



## **GOVERNANCE AND RISK COMMITTEE**

### **CONCURRENT RISKS RESILIENCE AND PREPAREDNESS PLANNING**

#### **REPORT BY DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

##### **A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Governance and Risk Committee on the concurrent risks identified by the council in relation to the UK's withdrawal from the EU at the end of the transition period, Covid-19 and other associated risks.

##### **B. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Governance and Risk Committee:

1. Notes the updates on the UK's trade negotiations following the UK's withdrawal from the EU;
2. Notes the latest position in relation to Covid-19 planning and guidance;
3. Notes the actions the council is taking to prepare, respond and adapt to the concurrent risks the council faces in relation to the EU Exit, Covid-19 and other associated risks over the next six-month period.
4. Agrees that a further update will be provided to a future meeting of the Governance and Risk Committee.

##### **C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

<b>I Council Values</b>	Focusing on customers' needs, being honest, open and accountable, providing equality of opportunities, making best use of resources, working in partnership.
<b>II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b>	Council officers continue to update a register of EU Exit and Covid-19 related risks identifying how these might impact on the council. Understanding local impacts will be an ongoing feature of the council's work.
<b>III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>	No implications at this stage.
<b>IV Impact on performance and performance indicators</b>	The concurrent risks the council faces due to EU Exit, Covid-19, winter and other risks may have a range of impacts on the council.
<b>V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>	The concurrent risks identified in the report may have an impact on the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.
<b>VI Resources – (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b>	None.
<b>VII Consideration at PDSP</b>	None.

**D. TERMS OF REPORT****D.1 BACKGROUND**

In response to the current civil contingencies' risks, this report outlines the council's latest position with regard to its approach to resilience and preparedness planning, considering lessons learned from Covid-19 and a need to plan for a number of concurrent risks over the next six months.

As we head into winter there are a number of scenarios with a high risk of occurrence that could potentially impact on the council's ability to deliver services. These are:

- An increase in the rate of Covid-19 infections
- Leaving the EU without a deal
- Periods of severe weather
- An increase in seasonal illnesses
- The associated economic challenges resulting from Covid-19 and a potential no deal EU exit

There is a risk that these factors could have a compounding effect on a wide range of economic, social and health impacts which could affect both the council and our communities.

There is general recognition that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the response to it has had a negative impact on our initial position to respond to leaving the EU without a deal.

- The impact of Covid-19 means that an economic downturn is more likely;
- The impact of Covid-19 means that many companies are in more fragile position than in the run up to previous deadlines for leaving the EU and this may impact on their ability to prepare;
- Low income groups have already been disproportionately affected by Covid-19 and are in a poorer position to absorb the disproportionate impact leaving the EU without a deal will have on them. Higher food and fuel prices could tip many more into food and fuel poverty;
- Food supplier stockpiles and processes put in place to mitigate risks to the supply chain in the run up to previous deadlines have been impacted by the spikes in demand which Covid-19 introduced. Higher demand for Christmas will also impact on ability of suppliers to stockpile.
- Medicine and medical supply stockpiles will have also been impacted by the Covid-19 response.

However, it should also be recognised that aspects of the response to Covid-19, such as arrangements to allow staff to work from home, and arrangements to allow services to be delivered using alternatives to face to face delivery models, have increased preparedness for continuing to deliver services during severe winter weather.

**D.2 EU EXIT NEGOTIATIONS – CURRENT POSITION**

Following the UK leaving the European Union on 31 January 2020, a transition period was set in place until the end of 2020 to allow the UK and EU to negotiate additional arrangements. The current rules on trade, travel, and business for the UK and EU continue to apply during the transition period. New rules will take effect on 1 January 2021. If no agreement has been reached between the UK and EU for the start of that date, the UK will automatically fall back on the rules of the World Trade Organisation meaning that the EU will impose tariffs on imported UK goods, and the UK will impose its tariffs on imported EU goods.

Negotiations to try and secure a trade deal are ongoing, however issues around state aid, fisheries and governance remain unresolved and on 2 October 2020, the UK Prime Minister announced that it was time to 'get ready' for a No Deal Brexit. Whilst the UK Government and EU Leaders are still hoping to conclude a deal, there remains a strong possibility that no deal will

be in place by the end of the transition period, and as such preparedness work is required to be stepped up for this eventuality.

### **D.3 COVID-19: SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK**

The Scottish Government published its Strategic Framework for suppressing the Covid-19 virus to its lowest possible level on 26 October 2020. The Scottish Government's approach to outbreak management is based on five levels of protection which allows responses to be taken, nationally or locally, using a range of measures and options.

#### Level 0 (baseline) and Level 1

Low incidence of the virus with isolated clusters, and low community transmission. Broadly, these levels are the closest we can get to normality, without a vaccine or effective treatment in place, before conditions will allow us to move to Phase 4 of the Route Map. They would be similar to the measures in place during the summer, once we reached Phase 3 of the Route Map. The measures in place for both levels are broadly similar with some additional restrictions in level 1 for socialising, sports and attending events.

#### Level 2

Increased incidence of the virus, with multiple clusters and increased community transmission. Protective measures to tackle the virus, focusing on key areas of risk – broadly, indoor settings where household mixing takes place with less, or less well-observed, physical distancing and mitigations. The measures would be intended to be in place for relatively short periods (2-4 weeks), and only for as long as required to get the virus down to a low, sustainable level.

#### Level 3

Increased incidence of the virus, with multiple clusters and increased community transmission. There would be a more graduated series of protective measures than level 2 to tackle the virus, focusing on key areas of risk with more restrictions to hospitality, travel, entertainment and sports. The measures would be intended to be in place for relatively short periods (2-4 weeks), and only for as long as required to get the virus down to a low, sustainable level.

#### Level 4

Very high or rapidly increasing incidence, and widespread community transmission which may pose a threat to the NHS to cope. It is likely that this level would see the introduction of measures close to a return to full lockdown. Measures would be designed to be in place for a short period, to provide a short, sharp response to quickly suppress the virus.

As at 29 October 2020, West Lothian has been placed in level 3 of the framework with revised restrictions or guidance on indoor and outdoor socialising and leisure activities, hospitality, accommodation, and travel and transport taking effect from 2 November 2020.

Schools and early learning and childcare facilities will remain open in level 3 with enhanced protective measures in place. Offices and call centres should be for essential staff only with working from home remaining the default position.

### **D.4 SEVERE WEATHER**

Advance warning of severe weather allows the council to plan for the necessary resources to be in place to respond effectively although it should be noted that severe weather incidents can occur with little warning. The Met Office issues National Severe Weather Warnings to the public, the police and other agencies to provide early warning of likely severe weather with the potential to cause disruption to particular areas of the country. Warnings can be issued at any time of the day or night and be ranked Yellow, Amber or Red dependant on the severity of the disruption they may cause. Notification of warnings and alerts are received by the council and are then distributed to a distribution list across all service areas.

The Scottish Flood Forecasting Service also provides a Flood Guidance Statement which gives an assessment of the risk of flooding, from rivers, coastal and tidal areas and surface water, for the following five days

The NHS's winter flu vaccination programme is vitally important this year due to Covid-19 with an increased risk to life if suffering from both viruses simultaneously. The flu vaccination programme began on 1 October 2020 using a phased approach which means different groups will be vaccinated at different times. The Scottish Government has expanded eligibility for the free flu vaccine to social care workers who provide direct personal care, household members of those shielding, and people aged 55-64. In total it is estimated that over 2.4 million people in Scotland will be eligible for the vaccine this winter.

**D.6 MULTI-AGENCY MONITORING AND RESPONSE FOR CONCURRENT RISKS**

The council and its partners have established and well used mechanisms and frameworks for responding to public health incidents and severe weather incidents. The same multi agency framework was used to prepare for leaving the EU throughout 2019, and this will be stood up again in early December to assist all partners in monitoring and responding to the concurrent risks which face us over the winter period.

There was always an understanding that there may be difficulty in attributing impacts directly to leaving the EU without a deal, and that correlation rather than causation may be more easily observed. The Covid-19 pandemic means that attributing an impact to a standalone cause may become even more difficult. The multi-agency monitoring for impacts will assist with early identification of where impacts are arising, irrespective of their cause.

The Scottish Government's Multi Agency Co-ordination Centre (MACC) will continue to facilitate information gathering and sharing of impacts and potential impacts and allow for a shared situational awareness amongst all partners. In the event of the UK leaving the EU without a deal, the focus will be on identifying emerging impacts such as:

- Impact on availability or cost of essential goods and services
- Any Contractors unable to provide services
- Availability of key staff
- Level of Emergency Welfare/Discretionary Fund payments
- Level of foodbank referrals
- Level of assistance being sought by businesses

Surveillance will continue to be a key tool in managing Covid-19 and tackling clusters or spikes. The Surveillance and Response approach, along with Test and Protect, is core business for public health teams in all NHS Health Boards, supported by teams in local authorities and many other agencies. This approach enables a rapid and collaborative response to any incident or outbreak at a local, regional and a national level.

The Covid-19 surveillance system has a number of strands to provide information on the full range of illness severity, and provides tracking over time and for key groups of the population. The Scottish Government publishes daily data on cases, testing and hospital and ICU admissions

The MACC will collate information on testing, cases, hospital and ICU capacity and identify where pressures are arising.

Public Health incidents are classified as level 0-5, with increasing severity and magnitude ranging from initial identification of a potential incident requiring a minimal response required due to limited local level impact through to a national level incident requiring local and central government co-ordination with population-wide national scale interventions. The Covid-19 pandemic response is currently being managed in Scotland as a Level 5 incident, with a Scotland-wide, nationally coordinated response, led by the Scottish Government.

Agencies like SEPA and the Met Office are likely to have a greater degree of involvement in the MACC than in the run up to previous deadlines. The MACC will provide an additional channel for monitoring for, and warning of, impending severe weather and be in place to assist with facilitating a multi-agency response if required.

**D.7 COUNCIL RESILIENCE AND PREPAREDNESS**

The council has a number of established plans and protocols in place that allows it to monitor, plan and react to potential disruptions to its workforce, buildings, systems and supplies, and services that are provided to our communities. Incorporated within our planning are:

- No Deal EU Exit Contingency Plan
- Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal
- Education Recovery
- Building Remobilisation
- Workforce Resilience and Preparedness
- Winter Service Plan 2020/21
- Business Continuity Plans
- Risk Assessments
- Risk Registers
- Horizon Scanning
- Economic Recovery

As previously reported to the Governance and Risk Committee, the council has developed a No Deal EU Exit Contingency Plan, which presents the arrangements in place across the council to identify, monitor and respond to potential issues arising following a No Deal EU Exit. The plan is structured by theme and focuses on risks around inflation, supply chain for goods and services, migration, legislation, data and the economy.

The council is continuing to monitor and review information being issued by the UK Government and Scottish Government, and is in regular contact with COSLA as the end of the transition period approaches. The contingency plan and associated Brexit risk register is monitored regularly via the council's Brexit Working Group, who will continue to meet on a regular and ongoing basis.

There are currently 55 risks associated with a No Deal EU Exit. Of these, three are considered in the high category. These are:

- Economic Downturn
- Impact on Public Health Functions
- Food Safety

The council has also identified a range of risks associated with Covid-19, many of which cut across similar themes to our Brexit risks. There are 102 risks associated with Covid-19. Of these 21 are considered in the high category. By category these are:

- Workforce Planning and Protection
- Financial Resilience
- Digital Resilience
- Business Resilience
- Supply Chain
- People

It is therefore important that the council is developing an effective and co-ordinated incident management framework for monitoring and managing risks, in order to respond to impacts irrespective of cause. It is doing this by undertaking the following:

- Using scenario planning to manage health and care and sustain services during the winter.
- Making use of shared data and information to make sure we have early warning of potential issues arising and to mobilise responses quickly.
- Continuing collaboration with partners through our Local Resilience Partnership and Multi Agency Co-ordination Centre arrangements.
- Monitoring staff absence and ensuring key staffing trigger levels are built into our scenario plans.
- Reviewing lessons learned from Covid-19 and good practice from other local authorities.

- Providing up to date advice and guidance to staff and customers using Frequently Asked Questions.
- Developing protocols based on impact rather than cause (e.g. Building remobilisation protocols)
- Continuing to liaise with Scottish Government, COSLA and professional associations.
- Continuing to liaise with Scotland Excel and key suppliers.
- Providing updates to Elected Members

## **E. CONCLUSION**

It is necessary that the council continues to reflect on a fast-changing position where it understands the potential risks it faces from Covid-19 infections increasing, the deadline for the EU withdrawal transition period approaching, and the usual weather emergencies and winter illnesses issues, and where necessary and possible has robust contingency plans in place.

By focusing on concurrent risks over the next six months, making best use of data and information and monitoring arrangements, the council will ensure it has arrangements in place to help mitigate against any disruptions which occur in the period ahead.

## **F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

No Deal EU Exit Contingency Plan

[No Deal EU Exit Contingency Plan](#)

Winter Service Plan 2020/21

[Winter Service Plan 2020/21](#)

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