

APPENDIX 1 - COVID-19 pandemic recovery - Risk Assessment

(Reviewed and updated November 2021. Coordinated by Internal Audit Manager, Punita Talwar)

The Covid-19 Risk Assessment focuses on the five most significant risks. Please refer to the bottom of this document for the 'Risk Scoring Matrix' and plotting of these risks to determine relative significance and prioritisation. Risk categories A and B are also included in the Council's Corporate (strategic) risk register.

The extent to which these some risks can be reduced and mitigated continue to be significantly impacted by externalities. These are highlighted in blue.

Risk Area	Likelihood	Impact	Control Measures / Mitigation	Risk or Issue Action Plan & Further Considerations (Including Residual Risk)
<p>A. ECONOMY</p> <p>RED RISK <i>AT OCTOBER 2021 WHILST RAG RATING REMAINS RED, SOME RISKS HAVE MOVED POSITION ON THE RISK MATRIX TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF NATIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH & FORECASTS</i></p> <p><i>(i)Risk: Challenges from the longer-term impact of the pandemic on local economic recovery continues to place demands on a range of Council Services; significant economic impact on local</i></p>	(i)3	(i)4	<p>Economic Development Recovery Plan forms part of the Council's broader COVID-19 Recovery Plan. Actions will include quick wins and longer-term actions.</p> <p>Several initiatives are underway to gain greater insight into the wider economic impact of the pandemic and pursue necessary recovery actions, as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Surveys conducted with businesses 2. A review of recent reports and surveys by relevant organisations to fully understand the adverse impact on employment and the aviation section. 3. Council working with Enterprise M3 (Local Enterprise Partnership) to promote 'Job Fuse' as a means of brokering new job opportunities. 	<p>ONGOING ACTION: The economic situation and ongoing impact of COVID-19 for the Borough is regularly reviewed and reported.</p> <p>Economic development elements of the draft corporate recovery plan have been considered by the Economic Development Committee on 22 June 2021, to cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimising unemployment • Developing skills and getting people back into work • Assisting future business growth and adaptation • Placemaking, regeneration and developing infrastructure • Attracting visitors back into the borough

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<p>area due to proximity to Heathrow airport with aviation industry being severely affected during the pandemic and regular changes to travel rules creating ongoing uncertainty.</p> <p><u>(ii)Residual risk</u> to be accepted - whilst Council actions aim to support and influence sustained economic recovery and growth, these alone cannot control outcomes due to the macroeconomic environment and global drivers.</p> <p><u>(iii)Risk</u> –Loss of Council income streams arising from reduced footfall in town centres such as Parking and retail letting of the Elmsleigh Centre, with these areas also likely to be influenced by evolving</p>	<p>(ii)3</p> <p>(iii)4</p>	<p>(ii)4</p> <p>(iii)3</p>	<p>4. The Council secured £43,000 match funding from EM3 for Bounce Back Streets</p> <p>5. Small business incubator is operational.</p> <p>6. Multi-Agency Group set up and led by the Council to focus on supporting the 18–25-year-olds into employment.</p> <p>7. Youth Hub will increase the accessibility to job, training, and employment opportunities for NEETs, and offers wellbeing support.</p> <p>8. Appointment of a Town Centres Manager who is developing individual action plans for Ashford, Shepperton and Sunbury.</p> <p>9. Initiatives to improve broadband speed and availability across Spelthorne.</p> <p>10. Dashboard information on unemployment rates in the borough.</p> <p>11. Working with the ‘Jobs and Recovery’ task group to promote synergy in approaches.</p> <p>12. Various other initiatives of a collaborative nature.</p>	<p>For each of the above elements, several key actions, tasks and desired outcomes are set out in the corporate recovery plan.</p> <p>ONGOING ACTION: Regular reporting on actions and tasks completed / in progress takes place at the Economic Development Committee. A report was issued to this Committee on 21 September 2021 setting out progress against the economic recovery actions on the corporate recovery plan.</p> <p>ACTION IN PROGRESS (NOVEMBER 2021) : Options on how best to support local retailers with a digital / app presence are being explored as nearly half of retailers are not geared up with online presence which is limiting their reach. Feedback from other Councils has identified the need for digital business skills training using recognised social media platforms and sessions have commenced from November.</p>

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<p>consumer behaviours. This will continue to impact the Council's finances.</p>			<p>Financial support for businesses has been made available through several Government schemes up to July 2021. Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) of £1.9m (currently available) to be applied up to March 2022. This is a discretionary grant scheme.</p> <p>Economic Development committee remit includes scrutiny of budgets and grant spend. Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) Task Group set up to specifically establish how to spend the remaining grant monies to ensure businesses benefit the most in terms of recovery and future growth.</p>	<p>ACTION - ED strategy is due for a complete refresh by April 2022 (to cover 2022 -2027).</p> <p>NEW ACTION (NOVEMBER 2021) The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) task group have agreed direction for spending the remaining ARG fund monies in supporting businesses, focussing on equipment, support and training. A policy can now be put in place to determine application of the ARG fund up to March 2022.</p> <p>Residual risk to be accepted - whilst Council actions aim to support and influence local economic recovery, these alone cannot control outcomes due to the macroeconomic environment.</p>

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<p>B. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE</p> <p>AMBER AND RED RISKS</p> <p>(i) Risk - Significant financial cost implication on the Council associated with recovery from the financial economic impacts of COVID-19 including longer term reductions in some income streams such as car parking and retail rental, risks to the Council's taxbase income, need to provide financial support for leisure centres, impact of rising inflationary pressures such as increased living costs, risks of rising interest rates (with wider implications), and risk of revenue impacts arising as a result of the Moratorium on high rise developments in Staines-upon-Thames.</p>	(i)4	(i)3	<p>Outline Budget scenarios for period 2022-23 to 2025-26 being modelled to identify potential range of budget gaps. Officers putting together strategy options, including savings for Corporate Policy Resources Committee to consider.</p> <p>An independent peer led review of the Council's approach to finance was undertaken and formally reported in January 2021.</p> <p>Accountancy liaise with services over financial monitoring. Mechanisms to account for expenditure relating to COVID-19. Delta returns submitted include details of loss of income and additional costs incurred during COVID-19. Various tranches of Government grants have been released.</p> <p>Surrey Treasurers liaise on fortnightly basis to monitor tax base and collection fund deficits and impacts on the current/future budgets.</p>	<p>NEW ACTION (NOVEMBER 2021): Ongoing. Production of outline budget for 2022-23. Corporate Policy Resources Committee Budget Briefing in early November.</p> <p>Chancellor's Budget and Spending Review announcements on the 27th October provided a useful indication of broader parameters for local government spending, including council tax increase rules, and the Local Government Provisional Funding Settlement in December will provide the detail of funding arrangements at an individual council level.</p> <p>ONGOING MONITORING: An action plan has been drawn up to progress the recommendations from the LGA Finance Peer Review. These recommended improvements have been accepted by the Council. Any synergies between this and the CIPFA Financial Management Code, Self-Assessment will also be</p>

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<p>(ii) <u>Risk</u> - Recovery is adversely impacted because local agencies (public and voluntary / communities) do not have access to sufficient funding to respond to additional demand / invest in recovery / lose organisational capacity because of shortfalls in income streams</p> <p>(iii) <u>Risk</u> - Significant negative impact on residents if Services are unable to meet need because of financial constraints</p>	(ii)3	(ii)3	<p>Financial impact assessment /scenario modelling is undertaken regularly, including worst, mid-range, and best-case assumptions. 10-year scenario modelling of worst case COVID-19 scenarios undertaken.</p> <p>Longer term modelling to assess next 12 months depending on stock market and pensions impact.</p>	<p>undertaken. Progress update to November Audit Committee.</p> <p>ONGOING ACTION: Managers will be continuing to consider the financial impact of recovery from COVID-19 and impacts on services as part of the budget process and financial monitoring.</p> <p>RESIDUAL RISK: The rate of economic recovery in the borough may be partially influenced by wider external factors, with business failures effecting collection rates for business rate income.</p>
	(iii)3	(iii)3	<p>Sinking funds set aside for commercial investments as a prudent measure. Continued weekly monitoring of commercial asset income due/any shortfalls anticipated. At October 2021, 99.3% of rental invoiced for 2020-21 collected, and 99.1% of rent for last four quarters collected including the most recent quarter day.</p> <p>Despite being acquired for regeneration purposes, the Elmsleigh Centre has performed well.</p> <p>Impact monitoring of Governments, extended moratorium on commercial property evictions.</p>	<p>ONGOING ACTION: Continued modelling of the effects of COVID-19 on the Council's finances. Expected case scenarios also highlighted.</p> <p>ACTION IN PROGRESS (NOVEMBER 2021): Individual business plans for each of the Council's investment assets are under development.</p> <p>ONGOING ACTION: Development Sub Committee of Corporate Policy</p>

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			<p>A weekly review of all investment and regeneration assets (including Elmsleigh) is undertaken which covers rent collection, lease negotiations, arrears and sinking fund expected and worse case scenarios.</p> <p>Liquidity and cash flow forecasting and monitoring / Treasury Management (TM) to assist planning for increased levels of expenditure and monitoring of market activity. Review of strategies with reference to external TM advisors in the context of COVID-19.</p> <p>Support to Leisure centre operators to assist their recovery process. Some provision built into budget for first quarter of 2021-22. Activity levels and financial figures (open book approach being pursued) being monitored. Currently figures and footfall since reopening in April 2021 are improving.</p> <p>Fully refreshed Reserves Strategy (2021). Medium term financial strategy. Budget process brought forward to align with service planning.</p>	<p>and Resources receives regular monitoring reports for scrutiny on the performance of the Investment portfolio. (Annual performance report considered in August 2021)</p> <p>ONGOING ACTION: Monitoring of Business Rates and Council Tax collection levels - currently Spelthorne are faring better than some other Authorities on Council Tax but due to Heathrow impact business rates more challenging. Deferral by a year of Fair Funding Review and Business Rates 75% retention anticipated in Spending Review will help.</p> <p>ACTION COMPLETED - Courts reconvened income recovery action from the end of July and Customer Services are pursuing recovery from the courts.</p> <p>ACTION COMPLETED - Bluebox system is being used for raising, collecting, and monitoring single</p>

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				tenant rents in investment properties from June 2021.
<p>C. HEALTH AND WELLBEING / SAFETY (Previously section F)</p> <p>AMBER RISK</p> <p>AT OCTOBER 2021 RAG RATING DOWNGRADED TO AMBER DUE TO EXTENT AND IMPACT OF VACCINATION PROGRAMME</p> <p>(i) <u>Risk</u> - Staff, contractors and communities are at increased risk of being infected by COVID-19 and/or the flu virus as we enter the winter season. Scientists have warned of low natural immunity due to extended lockdowns, leading to poor physical and mental health,</p>	(i, ii, iii, iv) 3	(i, ii, iii, iv) 3	<p>Refreshed remote working and DSE assessments required including photos as proof from staff of their homeworking desk arrangement. This is to satisfy the Council's duty of care in planning for hybrid working. Home Working arrangements continue whilst an assessment is underway to establish the Council's office capacity and confirm safety measures. Hybrid working policy developed.</p> <p>Lateral flow testing twice a week is a requirement for Officers and Members going into the office or workplace.</p> <p>As rollout of the mass vaccination programme continues including booster injections, uptake of vaccinations is being promoted across the borough through various communication channels to target groups as required. Expanded flu vaccination programme and government drive for take up.</p>	<p>RESIDUAL RISK: A residual risk remains as the possibility of covid virus transmission cannot be eliminated. This may be further accelerated as new and emerging variants arise. Vaccine efficacy may be further impacted with new variants.</p> <p>RESIDUAL RISK: There remains a residual risk around some individuals declining the covid vaccine/boosters, leaving them unprotected and enhancing risks of continued virus transmission across local and wider communities. Lateral flow testing is being encouraged across staff and the local community.</p> <p>ONGOING ACTION: Spelthorne's Health and Safety guidance will continue be reviewed to reflect any developments to national guidance.</p>

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<p>hospitalisation, and even fatalities from the flu virus (exacerbated if both flu and covid are contracted at the same time). Impacts on council service demands, service provision and resource availability.</p> <p>(ii) <u>Risk</u> - There are associated reputational risks if Council staff were found not to be complying with health and safety guidance leading to increased infection rates across the community, or alternatively if Spelthorne staff are not being adequately protected when returning to the office environment and in undertaking high risk activities (potential for claims against the Council)</p> <p>(iii) <u>Risk</u> – Further waves and / or local outbreak of</p>			<p>The Council has a contract in place for the provision of PPE, this has eliminated the need for ad-hoc supplies. The Council currently holds a stable supply in stock.</p> <p>COVID-19 testing is available where staff and Councillors show symptoms / Household risk identified and guidance has been circulated.</p> <p>Health and Safety Risk Assessments undertaken for key areas.</p> <p>Self-isolation guidelines issued. Where staff are required or expected to come into work / carry out visits to sites, residential properties or Community Centres, Health and Safety guidance is in place and communicated. This adheres to national guidance from 'Public Health England'. Guidelines are also in place for contractors such as at development sites.</p> <p>Environmental Health undertake inspections and compliance checks on</p>	<p>COMPLETED ACTION - Review of PPE stock levels has been undertaken most recently at the end of September.</p> <p>ONGOING ACTION: Contact Track and Tracing system to support protection measures. Spelthorne continue to apply a precautionary approach on self-isolation requirements to minimise the risk of covid spread within the workforce and across communities.</p> <p>ONGOING ACTION: Monitoring of staff retention measures and reiterating values around respecting and supporting staff.</p> <p>NEW ACTION (NOVEMBER 2021): As part of resumption planning, an office capacity assessment and review of ventilation arrangements is currently underway. This will determine maximum numbers that the council can safely accommodate and assist next steps.</p>

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<p>the virus arises because of inadequate mitigation measures and/or relaxation of former rules. In addition increased pressures on hospitals and local health services due to winter flu season having greater impact than in previous years</p> <p>(iv) <u>Risk</u> - Pandemic experience presents ongoing physical, mental, and emotional health impact on staff, volunteers, and residents</p>			<p>business premises. Enforcement action is taken if required.</p> <p>Staff are regularly reminded about mental health support as part of employee wellbeing. Hardship fund available to assist employees where eligible. Employee assistance scheme 'Care First' launched and promoted.</p> <p>Sickness monitoring by Human Resources including COVID-19 infections to determine level of staff affected.</p> <p>Human Resources are aware of 'long covid' amongst the workforce with the impact being monitored. It is expected that the NHS monitor 'long Covid' in the wider population and identify with local councils the role they can then play in supporting residents.</p>	
<p>D. POSITIVE OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>AMBER RISK</p>			<p>(i)The Council's pandemic recovery plan gives due consideration to how opportunities can be taken forward across various operations.</p>	<p>ACTION IN PROGRESS (NOVEMBER 2021): Human Resources developing new performance monitoring requirements</p>

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<p>(i) Risk – Failing to seize positive opportunities arising from the pandemic experience and reverting to old approaches may present new risks</p> <p>(ii) <u>Opportunity</u> - There may be opportunities for increased productivity and efficiencies to be built upon from new flexible patterns of working.</p> <p>(iii) <u>Opportunity</u> - Opportunities for environmental improvements (such as better air quality) have become more achievable arising from reduced traffic (road / rail / air) as people continue to work remotely, thereby positively contributing to sustainability measures</p>	<p>(i)2</p> <p>(ii)3</p> <p>(iii)3</p>	<p>(i)3</p> <p>(ii)3</p> <p>(iii)3</p>	<p>(ii) Positive lessons from extended remote working have been assessed and examined in moving to a 'new normal' and hybrid model. Managers have been offered training on effective remote team management and Human Resources are developing a refreshed training programme for return to the office.</p> <p>(iii) Climate Emergency declared and Environmental and Sustainability Committee established under new Committee system. Approval of green initiatives fund of £747k. The Environment and Sustainability Committee will determine how to prioritise this Budget provision. Hybrid models (for Spelthorne and other local employers) will support reduced traffic (air emissions from traffic is one of the biggest contributors to Climate Change)</p>	<p>for staff in line with the hybrid working policy and training for managers will be delivered in due course.</p> <p>ONGOING ACTION: The Council has identified and applied positives, around new ways of working, as part of the 'new normal'. This coincides with hybrid working policy development which has been completed and outlined to staff at the October meeting. The written version has been circulated to staff on 16 November 2021, confirming that the Management team in consultation with Unison have agreed the Hybrid working policy.</p> <p>ONGOING ACTION: Environmental and sustainable measures will be further analysed as part of seeking opportunities, to include scope for the Council representing "Green Jobs" as an employer going forward and into Council projects.</p> <p>COMPLETED ACTION - Further strengthening of resources to support delivery of green initiatives and related objectives in seizing positive</p>

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			and contribute to sustainability measures.	opportunities. <i>A Climate Change Officer has been recently appointed.</i>
<p>E. HOUSING</p> <p>AMBER RISK</p> <p>(i) Risk - Central Government lifting of bans on tenant evictions and ending the weekly uplift in universal credit payments presents new risks for local councils in terms of managing the likely impact on homelessness and housing service provision</p>	(i)3	(i)3	<p>Central Government have announced additional funding to Local Authorities, for the sum of £65m, Homeless Prevention Grant for 2021-22 intended to prevent or minimise evictions and homelessness caused by loss of a tenancy for vulnerable households. Spelthorne are due to receive £120, 000.</p> <p>In addition, Surrey County Council have received 5.6 million government funding and allocations from this fund will also be distributed (approx. 1.7 million to Spelthorne).</p>	<p>ACTION (ADDED JUNE 2021) - Eviction bans operating during the earlier phases of Covid came to an end from May 2021. It is estimated around 1million rented households may be concerned about the threat of eviction and the Housing Service have encouraged tenants to get in touch to discuss options at the outset and minimize risks of landlord eviction.</p> <p>ACTION STATUS UPDATE (NOVEMBER 2021): IN PROGRESS. Further mitigation measures are in place to minimise the risks and associated impact relating to eviction threats, such as government funding to assist vulnerable families that are in rent arrears and to prevent homelessness. Further £1.7million allocation to Spelthorne will be used to pay for school meals over the holiday period, as well as enabling the Citizens Advice Bureau to support vulnerable households with their tenancy issues.</p>

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Evaluating risks and Risk Matrix
(In accordance with the Risk Management Policy)

The Council evaluates its risks on a four-point scale on the likelihood of the risk occurring and the impact caused should the risk occur. Risks are evaluated with their controls in place. Risks are plotted on a risk matrix (see below) and prompt action is taken on those risks that fall into the red zone. Action is considered for “amber” risks while “green” risks are regarded as acceptable. The above risks associated with COVID-19 (reference A to E) have been plotted on the graph below.

Impact	4 (Catastrophic)			A (i)(ii)	
	3 (Major)		D (i)	B(ii & iii) C D (ii, iii) E	A (iii) B (i)
	2 (Medium)				
	1 (Trivial)				
		1 (Rare)	2 (Unlikely)	3 (Likely)	4 (Almost certain)
		Likelihood			