

Monmouthshire County Council Whole Authority Strategic Risk Assessment – Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic updates overview, July 2020 (Appendix 4)

The Council's Strategic Risk Assessment has continued to be reviewed and updated based on the latest evidence and assessment of potential impacts related to the coronavirus pandemic on the Authority and wider well-being impacts on the County. Due to its purpose the risk assessment is a detailed document, there have been a number of amendments and additions to the strategic risk register to ensure it accurately manages the current strategic risks facing the Council. The table below provides an overview of the updates made to the strategic risk register in relation to the coronavirus pandemic. The risk assessment is a living document and will continue to evolve as new information comes to light, the latest full version of the Risk Register continues to be available to members to use at any time on the Council's intranet, The Hub.

Ref	Risk	Risk Level – Pre mitigation	Risk Level – Post mitigation	Overview of Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic related updates
1	Potential Risk that: The authority does not remain relevant and viable for future generations due to not having a sustainable delivery model.	2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium	2020/21 – Low 2021/22 – Low 2022/23 – Low	<p>There has been a lessened focus on some of the priorities in the Corporate Plan to re-direct capacity towards the Coronavirus response effort. To provide clarity and ensure accountability through this time Cabinet has set a COVID-19 purpose and set of strategic aims which have been updated to guide activity during the transition phase.</p> <p>The Coronavirus pandemic is likely to impact on economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of the County. There is a need to continue to understand the impact and adapt/develop plans accordingly.</p> <p>The Council's medium term financial planning has been severely disrupted by the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the Council's finances.</p>
2	Potential Risk that: Without appropriate and effective governance infrastructure, the Council may not deliver its objectives.	2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium	2020/21 – Low 2021/22 – Low 2022/23 – Low	<p>The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020 came into force in April 2020 in response to the impact of the pandemic, the limitations of the lockdown and existing legal requirements applicable to local authorities. They aim to overcome those limitations to allow democratic processes and decision making to continue.</p> <p>During the Covid-19 pandemic, there have been significant changes to the way in which the Council operates. Governance mechanisms have been developed and established digitally. These will continue to be reviewed to identify ways of working that have improved efficiency, any remaining risks and identify where these can be developed going forward.</p>

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3	Potential Risk that: The Council and partners do not make sufficient progress in delivering through regional and partnership working.	2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium	2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Low 2022/23 – Low	The Coronavirus pandemic is likely to impact on economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of the County. There is a need to continue to work with partners to understand the impact and adapt/develop partnership working accordingly.
4a	Potential Risk that: Some services may become financially unsustainable in the short to medium term due to increasing demand and continuing financial pressures	2020/21 – High 2021/22 – High 2022/23 – High	2020/21 – High 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium	<p>The Council was already facing financial challenges following shortly after the flood response and recovery resulting from Storms Ciara and Dennis in February 2020. The pandemic has accentuated the challenge.</p> <p>Uncertainty remains as to whether Welsh Government funding and flexibilities will be sufficient to mitigate the additional costs and significant shortfall in income the Council is suffering.</p> <p>Financial Forecasts are being prepared on assumptions that are uncertain. The forecasts will be supplemented by sensitivity analysis and risk assessments. In order to highlight the extent of the financial challenge, the range is anywhere between a £3.5 million and £10.4m over-spend for 2020/21, depending on the level of Welsh Government compensating funding forthcoming.</p> <p>A budgetary recovery plan and further budget savings proposals is being produced for consideration by Council in September/October. This will subsequently inform the budget setting process for 2021/22 and the medium-term financial plan.</p>
4b	Potential Risk that: The authority is unable to deliver its political priorities or maintain key infrastructure and meet other identified pressures due to insufficient capital funding availability.	2020/21 – High 2021/22 – High 2022/23 – High	2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium	<p>The Council finalised its draft accounts for 19/20 with useable capital receipts of only £3.2m, a Council Fund balance of £8.5m and useable earmarked reserves of £6.4m (of which there is planned use that will reduce earmarked reserves to £5.4m at the end of 2020/21).</p> <p>The Covid-19 pandemic is likely to have a future impact on the availability of capital resources as the Council will have limited capacity to draw on useable capital receipts or to impact further the revenue account with further borrowing. In addition Welsh Government is also having to prioritise its funding to respond to the pandemic though this could introduce further capital funding opportunities.</p>

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				<p>As part of the budget recovery plan the Council’s reserves policy is being reviewed and the S151 officer will need to assess the adequacy of reserves to respond to the financial challenges faced in the current year and over the medium term.</p>
5	<p>Potential Risk that: Reduced organisational capacity, including skills and knowledge, recruitment and retention issues, and reduced staff wellbeing, will impact on our ability to deliver organisational aims and objectives</p>	<p>2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium</p>	<p>2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Low</p>	<p>There is a potential risk of a detrimental impact on staff well-being from a range of factors linked to the coronavirus pandemic and delivering the Council’s response. The impact on staff well-being will need to continue to be monitored to determine implications and to ensure staff are supported.</p> <p>Support mechanisms in the short term and development of arrangements in the medium term continue to support staff on the potential impacts on staff wellbeing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>
6	<p>Potential Risk of: Significant harm to vulnerable children or adults due to failure of arrangements or factors outside the Council’s control</p>	<p>2020/21 – High 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium</p>	<p>2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium</p>	<p>A number of potential risks have been identified due to the Coronavirus pandemic that will need to be managed and monitored as far as possible. Potential risks include: Child welfare concerns could not be recognised or referred in to Children Services; Adult harm could not be seen/reported; Harmful behaviours, abuse and neglect, including domestic abuse, can remain hidden as a result of the lock-down</p> <p>There has been a significant volunteer response to COVID-19 pandemic, work will be required to continue to support an increased volunteer network and ensure longer term arrangements are in place including support on their safeguarding responsibilities.</p> <p>Through the Coronavirus pandemic safeguarding remains an essential part of our delivery, supporting adults and children in Monmouthshire. The process for receiving and responding to referrals has not changed. This includes referrals regarding allegations or concerns against adults who work with children and adults at risk. Arrangements have been adjusted, where required, different solutions have been needed to deal with situations during the pandemic. The volume, type and source of referrals continue to be monitored</p>

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7	Potential Risk to: The robust delivery of the Council’s corporate parenting responsibility and services related to safeguarding vulnerable children as a result of an increase in demand and complexity in cases in Children’s services.	2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium	2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium	<p>A number of potential risks have been identified due to the Coronavirus pandemic. These will need to be managed and monitored as far as possible including: operational changes in the way that services are delivered as a result of COVID-19 with a reduction in ‘direct’ (physical) contact; possible increase in referrals and impact of any delays in operations affecting capacity issues; Increase in some spend areas to support certain areas of risk; Possible disruption to Foster placements and/or carer recruitment.</p> <p>Children’s services are priority services and remain fully operational. Risk assessments will be undertaken where any direct working / home visiting is required to follow up on child protection concerns, or to provide interim safeguards as part of a care and support plan. Some direct work may be undertaken virtually or using social distancing methods</p> <p>The potential risk that child welfare concerns are not recognised or referred in to Children Services continues to be monitored.</p>
8	Potential Risk of: Failing to meet the needs of learners, including-vulnerable learners, and failing to promote pupil well-being within Monmouthshire’s schools, which may result in children and young people not achieving their full potential. Failing to adapt to changes in the new curriculum and examination requirements	2020/21 – High 2021/22 – High 2022/23 – Medium	2020/21 – High 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium	<p>A number of potential risks have been identified due to the Coronavirus pandemic that will need to be managed and mitigated as far as possible including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children who require additional support or are vulnerable not being able to access support in a known and supportive environment; - The ability of all our learners to keep learning and developing, disadvantaged pupils are likely to be impacted upon more significantly - Planning for learners’ transition back into school and onto the next phase of their learning - Physical and mental health and well-being impact of all our learners could be a continuing risk factor <p>Schools reopened on 29 June 2020, offering a reduced timetable as part of Check in, Catch up and Prepare for all pupils who wished to attend for three weeks.</p> <p>Informed by guidance from Welsh Government, plans are now underway to prepare for the reopening of schools in September.</p>

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9	Potential Risk of: Loss or corruption of data due to cyber-attack or data mismanagement which will compromise the delivery of essential council services.	2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium	2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the reliance on and use of digital technology and communication. Infrastructure has been set up and practice changed rapidly. This will need to be closely monitored to ensure robust systems are in place to protect data and to ensure all staff and systems are equipped to manage this.</p> <p>The Cyber Security Service has operated throughout the pandemic. A separate operational risk register has been opened during the pandemic to mitigate against Coronavirus-related threats, which has been monitored by the security service on a monthly basis.</p>
10a	Potential Risk of: A lack of appropriate infrastructure, including affordable housing, in the County to meet future needs arising due to the County’s changing demography and weak economic base, external changes such as removal of the Severn Bridge tolls, and as a result of the growth of the County as set out in the emerging new Local Development Plan.	2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – High 2022/23 – High	2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – High 2022/23 – Low	<p>Public consultation and engagement on the Preferred Strategy, along with the second call for candidate sites, has commenced but engagement events have been postponed. The Revised Delivery Agreement will set out an updated timetable for future key stages of plan preparation, including the consultation events and closing date for the second call for candidate sites.</p> <p>A review of the RLDP issues, vision and objectives, in light of COVID-19, was undertaken and endorsed by Cabinet, and demonstrated that the plan’s strategic direction of travel remained relevant. However, the Minister for Housing and Local Government has requested that all local planning authorities undertake an assessment of the RLDP evidence base, strategy and policies to assess the consequences the current pandemic before progressing with plan preparation.</p> <p>Liaison is being undertaken with Welsh Government/Minister for Housing and Local Government on reviewing and removing the LDP expiry date prescribed in the legislation in light of the delays that COVID-19 has put on the preparation of Replacement LDPs. If this remains in place there is a risk it could mean that council is without a local planning policy framework for a period of time.</p>
10b	Potential Risk that: Insufficient broadband infrastructure and a lack of digital skills in the county have the potential to lead to social and economic disadvantages	2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium	2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Low	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic has seen a wide scale increase in the use of digital technology. In areas where broadband infrastructure is insufficient, or for people who do not have digital skills, this may amplify the potential social and economic impact of the pandemic.</p>

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				<p>The pandemic has amplified the need for good quality digital infrastructure and connectivity, including for the council, with many services moving to an on-line digital platform.</p> <p>Due to the pandemic and the preceding flooding that took place in November 2019 and February 2020, digital infrastructure works have been slow to move forward in the county and the digital deprivation rate still stands at 12.5%. Whilst progress to date has been slow, future planned activity will start to reduce the county's digital deprivation rate.</p>
11	Potential Risk of: Political, legislative and financial uncertainty for council services and local businesses as a result of the UK leaving the European Union	2020/21 – High 2021/22 – High 2022/23 – Medium	2020/21 – High 2021/22 – High 2022/23 – Medium	<p>The UK Government has stated that the transition period for the negotiation of the future UK-EU relationship will not be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The risks identified will need to continue to be monitored.</p>
12	Potential risk that: The authority cannot deliver its services due to potential internal/external factors resulting in service disruption due to lack of Business Continuity planning.	2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium	2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium	The COVID-19 pandemic has seen many areas of the council adopting their Business Continuity Plans as part of the Council's response; the learning from the response will need to be reviewed in light of the pandemic to determine where improvements can be made.
13	Potential risk to: Communities and public service delivery in Monmouthshire due to Global climate changes could impact on the future social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being in the County	2020/21 – High 2021/22 – High 2022/23 – High	2020/21 – High 2021/22 – High 2022/23 – High	<p>The pandemic has caused some delays to progressing some of the Council's Climate Emergency aspirations, and created some uncertainty over funding.</p> <p>The pandemic is likely to impact on economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of the County. There is a need to continue to understand the impact and adapt/develop the Council's climate emergency strategy accordingly. For example there have been changes to the way we work, the amount we travel, how we manage greenspaces and promote active travel.</p>
14	Potential risk that: Declining recycling rates will prevent achievement of the Welsh Government target of 70% recycling rates throughout Wales.	2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium	2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Low 2022/23 – Low	Changes to services and social distancing restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic may have an impact on recycling rates for the county. Garden waste collections were cancelled, Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) were closed, and there have been some missed collections due to staff shortages. The impact on fly tipping has also been monitored both during and through the easing of lockdown.

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				<p>Data will continue to be reviewed to establish the impact of the pandemic on recycling rates, and to determine if any learning can be taken from recent months to improve recycling figures going forward.</p>
<p>15. New</p>	<p>Potential risk that: The spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak will impact on staff and residents health and cause delays or reductions in the Council's service delivery</p>	<p>2020/21 – High 2021/22 – High 2022/23 – High</p>	<p>2020/21 – High 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium</p>	<p>The pandemic has posed a significant and unprecedented challenge to our way of life and how the Council continues to provide a range of vital services. The need to preserve life and stop the spread of the virus, while continuing to support communities, has meant that a lot of our usual work has been re-purposed or paused.</p> <p>The number of COVID-19 cases and deaths has declined in Wales and Gwent. Welsh Government has continued to ease the lockdown restrictions that have been in place since March. Covid-19 remains an active threat. There is risk concerning any resultant resurgence of COVID-19 cases, whether it be through a local outbreak or a second wave.</p> <p>Alongside Gwent partners, the council is contributing to the operation of the COVID-19 Test, Trace and Protect scheme. Staff and systems are in place to ensure the prompt identification and investigation of clusters/outbreaks and appropriate control/prevention measures if/where required.</p> <p>The impact of the coronavirus pandemic could lead to an increase in staff absence due to illness or self-isolation which continues to be monitored.</p> <p>A shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplies could also put the health and wellbeing of front line staff at risk. Work continues to ensure all our staff, who have the need, can access the right equipment.</p>
<p>16. New</p>	<p>Potential risks that: Care Homes could be hit by an outbreak of Covid-19, affecting some of our most vulnerable residents.</p>	<p>2020/21 – High 2021/22 – High 2022/23 – High</p>	<p>2020/21 – High 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium</p>	<p>Evidence has shown that older age and certain underlying health conditions, as well as other factors, are associated with greater risk and impact of COVID-19.</p>

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				<p>Care homes have particularly been affected by COVID-19 with many homes suffering outbreaks. Patients being discharged from hospital and new residents admitted from the community could increase the risk of the virus entering the home.</p> <p>There is strengthened provision and support for care homes including on testing, Personal Protective Equipment and infection control</p>
17. New	Potential risk that: The coronavirus pandemic could have a considerable economic impact resulting in business closures and job losses, significantly impacting on the economy in Monmouthshire and financial situation of some Monmouthshire residents	2020/21 – High 2021/22 – High 2022/23 – High	2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium	<p>The relaxation of lockdown measures could result in the removal of financial safeguards such as the furlough scheme and the availability of grants, making it harder for local businesses to survive.</p> <p>The negative impact the pandemic could have on the local economy may result in the loss of local businesses, subsequent local job losses and increased unemployment.</p> <p>The wider impact this may have on families could result in financial hardship, and related issues such as food poverty and homelessness. The authority will monitor this situation closely and consider allocating additional resources to support those most significantly impacted.</p>
18. New	Potential risk that: The coronavirus and lockdown measures could have a disproportionately negative impact on the well-being of some sections of our communities, resulting in increased poverty and inequality	2020/21 – High 2021/22 – High 2022/23 – High	2020/21 – Medium 2021/22 – Medium 2022/23 – Medium	<p>There is evidence that the pandemic has a bigger impact on the well-being of those in more deprived communities. Analysis has shown the association between deprivation and the risk of COVID-19.</p> <p>Evidence has shown age, underlying health conditions and ethnicity, along with other factors, is associated with greater risk and impact of COVID-19. There is evidence that the economic impact of the virus disproportionately affects those working in lower-paid sectors, which can exacerbate issues of poverty and inequality</p> <p>There is a risk that those already facing poverty and inequality will face a worsening situation due to increased financial hardship, health deterioration and a decline in educational attainment. As part of the Council's continued commitment to Social Justice, evidence is being reviewed and activity planned related to poverty in Monmouthshire.</p>