

**AUDIT and GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**  
**26 November 2025**  
**RISK MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW**

**Report by Lorna Baxter, Executive Director Resources and  
Section 151 Officer**

**RECOMMENDATION**

- 1. The Committee is RECOMMENDED to note the risk management update and approve the revised risk and opportunities policy 2025/26**

**Executive Summary**

2. This report sets out updates to the risk and opportunities policy and an overview of the latest strategic risk register which contains the Council's most significant strategic risks. The strategic risk register is proactively managed by the senior leadership team (SLT) and reported into the strategic leadership board (SLB) as part of the council's business management and monitoring reports (BMMR). These combined reports contain performance, risk, and finance progress updates against the delivery of the current strategic plan priorities.

**Introduction**

3. The Oxfordshire County Council risk and opportunities policy is the overarching framework of the risk management process across the council. The policy is reviewed and updated on an annual basis. This annual review ensures the policy is linked to the budget and business planning process, the strategic plan and captures any external influence that may impact on the risk management process. The policy has been submitted for review and approval as part of this risk and opportunities management update.

4. The current 2025 – 2028 Strategic Plan was approved by Cabinet in November 2025, focussing on our vision to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer, healthier county. Centred around strong and connected communities, healthy places to live, and a thriving local economy that benefits everyone.

5. The Performance and Insight (P&I) team are responsible for the management and reporting of strategic risks and continue to work with services to assess training needs and further embed the risk and opportunities management process across the organisation.

## Key updates

6. The scheduled strategic risk review and discussion was conducted in September 2025. The strategic register looks to reduce in size from 10 strategic risks to 6, as a positive consequence of effective and dynamic risk management. The revised strategic risk register will be at Cabinet for approval on 18 November 2025. Post Cabinet an updated risk position will be available.

Potential strategic risks are now in development with regards to inclusion, congestion charge and data. Once the services have completed their proposals, the proposed strategic risks will be presented to SLB for potential addition to the strategic risk register. Recommendations have been shared with SLT regarding horizon scanning, from a political, economic, social, technological, environmental, legal, and organisational point of view. including consideration of the impact of local government reorganisation (LGR) on 'business as usual' in addition to identifying risk and opportunity regarding each of the three proposal submissions.

The further delay in the announcement of the fair funding review on budget pressures and impact of extreme weather events across all services have also been shared for consideration.

7. Control owners are required to review the effectiveness of controls as and when required and as a minimum on a quarterly basis. The business management and monitoring report (BMMR), from Quarter 2 2025/26 now shows the risk manager's assessment regarding the overall effectiveness of controls, to demonstrate our commitment to effective risk and opportunity management.

Audit and Governance committee are encouraged and welcomed to discuss the management of controls and mitigation action with the risk owners and the performance and insight (P&I) team, to gain a further perspective on the organisations current strategic risk position.

8. The P&I team have refreshed all risk documentation for publication on the internal intranet, 'The Hive'. The team have also created and are developing a SharePoint site, where information is provided for colleagues who are new to the world of risk and opportunity, aligning to the key areas of focus of.

Consistent messaging to reinforce the following principles:

- "Everyone is a Risk Manager" to encourage shared responsibility across all colleagues.
- Risk management adds value and supports our organisations goals.
- Proactive risk identification and speaking up about risks is encouraged.
- Consistency in all risk processes and continuous learning is vital.
- Leadership support and available tools empower employees.

9. The P&I team are responsible for collating and reporting the business management and monitoring report, which includes the three elements, performance, risk, and finance. A member of the team will be commencing a Level 6 senior compliance and risk apprenticeship in early 2026 to further develop knowledge to continue to support the organisation in our risk journey.

## **Strategic Risk Register**

10. The term “Strategic risk” refers to both strategic risks (risks to the Council’s strategic objectives) and operational or programme/project risks which have been escalated due to the severity of their likelihood and/or impact. It does not necessarily include risks to the community, which are managed through the Community Risk Register, overseen by the Local Resilience Forum, (of which the Council is a member).

11. The strategic risk register records the risks identified as requiring the most senior management attention. The strategic risk register is reviewed monthly by the strategic leadership board (SLB) and will be reviewed quarterly by Informal Cabinet, Cabinet and is also an agenda item for chairs of scrutiny committees as part of the Business Management and Monitoring reporting process.

12. The high-level overview of the strategic risks will be reported publicly as part of the business management and monitoring report (BMMR) pack which goes to Cabinet.

13. Listed below is a summary of risk status updates following the risk review in September. This register is included in the most recent business management and monitoring report (BMMR) to Cabinet on 18 November 2025. Strategic risks can be added and escalated/deescalated at any time during the year.

### **14. Risk Status Updates**

#### **SR01 – Financial Resilience**

Risk updated description to reflect short-, medium-, and long-term sustainability concerns.

Continued monitoring due to delayed financial settlement announcement and pressures from reduced funding, rising costs, and the end of statutory override for high needs.

#### **SR02 – Cyber Security**

Risk reviewed. The organisation demonstrates effective risk management and has implemented robust assurance mechanisms to provide the highest level of confidence in our controls and processes.

#### **SR03 – Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF1)**

Risk reviewed. Strategic capital and commercial board (SCCB) agreement.

#### **SR05 – SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)**

Risk reviewed.

#### **SR06 – Oxford Core Schemes**

Risk reviewed. The organisation demonstrates effective risk management and has implemented robust assurance mechanisms to provide the highest level of confidence in our controls and processes.

#### **SR07 – Strategic Workforce Planning**

Risk reviewed. The organisation demonstrates effective risk management and has implemented robust assurance mechanisms to provide the highest level of confidence in our controls and processes.

**SR09 – Delivering the Future Together (DTFT)**

Risk reviewed with emphasis on transformation delivery and financial sustainability.

**SR10 – Climate Impact**

Risk reviewed. Description reviewed expanded to include infrastructure vulnerability and broader societal impacts.

**SR11 - S106**

Risk reviewed. The organisation demonstrates effective risk management and has implemented robust assurance mechanisms to provide the highest level of confidence in our controls and processes.

The service area are developing two annual performance metrics to support the effective risk management.




**SR12 – Local government reform (LGR)**

Risk reviewed. Review and escalates as required.

**SR13 – SEND Sufficiency**






Risk reviewed. Risk added to strategic risk register





**Strategic risk key**

Status Indicator	Status Description
High	Residual risk rating is high (Score 16 and above)
Medium	Residual risk rating is medium (Score 10-15)
Low	Residual risk rating is low (Score 1-9)
	Risk score has increased, and position declined
	Risk score has stayed the same and position maintained
	Risk score has decreased, and position improved

*Table 1 – Strategic risk key*

### Strategic risk table – position as at September 2025

Risk Title	Risk Description	Inherent Risk Score	Inherent Risk Rating	Residual Risk Score	Residual Risk Rating	Effectiveness of Controls	Direction of travel since previous reporting period
SR10 Climate Impact	Increasing vulnerability to climate impacts leads to failure of key infrastructure and services with a direct impact on health, safety, environment, and businesses.	25	High	20	High	Partially Effective	
SR09 Delivering the Future Together	Failure to deliver organisation wide transformation	25	High	16	High	Substantially Effective	
SR01 Financial resilience	The council is not financially sustainable in the immediate / medium term	25	High	12	Medium	Substantially Effective	
SR03 Housing Infrastructure (HIF1)	HIF1 – Programme and cost pressures posing financial and reputation risk to the council	16	High	12	Medium	Substantially Effective	
SR13 SEND Sufficiency	Sufficiency demands for SEND places	25	High	9	Low	Partially Effective	Not applicable
SR05 Special educational needs and disability (SEND)	Local area SEND partnership inspection outcomes found widespread systemic failure. Delay for children having their SEND	25	High	20	High	Substantially Effective	

	needs met. Reputational damage (locally, regionally, and nationally)						
SR02 Cyber Security	A successful and significant Cyber-attack leading to disruption, damage or compromise of any of the council's computer services, information systems, infrastructure or data.	25	High	15	Medium	Substantially Effective	
SR11 Section 106	Event: leads to loss of public and organisational confidence	25	High	6	Low	Substantially Effective	
SR12 Loyal Government Reform	Event: changes to the structural form/s and functions of the County Council as a result of local government reform. Creating a risk to the delivery of existing county council services during the transition to a new structure/s	25	High	15	Medium	Substantially Effective	
SR07 Strategic Workforce planning	A risk that the county council's workforce does not have capacity, capability or resilience to	16	High	12	Medium	Substantially Effective	

	deliver key functions, statutory services or transformational changes required to ensure the councils objectives and long-term priorities are met						
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*Table 2: Strategic Risk Overview for September 2025 – to be approved at Cabinet 18 November 2025*

## Corporate Policies and Priorities

20. The risk management process links to the council's corporate themes of greener, fairer and healthier.

All templates include the link to these corporate themes to ensure risks are identified with any effect on headline projects or wider objectives possibly not being delivered.

## Financial Implications

21. There are no significant financial implications from this paper

Comments checked by:

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## Legal Implications

22. There are no significant legal implications from this paper

Comments checked by:

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## Risk Management

23. There are no significant risk implications from this paper.

Comments checked by

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