

APPENDIX 1 - COVID-19 pandemic recovery - Risk Assessment

(March 2022. Coordinated and analysed by Internal Audit Manager, Punita Talwar)

The Covid-19 Risk Assessment focuses on the five most significant risks where the impact of the pandemic has been most prevalent. Please refer to the bottom of this document for the 'Risk Scoring Matrix' and plotting of these risks to determine relative significance and prioritisation. Elements of risk categories A, B and C are also referred to 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</p> <p><u>(i)Risk:</u> 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 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>	(i)3	(i)4	<p>Economic Development Recovery Plan forms part of the Council's broader COVID-19 Recovery Plan. Actions include quick wins and longer-term actions.</p> <p>Economic development elements of the 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 	<p>ONGOING ACTION: The economic situation and ongoing impact of COVID-19 for the Borough in terms of recovery is regularly reviewed and reported.</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 25 January 2022 setting out progress against the economic recovery actions on the corporate recovery plan. Footfall in the Elmsleigh Centre is positive with visitor numbers in the first week of February 2022 at 86,212, up 32.6% on the previous week.</p>

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<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, global drivers, geopolitical uncertainty - conflicts in Ukraine and political sanctions. These factors present uncertainty for the global economy and worldwide inflation.</p>	(ii)3	(ii)4	<p>For each of the above elements, several key actions, tasks and desired outcomes are set out in the corporate recovery plan. A further update was reported to the Economic Development Committee in January 2022.</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. 4. The Council secured £43,000 match funding from EM3 for Bounce Back Streets 5. Small business incubator is operational. 	<p>ACTION COMPLETED (Reviewed March 2022) 30 businesses have now received training on digital media skills with outstanding feedback, some attributing additional turnover directly to the training.</p> <p>ACTION IN PROGRESS (Reviewed March 2022) – The Economic Development strategy is due for a complete refresh (to cover 2022 - 2027). The review has been put back to May/June due to the processing of ARG Grants, as these need to be finalised by 31.3.22</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 consumer behaviours. This will continue to impact the Council's finances.</p>	(iii)4	(iii)3	<p>(See above for detailed control measures)</p>	<p>ACTION IN PROGRESS (Reviewed March 2022) 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. Policy has allowed for applications to purchase new equipment, replace shopfronts as well as access for</p>

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<p>iv. Risk: Uncertainty and volatility for global economy. Rising rate of inflation is putting increased pressure on businesses, households, and the Council's budget. The cost-of-living crisis impacts economic prosperity and recovery.</p>	(iv)4	(iv)3	<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>Financial support for businesses has been made available through several Government schemes up to July 2021. Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) with remaining amount of 770k</p>	<p>business support. The policy was agreed with the help and support of the Economic Development Committee Task Group</p> <p>Final round of ARG grants has taken place. During February 2022 the Economic Development Manager reported that around £750k in ARG grants had so far been spent on new equipment for our businesses (there were 90 applications at that time) which has made them stronger and more competitive. A further update was provided by the Economic Development Manager on 16.3.22 advising that £770k remains unspent in the ARG fund. The processing of applications needs to be finalised by 31.3.22.</p>

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			<p>available as at 16.3.22, to be applied up to 31 March 2022. This is a discretionary grant scheme.</p> <p>Economic Development committee remit includes scrutiny of budgets and grant spend.</p>	
<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 energy, fuel and</p>	(i)4	(i)3	<p>An independent peer led review of the Council's approach to finance was undertaken and formally reported in January 2021.</p> <p>Various tranches of Government grants were released. However, Government grant support for Councils with respect to impact of COVID19 ceased from the end of June 2021.</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>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</p>	<p>ACTION COMPLETED (Reviewed March 2022): Full Council approved budget for 2022/23. Importantly the following three years (2023-24 to 2025-26) are also indicatively balanced.</p> <p>ONGOING MONITORING (Reviewed March 2022): The Local Government Provisional Funding Settlement in December 2021 has provided the detail of funding arrangements at an individual council level. However subsequent Local Government Funding Settlement only provided details for one year, so no medium-term funding certainty for councils.</p> <p>ONGOING MONITORING (Reviewed March 2022): Periodical progress</p>

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<p>household costs, rising base rate interest rates (with wider implications), financial impact of geopolitical situation, and significant revenue impacts arising as a result of the Moratorium on high rise developments in Staines-upon-Thames, slowing down delivery of affordable housing units for residents and delaying the generation of residential rental income, as well as wider non-development costs .</p> <p>(ii) Risk - 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</p>	(ii)3	(ii)3	<p>scenarios undertaken and extending this time horizon to 20 years.</p> <p>Longer term modelling to assess next 12 months depending on stock market and pensions impact. Triennial Surrey pensions fund valuation undertaken by actuaries as at 31 March 2022- currently Surrey Pension has recovered well and achieving full funding levels.</p> <p>Sinking funds reserves set aside for commercial investments as a prudent measure and anticipate by end of March there will be £32m in these reserves. Continued weekly monitoring of commercial asset income due/any shortfalls anticipated. At end of January 2022, 99.6% of rental invoiced for 2020-21 collected, and 99.8% of rent for last four quarters collected including the most recent quarter day. Currently 95% of the investment asset portfolio occupied. Focus is ensuring that one property with significant unlet space (30%) moves as quickly as possible to be fully let.</p>	<p>updates are reported to Audit Committee regarding the action plan arising from the LGA Finance Peer Review recommendations. Any synergies between this and the CIPFA Financial Management Code, Self-Assessment are also undertaken.</p> <p>COMPLETED ACTION (Reviewed March 2022): Managers continued to consider the financial impact of recovery from COVID-19 on services as part of the 22/23 budget process and financial monitoring.</p> <p>RESIDUAL RISK: The rate of economic recovery in the borough is partially influenced by wider external factors, with business failures effecting collection rates for business rate income. Rising inflationary costs represent a significant risk for households, businesses, and the Council.</p> <p>ONGOING ACTION (Reviewed March 2022): Continued modelling of</p>

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<p>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>	(iii)3	(iii)3	<p>Bluebox software system is being used for raising, collecting, and monitoring single tenant rents in investment properties from June 2021.</p> <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. Capital value of medium-term pooled funds have more than fully recovered from initial impact of the downturn caused by the pandemic.</p> <p>Support to Leisure centre operators to assist their recovery process. Activity levels in early 2022 have improved significantly halving the projected deficit</p>	<p>the effects of COVID-19 on the Council's finances. Expected case scenarios also highlighted.</p> <p>ACTION IN PROGRESS (March 2022): Individual business plans for each of the Council's investment assets are under development. A template for plans agreed by Development Sub-Committee.</p> <p>ONGOING ACTION (Reviewed March 2022): Development Sub Committee of Corporate Policy 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 (Reviewed March 2022): 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</p>

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			<p>for the two leisure centres in 2022-23. The Budget for 2022-23 includes provision for £150k support towards the 2022-23 deficit.</p> <p>Medium term financial strategy. Budget process continues to be reviewed and brought forward to provide timely opportunities to review.</p> <p>The significant financial impact and costs of non-development delays continue to be analysed, quantified and reported to councillors.</p>	<p>Funding Review and Business Rates 75% retention has been delayed at least a further year. Fair funding review and business rates reset may happen in 2023-24.</p> <p>COMPLETED ACTION: (March 2022) A further review of the Reserves Strategy has taken place with refreshed version approved by 7th February Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.</p>
<p>C. HEALTH AND WELLBEING / SAFETY</p> <p>AMBER RISK</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 during the winter season. Scientists have warned of low natural immunity due to</p>	<p>(i, ii, iii, iv,v) 3</p>	<p>(i, ii, iii, iv,v) 3</p>	<p>Refreshed remote working and DSE assessments. Planning underway for hybrid working model to take effect imminently driven by business need. Hybrid working policy developed outlining requirement for staff to be 2-3 days office based and pro-rata for part time workers.</p> <p>Regular communications regarding ongoing safety measures and the Council maintains a precautionary</p>	<p>RESIDUAL RISK: (Reviewed March 2022) 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: (Reviewed March 2022) There remains a residual risk around some individuals declining the covid vaccine/boosters, leaving them</p>

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<p>extended lockdowns, leading to poor physical and mental health, 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 evolving health and safety guidance leading to increased infection rates across the community. If Spelthorne staff are not adequately protected as they return to the office environment and in undertaking high risk activities, there is the potential for claims against the Council. Returning to</p>			<p>approach in the interest of Members/staff/residents. Lateral flow testing (LFT) twice a week is currently a requirement for Officers and Members going into the office or workplace, and arrangements beyond 1 April 2022 are under review (LFT will no longer be free of charge). The Council has a contract in place for the provision of PPE. Masks are still advised in communal areas. COVID-19 testing is available where staff and Councillors show symptoms / Household risk identified. New guidance may apply as restrictions are lifted from 1 April 2022 (under review). Self-isolation guidelines previously issued, but these are being reviewed further as mandatory restrictions are lifted from April 2022. SBC advice/policy is currently to remain at home where testing positive.</p> <p>Health and Safety Risk Assessments undertaken for key areas.</p> <p>Environmental Health inspections and compliance checks on business</p>	<p>unprotected and enhancing risks of continued virus transmission across local and wider communities. Added protection from the booster programme should however reduce both the occurrence and impact of ongoing virus transmission. Lateral flow testing is currently encouraged across staff and the local community with arrangements beyond 1 April 2022 under review.</p> <p>ONGOING ACTION (Reviewed March 2022): Government will have lifted all restrictions by 1 April 2022 (current roadmap plan). The Council are developing a revised strategy going forward especially around testing. As part of this it is recognised that there is a need to maintain awareness of any changes in the virus and its potential to mutate and infect the population further. In addition, any emerging variants will need close monitoring.</p>

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<p>the office could also lead to increased staff absences arising from virus transmission with subsequent impact on service delivery. This is further complicated by self-isolation no longer being a legal requirement (SBC advice/policy is currently to remain at home where testing positive).</p> <p>(iii) <u>Risk</u> – Further waves and / or local outbreak of 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> – Impact of pandemic experience</p>			<p>premises may evolve as mandatory restrictions are lifted from April 2022. 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’ regularly promoted.</p> <p>Sickness monitoring by Human Resources including COVID-19 infections to determine level of staff affected. 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>ONGOING ACTION (Reviewed March 2022): Contact Track and Tracing system to support protection measures.</p> <p>ONGOING ACTION (Reviewed March 2022): Monitoring of staff retention measures and reiterating values around respecting and supporting staff. This links to employee wellbeing.</p> <p>COMPLETED ACTION (Reviewed March 2022): As part of resumption planning for the ‘new normal’, an office capacity assessment and review of ventilation arrangements has been completed. Ventilation is the most effective form of prevention in virus transmission. In addition, CO monitors are being explored.</p> <p>NEW ACTION (Added March 2022): All Services are required to commence planning and preparation for hybrid working as part of the ‘new</p>

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<p>presents ongoing physical, mental, and emotional health impact on staff, volunteers, and residents</p> <p>(v) Risk – The shift to a hybrid model of working after a long and continuous period of remote working for many employees of the Council may present new challenges in managing expectations.</p>				<p>normal', to take effect from Spring 2022. Managers need to define their business needs for individual service areas in terms of effectively operating hybrid working in line with the policy. From April there will be consideration of hotdesking approaches (dependant on whether there are any emerging variants).</p> <p>NEW ACTION (Added March 2022): Given the extensive period that many staff have been working remotely (two years) it is recognised that continued measures should be taken to make staff feel safe but also to ease them back into a different way of working (hybrid model) and a 'new normal'</p> <p>NEW AND ONGOING ACTION (Added March 2022) Spelthorne continue to apply a precautionary approach on self-isolation requirements to minimise the risk of covid spread within the workforce and across communities. Given the government's lifting of mandatory self-isolation, it is important that</p>

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				Spelthorne's policy position on self-isolation requirements (workforce) continues to be clearly communicated at regular intervals.
<p>D. POSITIVE OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>AMBER RISK</p> <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</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>(i)The Council's pandemic recovery plan gives due consideration to how opportunities can be taken forward across various operations.</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) Environmental and Sustainability Committee established under new Committee system. Approval of green initiatives fund of £747k to support measures in addressing net zero carbon emission targets. The</p>	<p>ACTION IN PROGRESS (Reviewed March 2022): Human Resources developing new performance monitoring requirements for staff in line with the hybrid working policy and training for managers will be delivered in due course.</p> <p>COMPLETED ACTION (Reviewed March 2022): The Council has identified and applied positives, around new ways of working, as part of the 'new normal'. This coincides with launch of the approved hybrid working policy with implementation underway.</p> <p>ONGOING ACTION (Reviewed March 2022): Environmental and sustainable measures will be further analysed as part of seeking opportunities, to include scope for the Council representing "Green Jobs" as</p>

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<p>better air quality) have become more achievable arising from reduced traffic (road / rail / air) as people continue to work remotely as part of the new hybrid model, thereby positively contributing to sustainability measures</p>			<p>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) and contribute to sustainability measures. Strengthening of resources to support delivery of green initiatives and related objectives in seizing positive opportunities.</p>	<p>an employer going forward and into Council projects. Recruitment underway for sustainability resource (vacant) to progress and support green actions.</p>
<p>E. HOUSING</p> <p>AMBER RISK</p> <p>(i) Risk: Increased levels of homelessness. Some of the causes include greater threat of eviction due to financial pressures felt by households, ending the weekly uplift in universal credit payments, ending of the Test and Trace Support payment scheme from February. This is further exacerbated by delays in</p>	<p>(i)3</p>	<p>(i)3</p>	<p>Housing Service discuss options with tenants at the outset to minimize risks of landlord eviction. Government funding to assist vulnerable families that are in rent arrears and to prevent homelessness. Additional government 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. In addition, Surrey County Council have received 5.6 million government funding</p>	<p>There are no new actions arising from this review, but a two new risk categories have been added (externalities).</p> <p>Please also refer to the Corporate Risk Register (risk category 1B- Housing – Affordable).</p>

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<p>delivery of the Council's Housing Delivery Programme impacting the achievement of affordable housing provision, as well as meeting wider housing needs.</p> <p>(ii) Impact of geopolitical situation and Ukraine crises on food supply chains with possibility of reduced availability for some staple food items, leading to consumer price increases impacting all communities and particularly effecting the most financially vulnerable households.</p> <p>ii) Geopolitical situation (Ukraine conflict) has led to humanitarian crises. In supporting refugees from Ukraine the Council along with partners will have a pivotal role in responding to and coordinating essential</p>			<p>and - approx. 1.7 million 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> <p>.</p>	

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needs including safe and secure housing provision.				

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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) ; A (iv); B (i)
	2 (Medium)				
	1 (Trivial)				
		1 (Rare)	2 (Unlikely)	3 (Likely)	4 (Almost certain)
		Likelihood			