.5 This year the compounded impacts of possible bad Winter weather alongside possible traffic disruption resulting from the EU to UK transition must be considered. Resources will have to be carefully balanced and deployed to ensure that two potential parallel emergency situations can be managed. Clear public communications will be essential in this scenario.

## **6. The management of multiple incidents**

6.1 The Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) has agreed that there will be a single command and control for all emergencies. KRF partners will also continue to work together to support communities and businesses in Kent and Medway in planning for dealing with multiple incidents.

6.2 KRF Partners have tried and tested plans in place to respond collectively to health pandemics and all agencies are working closely with Public Health England and the NHS to support and manage the Covid-19 situation.

6.3 Internally each service has a Business Continuity Plan and teams will be encouraged to continue to refresh these in response to the potential compounded Winter risks.

6.4 Situation Reports from KCC's directorates have proved invaluable during the pandemic and operational headlines and items for decision have been reported to the Corporate Management Team. This reporting approach has provided clear oversight of issues including workforce considerations and will be retained over the Winter period on a proportionate basis.

6.5 Effective communications will continue to be an important element of our responses. KCC's Communications Team have played a key role in co-ordinating communications between national and local levels as well as between local partners and this will continue to be essential as we progress through Winter.

6.6 Existing multiple communication channels including social media will continue to be used to communicate key messages and updates to the residents and businesses of Kent.

## **7. Financial implications**

7.1 Whilst KCC has received a level of funding from Government there is uncertainty about the quantum of any additional future monies that may come forward to support local authority emergency responses especially in respect of Covid-19. KCC is already in a challenging financial situation because of the pandemic and adequate internal budgetary provision must continue to be made available to ensure that the organisation remains resilient.

## **8. Legal implications**

8.1 Kent County Council must continue to deliver statutory responsibilities despite the multiple anticipated forthcoming Winter risks.

## **9. Equalities implications**

9.1 Regard continues to be given to the equality implications of the highlighted Winter risks on the different communities which constitute Kent's population.

9.2 National research is being progressed to understand the factors that have driven a disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on the BAME community.

9.3 Through our Public Health campaigns we will continue to highlight how good health can be achieved during the Winter period especially in terms of how elderly and vulnerable residents can be protected and supported during the cold weather.

## **10. Conclusion**

10.1 Kent County Council's risk profile continues to remain significantly higher than in previous years because of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is essential that this profile continues to be reviewed and monitored given the possible implications of the compounded Public Health, EU/UK transition and Winter weather risks.

## **11. Recommendation(s)**

The Cabinet is asked to:

- i) Consider the relevant Corporate Risk profile and agree whether the current risk levels associated with the Public Health, EU/UK transition and Winter weather risks are appropriate and whether further mitigations are required. A presentation will be provided to set out the risk profile
- ii) Discuss the possible cumulative impacts of the Public Health, EU/UK Transition and Winter weather risks. Presentations will be delivered to summarise each risk area.

## **12. Contact details**

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