



**Isle of Wight
Council**

Isle of Wight Council

**Risk Management
Framework**

April 2026

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Risk Management Policy

1 Risk Management Policy Statement

The Isle of Wight Council provides a diverse array of services to the 144,000+ people living and working on the Island. The Council often works in partnership with other public, private, and voluntary organisations as well as the wider community to support and sustain our economy, environment, and people.

Recent years have been profoundly difficult and challenging for the Council and maintaining service levels, both in terms of quantity and quality has been difficult in the context of continuing real term financial support from central government. Innovation has been key to this but whilst it creates opportunities, it can also lead to significant risk and uncertainty.

The Council manages risks and opportunities, to ensure that the delivery of our Corporate Plan is protected for the benefit of our community, by adopting good risk and opportunity management principles. This framework focuses on prescribing the risk management principles, tools, techniques, training, advice, and support to ensure that Risk Management, as a key business principle, is coordinated across the Council and is consistently included in decision making processes.

Risk is unavoidable for a local authority, as there will always be a level of unpredictability around the environment in which it operates. Exemplary Risk Management is about ensuring that we retain the correct level of control to provide sufficient protection from this unpredictability without stifling innovation or development.

The Council must adopt an attitude toward risk that includes creativity and innovation in which all services identify risks and proactively manage them rather than simply avoid them. Governance must be aligned, and processes are put in place to ensure that the risk position across the whole council can be assessed in a holistic and transparent manner through standardised methods of risk identification, assessment, and management. Doing

this assists us in our aim of meeting the needs of our community today and also in preparing the meet future challenges.

2 Risk Appetite

The council introduced its [Risk Appetite Statement](#) in April 2026.

This statement sets out the level and nature of risk that the Isle of Wight Council is willing to accept in pursuit if its strategic objectives. By understanding this appetite, the council is in a far better position to understand how much risk it is willing take, accept and tolerate to pursue its objectives. It also enables the council to make better and more informed decisions by defining our optimal position.

Risk appetite is embedded in decision-making processes, including:

- Strategic planning
- Budgeting and resource allocation
- Project and programme management
- Policy development
- Service redesign

All decisions must be assessed against the authority’s risk appetite using a structured risk assessment framework. Risks that exceed the defined appetite must be escalated and mitigated appropriately.

3 Risk Management Approach

3.1 Isle of Wight Council Risk Management Objectives

Our objective is to:	We will do this by:
Adopt a strategic approach to risk management to ensure that vital decisions are taken in a balanced manner based on the associated identification, assessment and management of the risks related to those decisions.	Ensuring that all papers to Committees and to CMT that are requesting a decision clearly show the risks identified with those decisions, the assessment of the likelihood and impact of that risk and mitigation that is in place.

<p>Set the strategic direction on the level of risk that the IWC is prepared to accept on the delivery of our key strategic and service outcomes.</p>	<p>CMT will actively manage the Strategic Risk Register which will contain those risks that represent the greatest threat to the delivery of the Key Aims of the Corporate Plan.</p>
<p>Understand and acknowledge that even with robust risk management and our best efforts, things may still go wrong. In such cases we will learn the lessons from this to help prevent future occurrences.</p>	<p>Where the council has been impacted by unforeseen risks, it will assess the potential re-occurrence and impact of the same thing happening again and manage that risk at the appropriate level (strategic, service or programme/project).</p>
<p>Develop leadership capacity and skills in identifying, assessing, and managing the risks the council faces.</p>	<p>Deliver training programme (and advice and support) to all appropriate levels. (Councillor's, Senior Managers, Project Managers, and other staff).</p>
<p>Further integrate risk management into Council business. Robust risk management processes, tools and techniques will help us deliver the key aims of the Corporate Plan.</p>	<p>As well as managing the Strategic Risk Register, CMT will ensure that all Council services and all active programmes and projects maintain an active risk register that is reviewed regularly.</p>
<p>Support appropriate risk taking throughout the Council at Strategic, Service and Programme/Project level. All risks identified will have appropriate ownership and accountability and will be responded to in a balanced way taking into account the level of risk, reward, consequence, and cost of mitigation.</p>	<p>Maintain Risk Registers at the following levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic (dealing predominantly with threats to the delivery of the aims of the Corporate Plan) • Service (dealing predominantly with threats to the delivery of the relevant Service Plan) • Programme (dealing predominantly with threats to the delivery of programme outcomes and benefits) • Project (dealing predominantly with threats to the delivery of project outputs (deliverables)).
<p>Meet all statutory responsibilities and where practicable, best practice requirements in relation to risk management.</p>	<p>Annually reviewing the maturity of our Risk Management practice.</p>
<p>Risk Management will be a key and effective element of our Corporate Governance arrangements.</p>	<p>All committee reports to include proper identification and assessment of risks associated with recommendations put forward.</p>

	Risk Management arrangements will be included in the self-assessment element of the Annual Governance Statement.
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This framework will be reviewed annually to ensure that it remains a useful tool for risk management within the W Council, considering changing legislation, best practice and lessons learned from its application.

3.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Risk management is the responsibility of all employees and councillors.

Role	Responsibilities
<p>Chief Executive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set the direction for the approach to risk management for the council. • Provide assurance to Councillors that the delivery of the corporate priorities is being monitored effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on and communicate council-wide achievements and risk outcomes. • Identify or commission any additional information required to monitor risk effectively. • Ensure Strategic Risk Register is reviewed monthly. • Discuss the Strategic Risk Register with the Leader of the Council highlighting any significant concerns.
<p>Directors and Heads of Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead risk management within own service areas in line with the IWC Risk Management Approach. • Provide assurance to Councillors that the delivery of corporate priorities is being monitored effectively within own service areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalate any serious or cross cutting issues that may affect the delivery of agreed performance targets to corporate management team. • Identify or commission any additional information required to monitor risk effectively. • Ensure relevant Strategic, Directorate and Service Risk Registers are tabled and reviewed on a regular basis at the Directorate’s Management Team or Service Board. • Review and approve the strategic risk register on a regular basis at the Corporate Management Team.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To approve the IWC Risk Management Strategy.
Risk Owners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take overall responsibility for managing any risks assigned to them and report the status of those risks regularly in line with either organisational or project governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure information about risk is accurate and kept up to date. Ensure the Risk Register is reviewed at least monthly at a Directorate Management Team or Service Board. Assign mitigating actions to appropriate people and regularly monitor progress. Close down risks when the threat has reached an acceptable level or has been fully mitigated.
Risk Action (mitigation) Owners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take overall responsibility for delivery any mitigating actions assigned to them and to regularly report the status of those actions in line with wider organisations or project governance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure information about the mitigation is regularly updated. Close the mitigations once the action is complete and inform the risk owner.
Audit and Governance Committee Members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing constructive challenge to the effectiveness of the IWC's approach to risk management. Providing assurance to Cabinet and Full Council regarding the effectiveness of risk management arrangements at strategic and service level. To make suggestions to Scrutiny Committee regarding matters arising within the Strategic Risk Register that require more in dept analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspect, examine, and enquire into the application of the IWC risk management approach and provide assurance to Cabinet. Regularly review the Strategic Risk Register following each approved update from CMT.
Programme Sponsors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have overall responsibility to ensure that Programmes have robust risk management in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make decisions based on recommendations made by Programme Manager on Risk Plans and the resourcing of those plans. Escalate to Corporate Management Team/Strategic Programme Board, any significant programme or project risks.

<p>Programme Managers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have overall responsibility for managing risks for a programme on behalf of the Programme Sponsor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage risks for a programme on a day-to-day basis highlighting to the programme board when a risk has the potential to threaten the delivery of the outcomes of the programme in terms of time, cost, and quality. • Table the key risks from projects within the Programme in the Programme Highlight Reports at each meeting of the Programme Board.
<p>Project Sponsors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have overall responsibility to ensure that projects have robust Risk Management in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make decisions based on recommendations made by Project Manager of Risk Plans and the resourcing of those plans. • Escalate to Programme Board, any significant project risks.
<p>Project Manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have overall responsibility for managing risks for a project on behalf of the Project Sponsor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage risks for a project on a day-to-day basis, highlighting to the project board when a risk has the potential to threaten the delivery of outputs of the project in terms of time, cost, and quality. • Table the Project Risk Register in each meeting of the Project Board. • Escalate key risks that require escalation to the relevant Programme Board.
<p>Organisational Intelligence Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have responsibility for providing risk management support to the organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the Strategic Risk Register. • Provide Risk Management training. • Provide assurance to Corporate Management Team that services are maintaining their service risk registers.

3.3 Embedding Risk Management

If Risk Management is to be effective, then it must be a key part of our management processes and business as usual activities. However, there are some specialist areas of risk management that are covered by their own specific policies within the Isle of Wight Council and therefore are not subject to this Framework, although it may be stated as mitigation against various risks that a separate policy is being followed. The table below shows the extent of risk management across the council and whether it is covered by this framework:

Corporate decision making	Yes	Key risk information included in all committee reports clearly showing how risks have been considered whilst recommending a decision.
Service planning	Yes	Annual process defining how each service will be contributing to the delivery of the key aims within the Corporate Plan including a full review and update of the service's risk register to reflect updated aims/outcomes.
Programme management	Yes	All programmes will regularly receive information on key project risks as part of programme highlight reports covering the threats to the delivery of the outcomes or the realisation of benefits of the programme.
Project management	Yes	All projects will have a risk register covering the threats to the deliver of the outputs/deliverables of the project.
Partnerships	Yes	Any partnerships with other organisations should have an agreed approach to risk management that allows all partners to be able to access up to date risk information.
Information governance	No	Wightnet Information Assurance (iow.gov.uk)
Insurance	No	Wightnet Introduction (iow.gov.uk)
Health & Safety	No	Wightnet Feedback (iow.gov.uk)

3.4 Culture & Training

The IWC risk management approach intends openness and transparency where lessons learned are shared whether they be positive or negative rather than looking for blame to be apportioned.

It is important that councillors and staff have the knowledge and skills necessary to enable them to manage risk effectively.

Training is available to both staff and councillors via the IWC Learning Hub. Additionally, facilitated workshops are available at either a directorate or service level to assist in maintaining and embedding risk management processes to ensure continued compliance with the IWC Risk Management Policy.

Appendix 1

4 Risk Management Process Guide

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this risk management approach is to:

- Provide standard definitions and language to underpin the risk management process.
- Ensure risks are identified, assessed, and monitored consistently across the whole organisation by making clear the key concepts that will be used.
- Clearly state the roles and responsibilities at all levels of the organisation in terms of managing risk.
- Follow best practice and relevant standards for risk management as well as ensuring any applicable legislative requirements are followed.

4.2 Definitions

Risk – can be defined as “an uncertain event that, should it occur, will have an effect on the Council’s objectives and/or reputation”. It is the combination of the probability of an event (likelihood) and its effect (impact/consequence).

Risk management – is the “systematic application of principles, approach and processes to the identification, assessment and monitoring of risks.” By managing our risk process effectively, we will be in a better position to safeguard against potential threats and exploit potential opportunities to the delivery of the key aims of the Corporate Plan.

Strategic risks – Risks that could affect the successful delivery of the key aims of the Corporate Plan. These risks are likely to be categorised as:

- Risks that could have a council wide impact or,
- Risks that cannot be managed solely within a single directorate because a joint approach is required to deliver the mitigation of that risk.

Risks that are recommended to be managed at strategic level require sign off by the Corporate Management Team.

Directorate/service risks – Risks at an operational level that could affect the successful delivery of the outcomes from Service Plans or other key business as usual activity.

Programme risks – Risks that could affect the delivery of the outcomes of a programme or on the delivery of the intended benefits of the programme.

Project risks – Risks that could affect the delivery of the agreed outputs/deliverables of the project.

4.3 Approach

The Isle of Wight Council has previously had a fragmented approach to risk with services adopting differing methods and levels of monitoring. The consequence of this is that it has been difficult to offer a consistent and transparent view of risk across the organisation.

Moving forward the Council will comprehensively manage risk ensuring that:

1. Councillors, Directors, Managers, and staff will have a clear understanding of what risk management is intended to achieve.
2. Significant risks are being identified and managed effectively.
3. Training, advice, and support for risk management is readily available and accessible.
4. Common “risk language” is used consistently across the authority.
5. Risk management is seen as an integral part of Corporate Governance.

This section shows the arrangements and processes that need to be in place to manage risk effectively across the organisation. The approach is based on the best practice identified in Management of Risk which was written in partnership with HM Government and the Risk Management equivalent to PRINCE2 Project Management of MSP Programme Management.

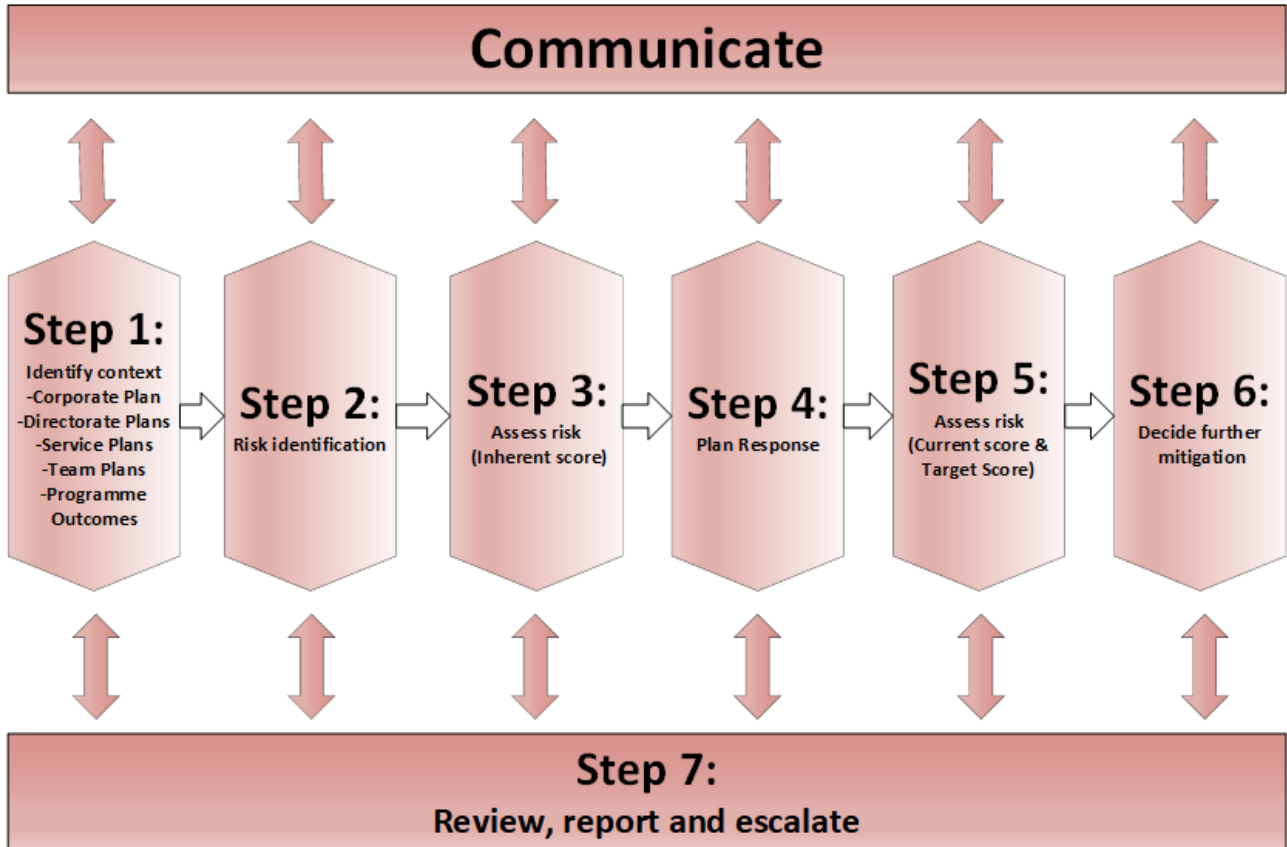
4.1 Communication

Successful risk management is critically dependent on communication. For example, risks may be identified by individuals, but to assess the impact of them and to select the correct mitigation required the involvement of stakeholders. Only by utilising the knowledge of staff

at all levels will the most applicable mitigations be identified. For this reason, Strategic and Service risks should be discussed at service boards, team meetings and staff one to ones.

4.2 The risk management process – the 7 steps

The key steps in the risk management process are shown in the diagram below:



Step 1 – Outcomes:

To correctly identify risk, there must be a clear context provided by understanding our desired outcomes (what we are trying to achieve) as it is the threat to those outcomes that it is most important to identify, assess and manage. The Isle of Wight Council identifies those outcomes in the following documents:

1. **The Corporate Plan** – this identifies the overall key aims of the Council.
2. **Directorate/Service Plans** – these identify each key outcome for each area that will contribute to the delivery of both the Corporate Plan and the statutory responsibilities of individual services.

3. **Team plans** – these identify those outcomes of Directorate/Service plans to which each team are contributing.
4. **Programme definitions** – these should identify the intended outcomes of a programme and the benefits that are identified as being deliverable by achieving those outcomes.
5. **Project Briefs/Initiation Documents** – these should identify the outputs (deliverables) that will be created by the successful delivery of each project.

Step 2 – Risk Identification:

Risk categories.

Organisations like the Isle of Wight Council face several different types of risk whose origins could be either internal or external, or both. As an aid to identifying risks, a checklist of risk categories can be used. These are based on the categories set out in the governments Orange Book – Management of Risk: Principles and Concepts 2020.

- **Strategy** - Risks arising from identifying and pursuing a strategy, which is poorly defined, is based on flawed or inaccurate data or fails to support the delivery of commitments, plans or objectives due to a changing macro-environment (e.g. political, economic, social, technological, environment and legislative change).
- **Governance** - Risks arising from unclear plans, priorities, authorities and accountabilities, and/or ineffective or disproportionate oversight of decision-making and/or performance.
- **Service Delivery (Operational)** - Risks arising from inadequate, poorly designed or ineffective/inefficient internal processes resulting in fraud, error, impaired customer service (quality and/or quantity of service), non-compliance and/or poor value for money.
- **Legal** - Risks arising from a defective transaction, a claim being made (including a defence to a claim or a counterclaim) or some other legal event occurring which results in a liability or other loss, or a failure to take appropriate measures to meet legal or regulatory requirements or to protect assets (for example, intellectual property).

- **Procurement** - Procurement risks are potential problems that can disrupt an organization's ability to acquire necessary goods and services, leading to financial losses, operational delays, and reputational damage. These risks can be internal (process failures) or external (market conditions, supplier issues).
- **Land and Property Asset Management** - Risks arising from property deficiencies or poorly designed or ineffective/ inefficient safety management resulting in non-compliance and/or harm and suffering to employees, contractors, service users or the public
- **Financial** - Risks arising from not managing finances in accordance with requirements and financial constraints resulting in poor returns from investments, failure to manage assets/liabilities or to obtain value for money from the resources deployed, and/or non-compliant financial reporting.
- **Commercial** - Risks arising from weaknesses in the management of commercial partnerships, supply chains and contractual requirements, resulting in poor performance, inefficiency, poor value for money, fraud, and /or failure to meet business requirements/objectives.
- **People** - Risks arising from ineffective leadership and engagement, suboptimal culture, inappropriate behaviours, the unavailability of sufficient capacity and capability, Page 16 industrial action and/or non-compliance with relevant employment legislation/HR policies resulting in negative impact on performance.
- **Technology** - Risks arising from technology not delivering the expected services due to inadequate or deficient system/process development and performance or inadequate resilience.
- **Information governance** - Risks arising from a failure to produce robust, suitable and appropriate data/information and to exploit data/information to its full potential.
- **Security** - Risks arising from a failure to prevent unauthorised and/or inappropriate access to key government systems and assets, including people, platforms, information and resources. This encompasses cyber security.
- **Project/ Programme** - Risks that change programmes and projects are not aligned with strategic priorities and do not successfully and safely deliver requirements and intended benefits to time, cost and quality.

- **Reputational** - Risks arising from adverse events, including ethical violations, a lack of sustainability, systemic or repeated failures or poor quality or a lack of innovation, leading to damages to reputation and or destruction of trust and relations.
- **Safeguarding** - Organisations working with vulnerable people face operational and strategic risks related to safeguarding. These include reputational damage from allegations, legal and contractual issues if procedures are not followed, risks from inadequate policies or training, and the failure to report concerns. Safeguarding can also create conflicts between confidentiality and disclosure. The main risk is the potential for significant harm to individuals if preventative measures fail.

Risk Description

To fully understand a risk, it is important that the description of what the risk is, and what the cause and effect of that risk is, are clearly articulated and can be understood by a reader who may not necessarily have a knowledge of overall or specialist council functions. Useful phrases that can be used include:

- **Description** – Risk of... failure to/of..., loss of..., lack of..., uncertainty of..., damage to..., inaccessibility to..., inadequate..., partnership..., opportunity to...
- **Cause** – due to..., because of..., in the event of...
- **Effect** – leads to..., results in..., exposes...

Following the identification of a risk it must be recorded in a risk register. For the Isle of Wight Council this means that:

- **Strategic risks** are recorded in the Strategic Risk Register. This is a register held by the Strategic Manager for Organisational Intelligence and at the request of the Audit and Governance Committee is not held within the IWC Risk System. The strategic risks are reported using the agreed templates and are shared with the Corporate Management Team (CMT) monthly and at every Audit and Governance Committee. If you feel a risk within your area is significant and should be considered for the strategic risk register, please confirm this with your director and then contact

the Strategic Manager – Organisational Intelligence who will work with you to present it for agreement or otherwise at CMT.

- **Directorate/Service Risks** are recorded within the appropriate service area within the IWC Risk Management system. Where this is not possible, and the register is stored elsewhere, it should be made accessible to the Organisational Intelligence Team.
- **Project risks** should be recorded in a project risk register that is regularly updated and presented to the Project Board. Once a project is established, an overarching risk should be added to the appropriate Directorate/Service risk register (within the ICW Risk Management System) detailing the likelihood and probability of any impact to the delivery of the project in terms of time, cost, or quality.
- **Programme risks** are recorded in a programme risk register from the commencement of the programme and should consist of risks that have been escalated from individual projects.

All identified risks must be allocated an owner and must be assigned to a staff member. The owner and the assignee can be the same person; however, it is recommended that two different members of staff are allocated to the roles to provide better oversight. The owner should be the person that is responsible for delivering the outcome that is threatened by the risk, the assignee should be the person that will be responsible for ensuring the risk is managed.

Step 3 – Assess the Risk (inherent score)

The Isle of Wight Council operates under significant resource constraints so must ensure that resources are focused on the most significant risks. To understand the significance of each risk and therefore be able to prioritise it requires each risk to be assessed in terms of likelihood (potential of occurrence) and impact (potential effect). The inherent risk score: this is the score whereby no action is being taken and none is planned. In effect this is the worst-case scenario.

The Council adopts a consistent scoring method using a matrix with set criteria for likelihood and impact, each combination of which produces a unique score. For example, a

risk assessed as being likely to occur (4) and as having a major impact (5) would have a risk level of “very high” (20). The matrix uses a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) approach to clearly indicate the most significant risks.

Step 4 – Identify existing Mitigation:

Identify any existing actions in place, or already completed, that are currently in place to mitigate either the impact from or the likelihood of the risk occurring. An example of this might be a regular review or training having been provided. These mitigations should be included in the Risk Register and can be marked as completed when necessary.

Step 5 – Assess Risk (Current Score & Target Score):

Following the identification of existing mitigation, the risk should be re-scored to consider the effectiveness of that mitigation. The scoring is done using the same matrix as used in Step 3 and provides the ‘current score’ for the risk.

Further to this, the risk should also be provided with a ‘target score’, this reflects the level of risk that the Isle of Wight Council deems to be acceptable in each case. It is worth noting that in some cases the impact of the risk occurring cannot be reduced and, in these cases, target scores should focus on reducing the likelihood to as low a level as possible. An example of this would be a risk concerning loss of life.

With the risk now having 3 scores, (inherent, current and target), it will be clear how effectively it is being mitigated and by looking at the risks holistically it will be possible to view the overall picture of the Isle of Wight Council’s risk exposure. This allows for more effective application of resources to the most significant risks and will also show the effectiveness of the existing mitigation to risks.

Step 6 – Decide further mitigation.

If a risk’s existing mitigation has resulted in the current score being at or below target, then little or no further mitigation should be necessary, and the risk owner can take a view on whether to close the risk.

Mitigations can be provided in various ways, but it is useful to use the following criteria when evaluating what measures can be planned or put in place:

Avoid – decide not to take a risk (for example, closing a project that presents an unacceptable level of risk)

Accept – Decide just to accept the risk as it is (this is more likely to be approach when the impact of the risk occurring is judged as being low). As a rule, this approach should not be used where a current risk score is HIGH or VERY HIGH (15 to 25).

Transfer – Decide to transfer some or all of the risk to a third party or through insurance.

Reduce – Decide on further actions to be implemented to reduce (or prevent) the likelihood of the risk occurring or reduce the impact should it occur (contingency).

Exploit – Take a decision to exploit an opportunity that has resulted from an existing mitigation.

Step 7 – Review, Report & Escalate.

It is important to think of Risk Management as an ongoing process where risks are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are being managed effectively. At the Isle of Wight Council this means the following:

- Strategic risks are reviewed by CMT monthly with the register also being presented to the Isle of Wight Council's Audit and Governance Committee. A summary of the Strategic Risk score will also be included within the Quarterly Performance Management Report to the IWC Cabinet.
- Directorate and Service risks should be reviewed at each Directorate service board.
- A copy of the Strategic Risk Register is provided to each directorate service board for review of mitigations by the director.
- Programme risk registers should be reviewed at every programme board. They should consist of any risk escalated from individual projects.

All service risk registers should be stored within the IWC Risk Management System. The exception to this is Programme/Project risk registers where an overarching risk should be

added to the appropriate directorate/service risk register (within the IWC Risk Management System). Where risks registers are not stored within the IWC RMS, for example when working in partnership, arrangements need to be put into place for access by the Organisational Intelligence Team so that an overall transparent view of the IWC's risk exposure can be understood and presented when required for audit and insurance purposes.

As part of this step, any risks for which the mitigation has brought the score down to on, or below, the target score, can be closed so that they no longer form part of the live risk registers being reviewed regularly.

Risks can only be closed on the following basis:

- Strategic risks should only be closed with agreement from CMT.
- Directorate/Service risks should only be closed with the consent of the relevant Director.
- Programme risks (those escalated from projects) should only be closed with the consent of the Programme Sponsor (unless this responsibility has been delegated by the to the Project Sponsor).
- Project risks should only be closed with the consent of the Project Sponsor (unless this responsibility has been delegated by them to the Project Manager).

RISK MATRIX

Will occur (5)	5	10	15	20	25
Likely to occur (4)	4	8	12	16	20
Could occur (3)	3	6	9	12	15
Fairly unlikely to occur (2)	2	4	6	8	10
Unlikely (1)	1	2	3	4	5
	Minimal (1)	Minor (2)	Moderate (3)	Significant (4)	Major (5)

For a full breakdown of how to use the risk scoring matrix, along with scoring criteria, please refer to the [Risk Scoring and Criteria Guidance](#) document.