
RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Chris McEwan
Efficiency and Resources Portfolio**

Responsible Director – Paul Wildsmith, Director of Corporate Services

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Cabinet approval for proposed changes to the Council's Risk Management Strategy.

Summary

2. The existing Risk Management Strategy was approved by Cabinet in January 2007 (Min Ref C125/Jan/07).
3. It is considered that the Strategy be refreshed to make explicit reference to the Sustainable Community Strategy, One Darlington : Perfectly Placed and to reflect the Council's new planning methodology, Outcome Based Accountability, and future business model. An updated Strategy that incorporates such amendments is attached as **Appendix 1** to this report.
4. The proposed amendments were endorsed by the Audit Committee on 18 December 2009.

Recommendation

5. It is recommended that Cabinet approve the updated Risk Management Strategy.

Reasons

6. The recommendation is supported to ensure the Council has a Risk Management Strategy that remains current and fit for purpose.

**Paul Wildsmith
Director of Corporate Services**

Background Papers

(i) Use of Resources Auditor Scored Judgements 2009.

George Cornforth : Extension 2324

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for crime and disorder
Health and Well Being	There is no specific health and well-being impact
Sustainability	There is no specific sustainability impact
Diversity	There is no specific diversity impact
Wards Affected	All wards are affected equally
Groups Affected	All groups are affected equally
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council's budget or policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The Strategy strengthens the ability of the Council to deliver its contribution to the achievement of the outcomes detailed within the Sustainable Community Strategy.
Efficiency	There continues to be a reduction in insurance claims as a result of the pro-active risk management work undertaken.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

7. The existing Risk Management Strategy was approved by Cabinet in January 2007 (Min Ref C125/Jan/07).
8. The Risk Management Strategy outlines how the Council is taking on its responsibility to manage risks using a structured and focused approach to integrate and embed risk management into the culture of the organisation and its existing processes.
9. Delivery of the Strategy has underpinned service delivery and positive scores have been received in recent years for risk management under the Use of Resources auditor scored judgements. The 2009 score for 'the Authority manages its risks and maintains a sound system of internal control' was 3 ie performing well – exceeds minimum requirements.
10. However, it is considered opportune to refresh the Strategy to make explicit reference to the Sustainable Community Strategy, One Darlington : Perfectly Placed and to reflect the Council's new planning methodology, Outcome Based Accountability, and future business model.
11. The amended Strategy incorporates such changes and is attached to this Report.

Outcome of Consultation

12. The proposed changes to the Strategy were considered and endorsed by the Audit Committee on 18 December, 2009.



Risk Management Strategy

December 2009

Risk Management Strategy

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1. Policy Statement

The Council will embed risk management into its culture, processes and structure to ensure that opportunities are maximised and will encourage managers to identify, understand and manage risks.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the strategy are to:

- Develop risk management and raise its profile across the Council
- Integrate risk management into the culture of the organisation
- Embed risk management through the ownership and management of risk as part of all decision making processes
- Manage risk in accordance with best practice
- Create effective processes that will allow the Council to make risk management assurance statements annually

The strategy outlines how the Council is taking on its responsibility to manage risks using a structured and focused approach.

3. What is Risk Management?

Risk Management can be defined as:

“The management of integrated or holistic business risk in a manner consistent with the virtues of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. In essence it is about making the most of opportunities (making the right decisions) and about achieving objectives once those decisions are made. The latter is achieved through controlling, transferring and living with risks” ZMMS/SOLACE, *Chance or choice?* July 2000.

Risk Management is a strategic tool and an essential part of effective and efficient management and planning.

The Strategy encompasses all business risks into a robust and consistent process to ensure that the Council can make the most of its opportunities and make informed decisions based on complete information.

4. Why do we need a Risk Management Strategy?

Risk management strengthens the ability of the Council to deliver its contribution to the achievement of the outcomes detailed within the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) 'One Darlington : Perfectly Placed.'

Strategic risk management is an integral requirement of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and as such is an important element in demonstrating continuous improvement. Risk Management is also an essential part of the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance that reflects the requirements of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework on Corporate Governance.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations require the Council to publish each year an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The AGS forms part of the overall Statement of Accounts and must be signed by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive. The effectiveness of the Council's risk management process underpins production of the AGS.

5. What is the Risk Management Process?

Implementing the Strategy involves identifying, analysing, managing and monitoring risks.

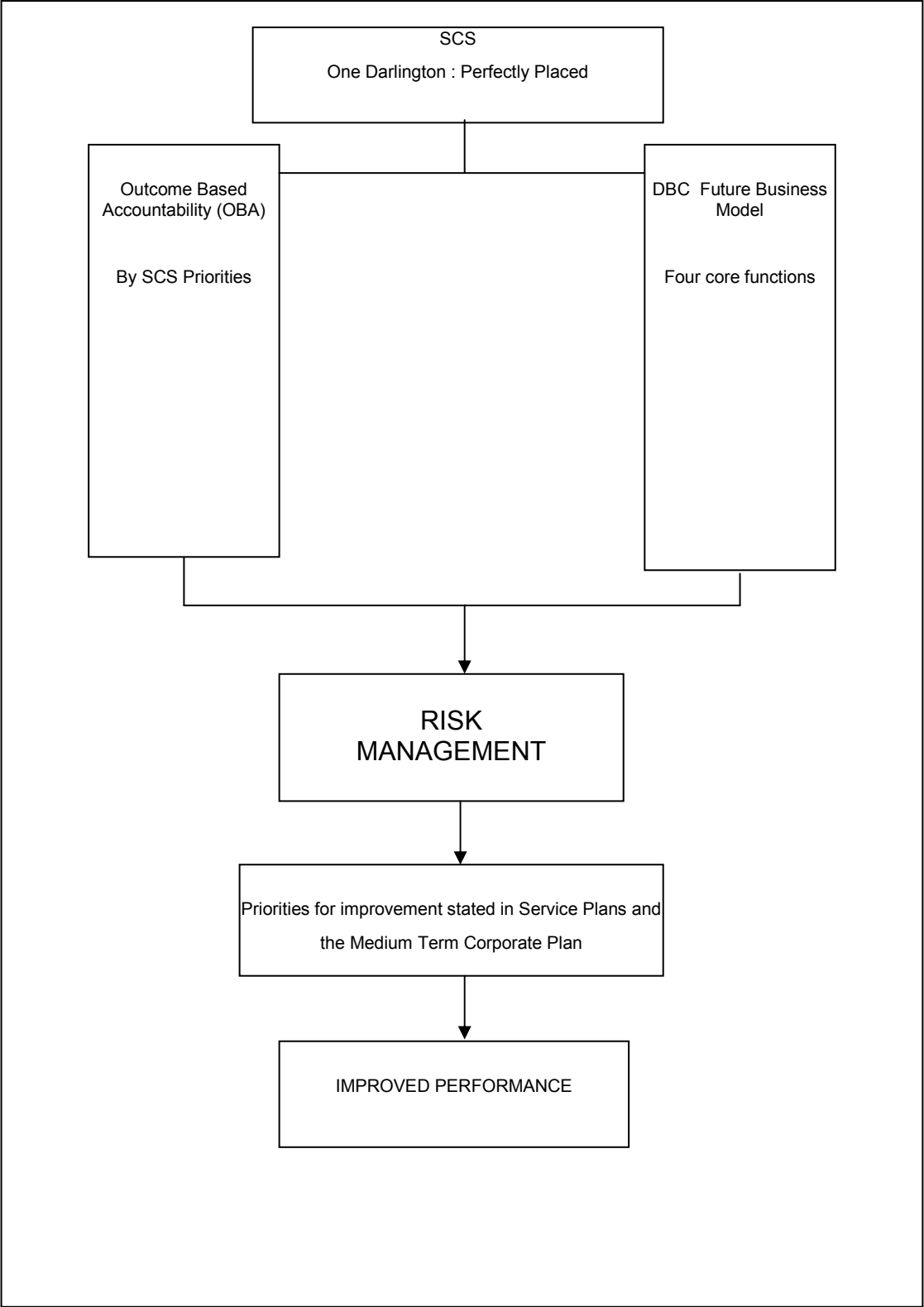
The identification of risks is derived from both a 'top down' (corporate) and a 'bottom up' (departmental) process of risk assessment and analysis resulting in coverage of the whole Council. The process then prioritises the risks resulting in a focus on the key risks and priorities. The risks are then managed through the development of appropriate action plans with relevant Performance Indicators (PI's) which are fed into overall service plans and the Council's Medium Term Corporate Plan. The relevant PI's identified are then monitored through the performance management framework ensuring that the focus remains on achieving the Council's objectives.

Full details of the Risk Management Methodology are contained within Appendix 1.

6. How does it feed into other processes?

Annual Planning and Budgeting

The risk management process is an integral part in the development of an annual refresh of service plans and the Council's Medium Term Corporate Plan that in turn impact on the budgeting process. Risk Management is an essential element to establishing policy, developing plans and enhancing operational management.



Partnerships

The Council recognises both the benefits and the risks of partnership working. Good risk management practice is a key tool in delivering successful partnerships. The risk management process is used by partnership lead officers to specifically consider risks in relation to significant partnerships and provides for assurances to be obtained about the management of those risks.

In respect of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and other Themed Groups, oversight of the process is maintained by the Corporate Planning and Performance Network (PPN) in conjunction with the LSP Lead Officers Group and the Multi-Agency Data Group (MADG).

The Future Business Model and Project Management

A new phase of organisational development was launched in November 2009. The resulting 'Future Business Model' is based on four core functions:

- (a) Champion the interests of its citizens and business, based upon a solid evidence base and good in depth engagement.
- (b) Promote strong partnerships to ensure there is a vision and clear direction for the Borough and for public services.
- (c) Promote the Borough, as an active player within local, sub regional, regional and national governance frameworks.
- (d) Ensure the provision of good quality services to the public.

Through the Future Business Model the principle of effective service challenge remains and is reinforced through improved programme and project management, improved reporting and monitoring and effective risk management.

Project Management aims to deliver defined outcomes within time, cost and quality constraints. A key element of this approach is effective risk management. The Council has adopted the MicroP2 methodology for change projects. MicroP2 uses the Council's corporate template to identify risks and develop actions, enabling project managers to control their risks as part of the ongoing project. Projects are owned by a senior sponsor and managed by a designated Project Manager, so responsibility for managing project risks is clear.

Risk management is also a key part of capital project delivery. A Project Management Handbook has been produced to help ensure an established project management methodology is applied consistently across the Authority on all capital projects from inception to completion and to assist the management of risk. In addition the Asset Management Capital Programme Review Board, chaired by the Director of Corporate Services, has been established to oversee the monitoring and reporting of capital projects.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

The following describes the roles and responsibilities that Members and officers will play in embedding and owning the risk management process:

Members

Elected Members are responsible for governing the delivery of services to the local community. Members have a responsibility to understand the strategic risks that the Council face, and will be made aware of how these risks are being managed through the annual strategic and service planning process. They will also be kept informed on the management of those risks through half yearly reports to the Audit Committee and through the performance management framework. Members should not seek to avoid, or delegate this overall responsibility, as it is key to their stewardship responsibilities.

Member's key tasks are: -

- Cabinet approve the risk management strategy.
- Monitor the Council's risk management and internal control arrangements via a reporting process through the Audit Committee together with using the performance management framework that reports on key Performance Indicators.
- The Audit Committee will approve the Annual Governance Statement that reflects the effectiveness of the Council's risk management process.
- Scrutiny members are central to monitoring of the service plans as part of the performance management framework.
- The Cabinet Member with Efficiency and Resources Portfolio will be the Council's Member Champion for Corporate Risk Management.

Chief Executive and the Corporate Management Team

The Chief Executive and the Corporate Management Team (CMT) are pivotal in their promotion and support to embed risk management within the Authority.

The Chief Executive and CMT's key tasks are:

- Support and promoting risk management throughout the Council.
- Actively identify and assess strategic risks on a regular basis.
- Individual Directors will be responsible for developing relevant action plans for the key risks and establishing relevant PI's to measure their performance through the performance management framework.

Directors

Directors will demonstrate their commitment to risk management through:

- Being actively involved in the identification and assessment of strategic risks.
- Incorporating the risk management process into service planning processes.
- Encouraging staff to be more innovative and recognising their achievements.

- Encouraging staff to be open and honest in identifying risks and opportunities.
- Ensuring that the risk management process is part of all major projects, partnerships and change management initiatives.
- Regular monitoring and reviewing of relevant actions plans and associated PI's to reduce or control the significant risks.

Managers

Managers need to understand their role in the risk management process and why they should be concerned with risk in order to achieve their objectives. They need to know how to evaluate risks and when to accept the right risks in order to pursue an opportunity.

Corporate Risk Management Group

This is an established and effective group that focuses upon the management of operational risks with the aim to reduce the cost of claims against the Council and to minimise the risk of financial losses and disruption to the efficient delivery of services to the community. The Group will report to the Audit Committee half yearly on the progress of risk management initiatives being undertaken.

Information from the departmental risk analysis and the corporate risk analysis will be reported to the risk management group for information. The risk management group will take any patterns in operational risks into account when establishing its annual work plan.

Departmental Planning and Performance Network Officers

Departmental Planning and Performance Network Officers take on the role of risk champions. They promote best practice and drive risk management forward within departments. They are responsible for ensuring that the relevant managers are trained in using the methodology and that the risk management process is applied at the key stages of planning, projects, partnerships and major change initiatives. Risk champions receive support from the Risk Management Co-ordinator.

Risk Management Co-ordinator

The Risk Management Co-ordinator's role, to be undertaken by the Head of Corporate Assurance, is responsible for:

- ◆ co-ordinating the adoption of risk management across the Council
- ◆ challenging risk identification and evaluation
- ◆ annually review the risk management strategy
- ◆ act as a link between the departmental Planning and Performance Network Officers
- ◆ provide guidance and advice to the departmental Planning and Performance Network Officers
- ◆ act as a link with the Corporate Risk Management Group

Audit Services

Internal audit's role is to provide assurance to officers and Members on the effectiveness of controls. Internal Audit reflect on the results of the corporate and departmental risk analysis when developing the annual audit plan.

8. Monitoring and Reporting Framework

A robust review and reporting structure is in place. This framework allows:

- Quarterly monitoring of the effective management of risks through existing performance management mechanisms including regular reporting on service and corporate performance indicators to CMT and Members.
- Regular service reviews within departments and Performance Clinics between Directors and the Chief Executive.
- Half Yearly Reports to the Audit Committee to monitor that appropriate action is taken to ensure that corporate business risks are actively managed together with details of the work undertaken by the Corporate Risk Management Group to highlight operational risk management issues affecting the Council.
- An annual report to the Audit Committee to approve the Annual Governance Statement.-

9. Training

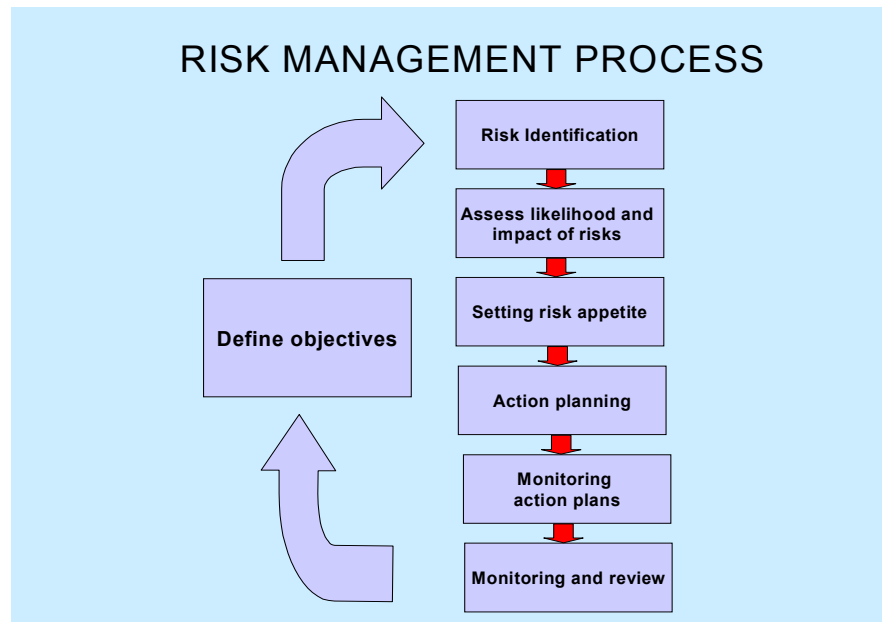
To assist the risk management process and to embed its use within the Authority, risk management awareness training is required for both Members and appropriate staff. A programme of training will be arranged with details incorporated within the reports to the Audit Committee.

10. Annual Review of Strategy

The Head of Corporate Assurance will annually review the Council's Risk Management Strategy in light of changing legislation, government initiatives, best practice and experience gained within the Council in adopting the strategy. Significant changes proposed will be referred to the Audit Committee for consideration. Changes recommended / endorsed by the Audit Committee will be referred to Cabinet for approval.

Risk Management Methodology

The Council has adopted the Zurich Municipal Management Services (ZMMS) STORM[®] methodology to manage risk, a structured systematic approach that identifies, evaluates, prioritises and manages risk at strategic, tactical and operational levels. A key element of STORM[®] involves embedding a risk management culture in all staff and Members. The process is explained in detail below.

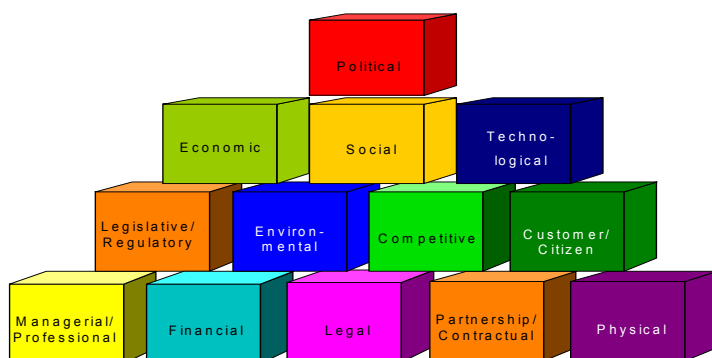


- **Risk Identification**

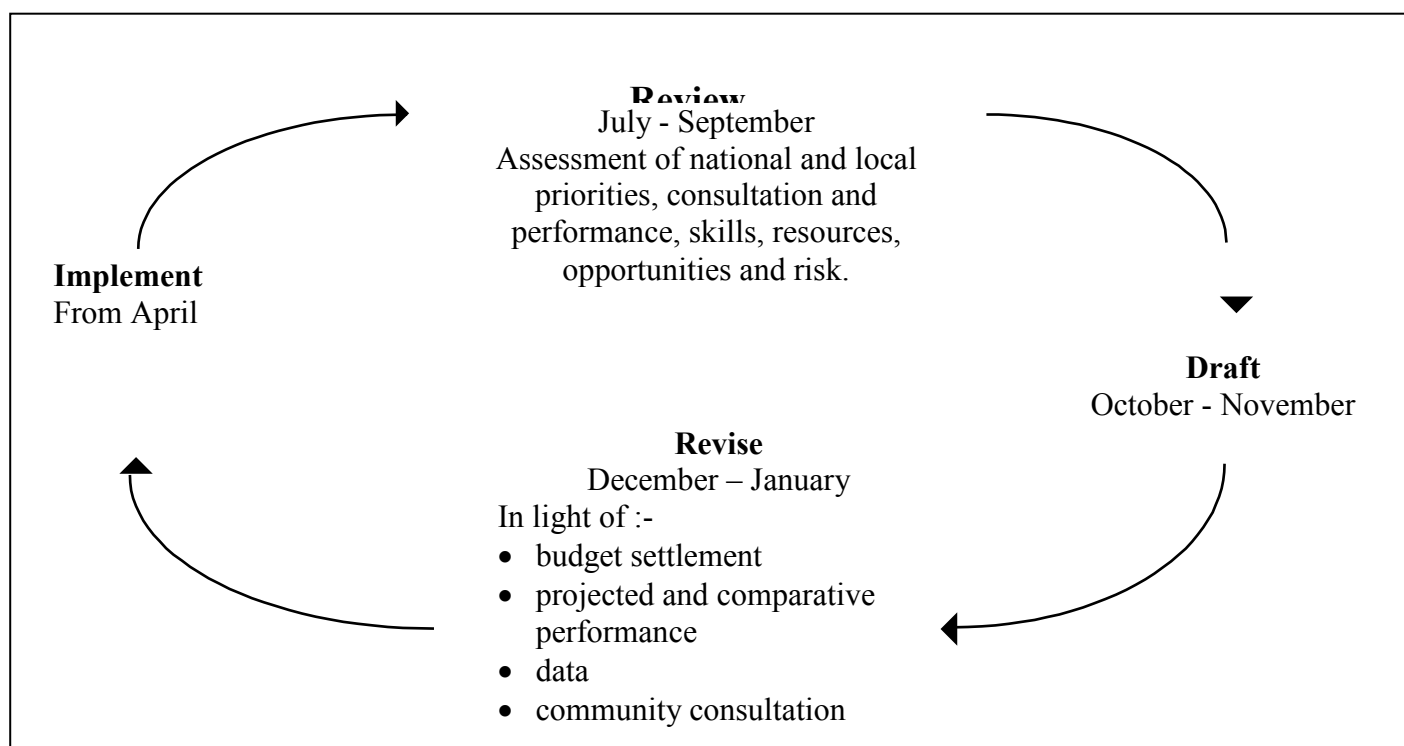
The identification of risks that affect the achievement of outcomes takes place annually both by departments and by CMT. The process involves the identification of new risks and a review of existing risks.

When identifying risks the following categories are used as a prompt for officers. They ensure that a holistic approach is taken to risk identification. Further information about each category of risk is given at Appendix A.

Risk Areas



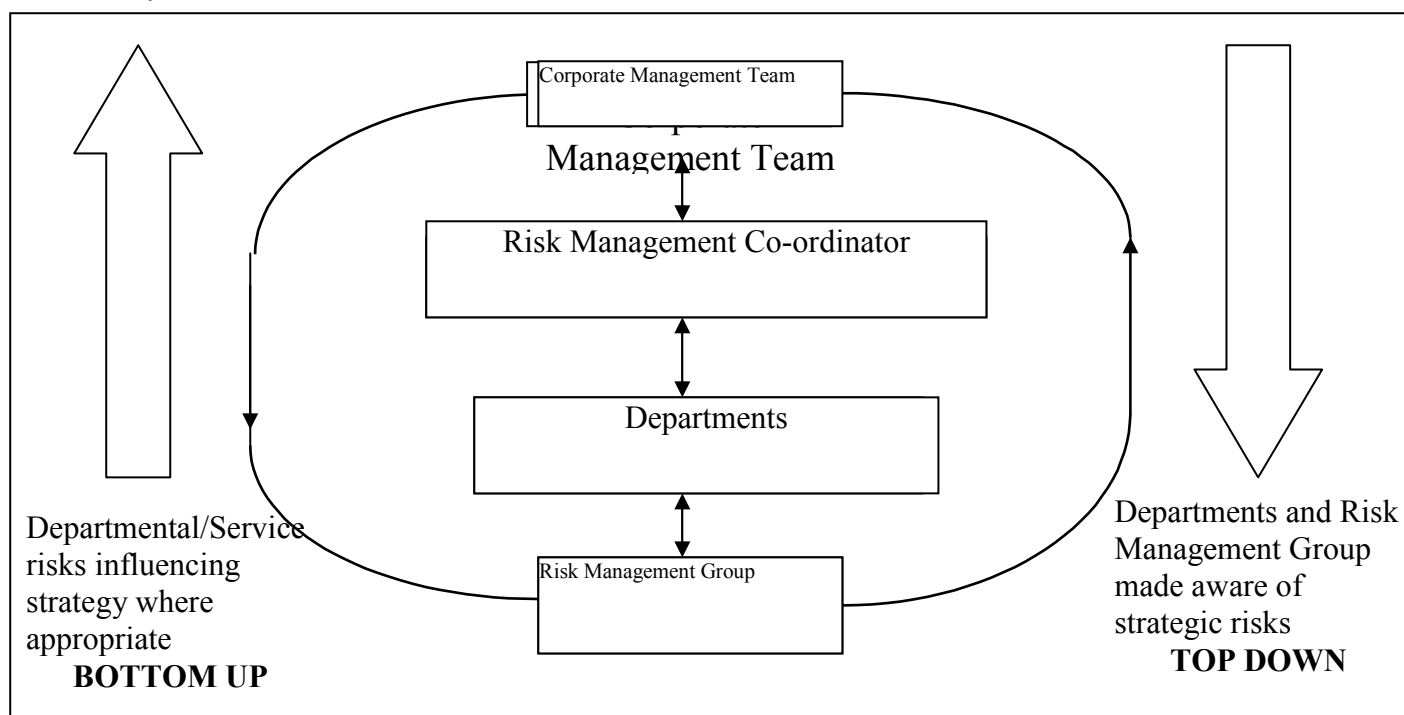
The annual process is fed into the following timetable :-



The timetable is based on two main principles:

1. a continuous cycle of improvement linking monitoring and implementation shown schematically above for all plans - strategic, financial and service plans;
2. a balance between top-down (strategic influencing service plans) and bottom-up (an overview of service plans helping to shape strategic priorities).

In departments where risks appear in the 'top four' boxes of the risk matrix – AI, All, BI or BII – those risks are reported to CMT. CMT then consider whether the departmental risks in those categories are in fact corporate risks and should be managed corporately. This process ensures that CMT are made aware at least annually of the key risks within departments.



CMT and departmental management teams also ensure that any emerging risk, identified after the service planning process, is appropriately profiled and managed. There is a standard item placed on each agenda for meetings to ensure that there is a facility for officers to raise key risks throughout the year. This enables key emerging risks to be effectively managed in a timely manner rather than waiting for the annual process to occur.

- **Risk Analysis**

Areas of potential risk, once identified, need to be analysed and risk scenarios developed. Risk scenarios illustrate the possible consequences of the risk if it should occur, so that its full impact can be assessed. An example of a risk scenario is provided below.

SAMPLE RISK SCENARIO

Vulnerability	Trigger	Consequence
Balances are low and there are insufficient reserves to cover unexpected events	A significant event arises with large financial consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to finance event • Funding of other projects jeopardised • Officers responsibilities questioned • Inability to defend Council's previous spending decisions • Adverse effect on Council Tax • Adverse effect on performance • Censure by audit • Adverse publicity • Image of Council damaged

- **Risk Profiling and Prioritisation**

Following identification and analysis of potential risks, they are then profiled with reference to documented controls in place and working. This process involves: -

- An assessment of the likelihood of the risk occurring
- An assessment of the potential impact of the consequences, should such an event occur

By assessing the likelihood and impact of risks and using a matrix to plot them, a prioritisation is given to the management of those risks.

Although the process produces a priority for addressing each risk, determining a group's appetite for risk can enhance this. All risks above the appetite line (the shaded area in the matrix below) are considered a priority for improvement and must be managed down, transferred or avoided.

An example risk profile is given below. The numbers correspond to each individual risk identified.

Matrix for Risk Profiling

L I K E L I H O O D	A Very High					Likelihood A: Very High B: High C: Significant D: Low E: Very Low F: Almost Impossible Impact I: Catastrophic II: Critical III: Marginal IV: Negligible
	B High					
	C Significant		1, 5	3, 9		
	D Low		7	2, 4	6	
	E Very Low		10	8		
	F Almost Impossible					
		IV Negligible	III Marginal	II Critical	I Catastrophic	
	IMPACT					

- **Action Planning**

The potential for controlling risks identified is addressed through management action plans. Most risks are capable of being managed – either by managing down the likelihood or impact or both. Relatively few risks have to be avoided or transferred. Action plans identify the resources required to deliver the improvements, key deadline date and critical success factors/KPI's.

These plans are not a separate initiative but are incorporated into the business planning process and included in corporate and service plans.

An example of a management action plan is provided below:

Risk Management Action Plans

Risk X

Required Management Action / Control	Responsibility for Action	Critical Success Factors and KPIs	Key Dates	Review Frequency

Risk Y

Required Management Action / Control	Responsibility for Action	Critical Success Factors and KPIs	Key Dates	Review Frequency

- **Risk Monitoring**

The effective management of risks will be monitored through half yearly reports to the Audit Committee and through the performance management framework.

Appendix A

Categories of Risk

Risk	Definition	Examples
Political	Associated with the failure to deliver either local or central government policy or meet the local administration's manifest commitment	New political arrangements, Political personalities, Political make-up
Economic	Affecting the ability of the Council to meet its financial commitments. These include internal budgetary pressures, the failure to purchase adequate insurance cover, external macro level economic changes or consequences proposed investment decisions	Cost of living, changes in interest rates, inflation, poverty indicators
Social	Relating to the effects of changes in demographic, residential or socio-economic trends on the council's ability to meet its objectives	Staff levels from available workforce, ageing population, health statistics
Technological	Associated with the capacity of the Council to deal with the pace/scale of technological change, or its ability to use technology to address changing demands. They may also include the consequences of internal technological failures on the council's ability to deliver its objectives	E-Gov. agenda, IT infrastructure, Staff/client needs, security standards
Legislative	Associated with current or potential changes in national or European law	Human rights, Appliance or non-appliance of TUPE regulations
Environmental	Relating to the environmental consequences of progressing the council's strategic objectives	Land use, recycling, pollution
Professional/ Managerial	Associated with the particular nature of each profession, internal protocols and managerial abilities	Staff restructure, key personalities, internal capacity
Financial	Associated with financial planning and control	Budget overspends, level of Council tax, level of reserves
Legal	Related to possible breaches of legislation	Client brings legal challenge
Physical	Related to fire, security, accident prevention and health and safety	Offices in poor state of repair, use of equipment
Partnership/ Contractual	Associated with failure of contractors and partnership arrangements to deliver services or products to the agreed cost and specification	Contractor fails to deliver, partnership agencies do not have common goals
Competitive	Affecting the competitiveness of the service (in terms of cost or quality) and/or its ability to deliver best value	Fail to win quality accreditation, position in league tables
Customer/ Citizen	Associated with failure to meet the current and changing needs and expectations of customers and citizens	Managing expectations, extent of consultation