

Risk Management Update

Audit & Governance Committee

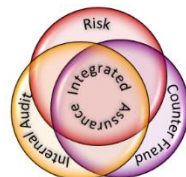
Plymouth City Council

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Official



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1. Introduction.

Plymouth City Council (PCC) like all public sector organisations, cannot be risk averse and still be successful. Risk Management enhances the ability to achieve the council's objectives, deliver its services and be successful, it strengthens the ability to respond to change and challenge, be more resilient and improve decision-making across the council.

PCC has an existing Risk Management framework that it uses to ensure that there is a consistent approach to Risk Management, this was approved by the Audit & Governance committee in November 2023.

Following the issue of central government's [English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK](#) senior leadership resource has been reassigned to ensure PCC is best prepared to deal with the challenges and opportunities that Devolution will create. This has meant that active support around Risk Management was reduced, therefore PCC leadership utilised its relationship with Devon Assurance Partnership (DAP) to help support the continued support and development of the Risk Management framework, ensuring that the risks accurately reflect PCC's position and that risks are managed in line with the risk management framework that PCC has set out. DAP has qualified and experienced staff to help assist with this and work has begun in further embedding the framework and accurate risk definition.

This paper is intended to provide members of the Committee with a comprehensive update on the Council's ongoing focus on risk management activities. It outlines the planned actions, work commenced, and risk information to support members in fulfilling their oversight responsibilities.

By offering clear and relevant information, this paper enables members to have awareness on the risks associated with the strategic priorities of the Council.

2. Risk Identification.

Initial work by the Senior Leadership team, supported by DAP, has identified fourteen strategic risks that PCC faces.

A strategic risk is defined as: *“Potential events that could impact the long-term strategic objectives of the organisation.”* The risks, a brief description and the assessed current risk score for each of these risks is detailed below. A full copy of the Strategic Risk Register is included as Appendix B to this report.

01 Failure of financial planning and delivery undermining long term sustainability.	<i>Current risk score:</i>
Without effective financial management, governance, and control, the Council faces a significant risk of financial unsustainability. This could lead to substantial and potentially long-term consequences, severely undermining its ability to deliver statutory services and achieve its strategic objectives.	10-19. Medium
02 Failure of cyber security protection framework to prevent data breaches, service disruption or loss of sensitive data.	<i>Current risk score:</i>
The Council faces a constant risk of being targeted by cyberattacks or data breaches involving its protected information. Without having specialist expertise and robust mitigation strategies, it is vulnerable to the loss of extremely sensitive data, disruption to statutory service delivery, and potentially severe financial consequences.	20-25. High
03 Failure to leverage strategic data effectively, resulting in poor decisions.	<i>Current risk score:</i>
Without effective processes and procedures for collecting, storing, presenting, and utilising data, the Council risks being unable to respond to emerging trends, operate efficiently, and make informed decisions. This could result in increased costs, reduced service effectiveness, and poor strategic outcomes.	3 > 9. Low
04 Failure to recruit, retain and support workforce capability and capacity, impacting service delivery and organisational performance.	<i>Current risk score:</i>
Unless the Council actively maintains and supports its existing workforce, it risks losing critical skills and knowledge essential for delivering statutory services and achieving strategic objectives. An additional risk lies in the Council's ability to position itself effectively to attract and retain individuals with the right skills, expertise, and behaviours needed to drive organisational success.	3 > 9. Low
05 Failure to nurture and develop our key relationships leading to a breakdown affecting service delivery.	<i>Current risk score:</i>
Without sufficient attention to building, maintaining, and evolving strategic relationships with key partners, stakeholders, and service providers may lead to a breakdown in effective collaboration. This could result in fragmented service delivery, reduced effectiveness of joint initiatives and missed opportunities for innovation. The impact may be particularly acute in areas requiring multi-agency coordination, such as health, social care, and community safety.	3 > 9. Low

06 Failure to maintain and develop a robust and successful supply chain.	<i>Current risk score:</i>
There is a risk that the Council may not adequately sustain or evolve its supply chain arrangements, including procurement frameworks, supplier relationships, and market engagement strategies. This could lead to service disruption, reduced value for money, delays in project delivery, and increased vulnerability to external shocks such as market volatility or supplier insolvency. A weakened supply chain may also hinder the Council's ability to respond flexibly to emerging needs and strategic priorities, impacting overall service quality and public outcomes.	3 > 9. Low
07 Failure to safeguard vulnerable adults from neglect and harm.	<i>Current risk score:</i>
The Council holds a critical responsibility for safeguarding vulnerable adults from harm, abuse, and neglect. Without the implementation of high-quality care standards and robust safeguarding controls, there is a significant risk of failing to protect the wellbeing of vulnerable individuals. This includes shortcomings in coordinating safeguarding support mechanisms, developing effective procedures and processes, and responding appropriately to safeguarding enquiries.	3 > 9. Low
08 Failure to safeguard vulnerable children from neglect and harm.	<i>Current risk score:</i>
The Council has a statutory duty to protect children from harm, abuse, and neglect. Failure to deliver this responsibility may result from inadequate early intervention, poor multi-agency coordination, insufficient training for professionals working with children, or ineffective safeguarding procedures. Such failures could lead to serious physical or emotional harm, long-term developmental consequences, legal liability, reputational damage, and a loss of public trust in the Council's ability to protect children. Ensuring timely and appropriate responses to safeguarding concerns, alongside strong governance and oversight, is essential to maintaining the safety and wellbeing of children across the city.	3 > 9. Low
09 Failure to maintain effective business continuity and prevention strategies hindering response to major disruptions	<i>Current risk score:</i>
There is a risk that the Council may not sustain or adapt its business continuity arrangements to effectively respond to significant internal or external disruptions. This includes risks arising from climate-related challenges, severe weather events, cyber incidents, infrastructure failures, or other emergencies. Inadequate planning, testing, or resourcing of continuity strategies could lead to service disruption, delayed recovery, financial loss, and reputational damage. Ensuring resilient systems, clear response protocols, and cross-departmental coordination is essential to maintaining critical service delivery during periods of disruption.	10-19. Medium
10 Failure to respond effectively to emergencies or disasters, undermining community support.	<i>Current risk score:</i>
Unless the Council establishes effective procedures to support response and recovery efforts following an emergency or local disaster, it risks undermining its ability to support the community and maintain continuity in service delivery.	3 > 9. Low

11 Failure to effectively support and maintain local infrastructure.	<i>Current risk score:</i>
Failure to maintain effective business continuity strategies may result in an inability to respond to significant internal or external disruptions, including climate-related challenges or severe weather events, potentially impacting service delivery.	3 > 9. Low
12 Failure of strategic asset management to support service delivery and value for money.	<i>Current risk score:</i>
Without effective management of its assets, the Council risks a decline in asset value, reduced revenue from leased properties, increased maintenance and repair costs, and potential health and safety hazards affecting both staff and the public. Additionally, poor asset oversight may expose the Council to legal and liability issues.	10-19. Medium
13 Failure to effectively implement devolution and local government reorganisation, undermining support for Plymouth communities.	<i>Current risk score:</i>
The Council faces significant risks related to both the preparation for and implementation of devolution and local government reorganisation. If not proactively managed through effective governance and mitigating controls, these changes could impact all aspects of the Council's operations including funding, service delivery, housing provision, education services, and the preservation of a strong sense of local community in Plymouth.	0 > 2. Very Low
14 Failure to comply with statutory and regulatory requirements, and broader governance frameworks.	<i>Current risk score:</i>
The potential failure to meet statutory and regulatory obligations that underpin key governance functions, including the lawful administration of elections and referendums, and adherence to procurement legislation. Such failures may arise from insufficient capacity, inadequate oversight, or pressures to accelerate decision-making and delivery. A breach could result in legal challenge, financial penalties, reputational harm, and erosion of public trust. It may also undermine democratic processes and compromise the integrity of governance arrangements, particularly where decisions are made without due process or transparency.	3 > 9. Low

To assist the Committee understanding of the updates made to this register, a copy of the Quarter 1 Risk Monitoring report is included as Appendix C to this report.

Whilst these legacy risks offered coverage across the organisation, this improved position of clearly clarifying the risks and an assigned risk lead at senior management level will improve the overall ownership and accountability of managing and controlling the risks to acceptable levels for the organisation.

3. Planned actions.

Following extensive discussion with Senior Leadership at PCC, the proposed work supporting risk management has commenced, we detail below what will be delivered;

1. Working with the Senior Leadership team to further embed the current Risk Management framework, this work will focus on accurate risk language and definitions, scoring methodology and appropriate response. Additionally, work with Senior Leadership will focus on identifying the key corporate risks that the council faces, describing these risks accurately and designing mitigating controls that are effective and efficient.
2. Collaborating with operational staff to embed the Risk Management framework, increasing the knowledge, and understanding around risk language giving staff the confidence to accurately describe, score and respond to a risk.
3. Further development of the Risk Management framework, including establishing a Corporate Risk Management Group to actively manage risk, creation of operational risk registers, updating training materials and designing risk engagement strategies that support identification and management of risk across the organisation.

Work has already commenced and nearing its final stages on the first phase of the work, whereby a risk workshop, CMT discussion and significant risk identification work has been completed.

The work supporting the second and third phase are due to be completed in the remainder of 2025. Further updates will be provided to each committee providing progress against the work outlined above.

Brad Hutton – Senior Assurance Manager, Devon Assurance Partnership. October 2025.

Appendix A – Strategic Risk Register Heat Map

