

RECOVERY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 9 th September, 2021
Report Subject	Risks and Issues within Portfolios
Cabinet Member	Collective Cabinet
Report Author	Chief Executive
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Portfolio Recovery Business Plans were developed for exiting the first response phase to the pandemic in 2020.

This Committee has had oversight of the Recovery Business Plans for all five service portfolios during recent meetings (June – August). During each of the meetings the relevant Chief Officers were asked to highlight significant areas of risk. This report today presents progress and updates on those areas of risk for each of the portfolios.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To review progress of the highlighted areas of risk within all five portfolios identified at earlier meetings of this committee.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE RISKS AND ISSUES WITHIN PORTFOLIOS
1.01	In the following sections updates will be provided for the highlighted areas of risk from each of the service portfolios.
1.02	<p>The following portfolio risks were identified as highlighted areas of risk during recent meetings of the Recovery Committee:</p> <p><u>Education & Youth</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Managing uncertainty around operational changes which may need to be implemented for the start of the new term. Schools have received updated operational guidance from September 1st from Welsh Government and a new framework which will supersede this by 20th September. Meetings have been held with Flintshire Headteachers at the start of the new year to respond to any queries and concerns and to address any anomalies. Where the guidance is unclear, the Chief Officer seeks clarification from Welsh Government and then communicates to all schools.• The impact the pandemic has had on children and young people, specifically on their health and emotional well-being and their ability to engage with learning. Schools will be carefully monitoring the health and well-being of their pupils on their return to school and their academic progress and adjusting support for individual pupils as needed. Welsh Government has provided additional funding to schools to support pupil recovery which can be used to employ additional staff and modify learning and pastoral programmes to meet pupil needs. All schools will be engaged in the new national framework for Emotional Health and Wellbeing to ensure there is a strong focus on this aspect of personal and social development alongside academic progress.• The resilience of schools in managing a significant number of changes i.e. the new curriculum, Additional Learning Needs transformation and the introduction of school inspections. Schools will continue to be supported by expert officers from with the Education Portfolio and from the regional school improvement service, GwE, to help them balance the demands of these significant changes, particularly school leaders. Professional development opportunities linked to curriculum and ALN reform are available for staff at all levels in schools via the GwE Professional Offer and the take up of these by Flintshire schools is consistently high. Each school has their own dedicated Supporting Improvement Adviser from GwE. There is a well-established process for supporting schools pre and post inspection. There is effective partnership working between the Council's Education Team and GwE to ensure schools get all the support they need and concerns are quickly identified and addressed.

Housing & Assets

- **Rental Income continues to be impacted by the pandemic and when furlough and other protections end the situation worsens.**

Welsh Government announced that the extension of powers enacted under the Coronavirus Act 2020 relating to evictions ended on the 30th June 2021, in this context evictions can now proceed. In terms of notice periods (Notice of Seeking Possession [NOSP]) these were also to end on 30th June 2021, however will now be extended by a further six months to the 30th September 2021. This means that a six month notice period will apply to notices issued on or after 24th July 2020 (except in cases of anti-social behavior).

The position will be further compromised when Universal Credit additional payments are stopped and the implications of the new 'Breathing Space' measures are taken into account (60 day hold on all creditor activity).

This will continue to place further pressure on the HRA Business Plan.

- **Homelessness presentations increase as current protections around evictions and furlough end and landlords take measures to commence and follow through on stalled evictions.**

We continue to closely monitor demand and capacity for homelessness and housing support services. Extensions of Notice periods and delays to Court proceedings continue to offer protection to tenants but this is time limited. Evictions Ban came to an end on 30th June 2021. In terms of notice periods (Notice of Seeking Possession [NOSP]) these were to end on 30th June 2021, however will now be extended by a further six months to the 30th September 2021. This means that a six month notice period will apply to notices issues on or after 24th July 2020 (except in cases of anti-social behaviour).

Additional Funding announced for the Tenant Hardship Grant which is available to renters in the private sector who have accrued arrears and are at risk of homelessness during the Covid period.

Additional funding from Welsh Government through Housing Support Grant for 2021-2022 onwards (extra £1.87m) is enabling the service to increase staffing capacity and other commissioned support services. Recruitment for new posts commenced in Q1, but the benefit of this will not likely be felt until Q2 2021/22 onwards when people are in post and additional support services commence.

- **Raw material supplies shortages lead to increased costs, programme delays and increased cases of contractual disputes.**

We continue to identify alternative suppliers or source stock and hold for future use. Areas of particular concern are lift companies,

heating installation suppliers, some specialist electronic companies and raw materials particularly plaster, timber, steel, cladding systems, glazing these currently have long lead in times, significant price increases, supply shortages or are subject to increased market volatility. Labour is also proving difficult to source as many of those previously engaged in construction activity have left the UK and remain in Europe

The situation is constantly under review due to wider international impacts a direct result of the Pandemic and the residual impacts of Brexit.

Planning, Environment & Economy

- **The resilience of various teams due to unprecedented demand to services during the emergency situation.**

Business Cases have been prepared to recruit into the following areas which are under pressure: Planning Enforcement; Environmental Health; Drainage and Flood Protection and Town Centre Regeneration. A report is to be presented to Cabinet in September to accelerate approvals for urgency capacity including these.

- **The delivery of the Local Development Plan and the implementation of the back-office system.**

The LDP Examination in Public (EIP) was temporarily suspended to deal with two matters: the Strategic site at Warren Hall in Broughton and the implications of new guidance from NRW on pollution levels in rivers. The former matter will be addressed in a separate session on 8th September. The latter issue has resulted in considerable additional work with colleagues in Wrexham CBC, who are experiencing similar frustrations with their LDP, NRW and Welsh Government. It is hoped that a Statement of Common Ground between ourselves and NRW will be submitted to the EIP in October which will satisfy the Planning Inspector and allow her to finalise her reports.

Work continues on the significant project to introduce a new back office system with a presentation planned for Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14th September.

- **Public Protection service where resources had been in overwhelming demand during the emergency.**

Some work has been re-allocated to colleagues in the Track and Trace teams who can now provide general advice to clients which has allowed the Community and Business Protection teams to begin to address considerable backlogs within their “normal” areas of work. However, pressure on the teams is still significant.

Social Services

- **Recruitment of staff to work in the sector, encompassing social work, occupational therapy and direct social work.**

- **The fragility of the market around Elderly Mentally Infirm (EMI) nursing and the recruitment of staff.**
- **Funding and fees linked to market stability.**

The three identified risk areas for social services are closely linked. We have a number of local work streams in train, including the appointment of a sustainably post, grant funding to support a sector wide approach to recruitment of the direct work force, and supporting care providers to review and strengthen business plans.

Supply risks are under urgent review at both a national and a regional level.

Within the regional transformation programmes we are working with the partners across the health and social care economy looking at more integrated ways of working to further reduce demand on services. Work is ongoing on fees and national funding to support fee and pay rate increases.

Streetscene and Transportation

- **Reduced numbers of frontline workers and contractors to deliver services safely due to the requirement for self-isolation.**
The service had been experiencing an increase in the numbers of frontline workforce needing to self-isolate. This was impacting on effective service delivery when combined with general sickness absence and annual leave requests over the summer holidays. Services have continued to operate to the required standards through the use of agency workers and overtime, and the situation has stabilised. The situation will continue to be monitored with the return of schools in September, as this could lead to a further increase in absences from the workplace.
- **Unable to progress with key infrastructure improvement projects due to lack of resilience in staff, contractors and supply chain.**
The service is currently experiencing an issue in the supply chain to progress some major infrastructure projects. This is resulting in delays to schemes although there has been no case of a project failure to date. Each grant funded project is given a project team to control delivery within specified timescales. Additional partners (e.g. consultants; WRAP Cymru) have been engaged in projects to support us with delivery. The risk trend has been changed to static.
- **Unable to gain regulatory approval (planning; drainage; environmental permitting) to progress key infrastructure projects in a timely manner due to delays in processing applications.**
Following the award of grant funding, a number of large infrastructure improvement projects are currently in progress. The development of these projects does rely on regulatory approval to move forward, such as planning consent, drainage (SUDs) and

	<p>environmental permitting. Any undue delay in the approval processes could lead to delays for the projects and impact on available grant funding. Also, the impact of having to redirect services to alternative locations can be costly (e.g. recycling collections). The project teams are working with the regulatory bodies to ensure that all aspects are progressed to deadlines. External partners (e.g. WRAP Cymru) have been engaged with to provide industry-related expertise and support to assist with progress and mitigate against further delays to projects.</p>
1.03	<p>The risks identified above have all been included in the 'Council Plan & Governance Risk Mapping' document to ensure that they are reported to the relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committee for consideration.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None specifically.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>This report specifically covers highlighted areas of risk for each of the service portfolios and they continue to recover from the pandemic emergency situation and is based upon a framework of risk management.</p>

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	<p>The plans have been developed with wide consultation with officers within and across portfolios.</p>

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None.

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Jay Davies Telephone: 01352 702744 E-mail: jay.davies@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
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8.01	Risk Management: the process of identifying risks, evaluating their potential consequences (impact) and managing them. The aim is to reduce the frequency (likelihood) of risk events occurring (wherever this is possible) and minimise the severity of their consequences (impact) if they occur. Threats are managed by a process of controlling, transferring or retaining the risk. Opportunities are managed by identifying strategies to maximise the opportunity or reward for the organisation.