

ABINGDON -ON- THAMES TOWN COUNCIL

RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

Introduction

This policy has been developed as an essential part of effective corporate governance.

The Risk Management Policy of the Council is to adopt best practices in the identification, evaluation and cost-effective control of risks to ensure they are eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level.

All decisions present different levels of risk and opportunity to the Council. It is acknowledged that some risks will always exist and will never be eliminated for this reason contingency plans will need to be in place to manage these risks. The Town Council expects Members and employees at all levels to understand the nature of the risks and accept responsibility for risks associated with their area of authority.

Risk Management Objectives

The risk management policy objectives of the Council are:

- To integrate risk management into the culture of the Council
- To identify, evaluate and manage risk in accordance with best practice
- To anticipate and respond to changing social, environmental and legislative requirements
- To prevent injury, damage and losses and reduce the cost of risk
- To promote awareness of the need for risk management in all service areas

Achievement of Objectives

These objectives will be achieved by:

- Establishing clear roles, responsibilities and reporting lines for risk management within the Council
- The inclusion of risk assessments, where applicable, in reports to the Committees and Council
- Establishing a corporate risk register which identifies and evaluates risks and the controls used to manage those risks on an ongoing basis
- Preparing contingency plans in areas where there is potential for an occurrence having a significant effect on the Council and its business capability
- Monitoring arrangements on an ongoing basis

Risk Identification

By using the software 'Local Council Risk System', various risks have already been identified and are ready to be scored, however this is not an exhaustive list and other risks not so obvious may come to light. A Risk Assessment Programme has been drawn up to ensure all areas are encompassed in the first year. Line Managers are therefore

encouraged to review their areas to highlight any other aspects of the Council business that may be exposed to risk.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment can be performed based on the **impact** of the risk on the service or Council and the **likelihood** of it occurring. A points system is used in order to flag risks for attention or further action.

Low = 1 Medium = 2 High = 3

Having scored the risks, the results are then prioritised. An action plan is produced and presented to the Committee responsible for comment.

Managing Risk

There are a number of ways in which risk can be managed and these include:

- Identification and implementation of adequate controls to reduce risk to an acceptable level
- Accept the risk
- Avoid the risk (do not carry out the activity)
- Transfer the risk (insurance or third party)
- Reduce the possible impacts (business continuity planning)

Many risk control measures may already be in place whilst others may need to be implemented as a result of this process. Officers are required to ensure that processes are clearly documented in order to satisfy Auditors.

Re-Assessment of Risk

From the initial risk assessment of a service further reviews are triggered on a timely basis. However, all risks should periodically be reassessed at least annually. Risk control measures will also need to be monitored to ensure all relevant Officers understand all new processes.

Action Planning

As mentioned above, after the appropriate risk control measures have been identified and assessed as being adequate terms of reducing risk to an acceptable level, action needs to be taken to ensure these are properly implemented and maintained.

All documentation associated with operational risk assessment and risk management should be maintained in a central location and, where appropriate, used to support subsequent business planning.

Monitoring and Reporting

Risk assessment and risk management is not a one-off activity and should therefore be integrated within the normal management and business planning process.

Once a particular area of the Council's business has been risk scored and an action plan drawn up a report will be presented to the Committee responsible for comment, and any financial implications rising directly from the risk assessment will be referred to the Finance, Governance and Asset Management Committee for approval.

Review of Risk Management Policy

Any variations to this policy will be reported to the Finance, Governance and Asset Management Committee as they occur.