

Thurrock Council Risk Management Strategy (2024-2027)

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RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY REVIEW

This Risk Management Strategy will be reviewed on at least an annual basis, with the next review scheduled for **September 2025**.

The updated Strategy will be reported to Senior Leadership Team, Cabinet and Audit Committee for approval.

Thurrock Council
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statutory Responsibility for Risk Management

Thurrock Council has a statutory responsibility to have satisfactory arrangements for managing risks, as laid out under regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015:

“The relevant body is responsible for ensuring that the financial management of the body is adequate and effective and that the body has a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of that body’s functions, and which includes arrangements for the management of risk”.

1.2 The Purpose of Risk Management

A risk is something uncertain – it may happen, or it might not. A risk matters because if it happens, it will have an impact on objectives.

Risk Management is the planned and systematic approach to identify, evaluate and manage the risks to the achievement of objectives.

Risk Management is an essential part of an organisation’s governance arrangements. Risk Management is fundamental to how an organisation is directed, managed and controlled, across all levels.

Embedding effective Risk Management practice at Thurrock Council will increase the likelihood that the Council’s priorities and objectives, as set out in the [2024-2029 Corporate Plan – A fresh start for Thurrock](#) will be achieved, by effectively identifying and minimising risks, whilst also enabling the Council to be agile in its response to emerging challenges.

The effectiveness of Risk Management depends on the individuals responsible for operating the systems in place and the organisation’s Risk Management culture.

2. THURROCK COUNCIL’S RISK MANAGEMENT POSITION STATEMENT

Thurrock Council recognises its legal responsibility to manage business risks effectively, in a controlled manner to achieve its corporate objectives, enhance the value of services provided, ensure business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards of governance and public money is safeguarded and accurately accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The effective management of risk will be a priority of the Council’s approach to delivering cost effective and valued services to the public, as well as being an important element of the organisation’s corporate governance arrangements.

Thurrock Council is committed to embedding Risk Management behaviours and practices into all Council activities, including those with partners.

The ambition is to achieve a Risk Management maturity level of **RISK MANAGED** by April 2026.

2.1 OPPORTUNITY RISK

This Risk Management Strategy does not encompass Opportunity Risk. This will be kept under review, in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet, to ensure the Council’s Risk Management arrangements are able to fully support the Council’s purpose and priorities, as set out in the [2024-2029 Corporate Plan – A fresh start for Thurrock](#).

3. THE PURPOSE OF THE RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The purpose of this Risk Management Strategy is to set out Thurrock Council's approach and commitment to the identification, assessment, management and reporting of risks and to promote a culture of risk management across the Council.

The Risk Management Strategy is one element of the wider Risk Management Framework.

This Risk Management Strategy and Framework will be pivotal in embedding the Risk Management across all levels of the Council.

This Strategy has been created in-line with the **UK Government Orange Book – Management of Risk – Principles and Concepts**, the **Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) Basics of Risk Management** and the **UK ISO Standard for Risk Management – ISO 31000:2018**.

This Risk Management Strategy will enable the Council to achieve the following objectives:

- To enable corporate, strategic, programme and partnership objectives to be achieved in the optimum way by managing risks which could impact on the Council's success.
- To manage risks through a focused approach that includes risk taking in support of innovation to add value to service delivery.
- Risk management will be an integral part of the Council's culture.

These objectives will be achieved by:

- Proactively anticipating and responding to changing social, economic, political, environmental, legislative and technological requirements which may impede delivery of objectives.
- Improving the implementation and collaboration of risk management activity across the Council.
- Eliminating or reducing negative impacts, disruption and loss from current and emerging risks.
- Ensure that risk management effectively supports corporate governance arrangements in the Council.
- Integrate risk management into the culture of the Council as well as into its key management processes, projects, and financial management.
- Managing risks in-line with the approved risk appetite.
- Ensure that the risk management process for identifying, evaluating, controlling, reviewing, reporting, and communicating risks across the Council is in line with Best Practice, consistently applied, understood by officers.
- Promoting openness and transparency in risk management processes.
- Ensure that the Senior leadership Team, Directorates, Cabinet, Audit Committee, and other stakeholders obtain regular assurance that the Council is managing and mitigating its risks effectively.
- Continuously expend and improve risk management through learning and experience and actively communicate Thurrock's risk management approach to all employees and stakeholders.
- Raising awareness of the need for risk management with all service deliver partners / agencies.

4. THE RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

This Risk Management Strategy is the first element of the wider Risk Management Framework. The Risk Management Framework consists of the following components:

Risk Management Strategy	Thurrock Council's position statement, commitment and approach to Risk Management, including risk appetite and the activities and responsibilities for managing and reporting risks.
Risk Management Guidance	Guidance for staff on how to fulfil the Risk Management Strategy.
Corporate Risk Register	A register to records all corporate risks and who is responsible for managing them.
Directorate Risk Registers	Register which records all directorate risks and who is responsible for managing them.
Service / Departmental Risk Registers	Register which records all service/team/operational risks and who is responsible for managing them.
Project Risk Registers	Register which records all programme/project risks and who is responsible for managing them.

The Risk Management Framework is an integral part of the Council's overall corporate governance arrangements and will support delivery of the Council's priorities and objectives.

The wider elements of the Risk Management Framework highlighted above are currently being developed and will in place from April 2025.

5. RISK CULTURE

Risk culture is critical to the successful implementation of Risk Management across an organisation.

The Best Value Inspection report, in May 2023, identified significant deficiencies with the Risk Management culture at Thurrock Council.

Thurrock Council is committed to fully and promptly address all issues and actions identified within the Best Value Inspection in respect of Risk Culture and to ensure that the Council proactively follows this Strategy to embed strong risk management practice across all business activity.

6. RISK MATURITY

Thurrock Council's Risk Management arrangements is currently assessed as '**RISK AWARE**'. This is based on the outcomes from the [Best Value Inspection report \(May 2023\)](#) and an Internal Audit review on Risk Management Culture (October 2023).

It is the ambition of the Council to achieve the maturity status of '**RISK MANAGED**' by April 2026.

The Council's journey to RISK MANAGED will be achieved through a Risk Management Action Plan (SECTION 17), which has been informed by the actions from the Best Value Inspection report.

There will be an annual self-assessment of the Council's Risk Management maturity level. The outcomes of this annual assessment will be communicated to key stakeholders in an annual Risk Management report.

7. RISK APPETITE

Risk appetite is defined as “***the amount of risk an organisation is willing to accept***” so by articulating how much and type of risks which are acceptable it provides a basis for making judgements on the balance of the benefits and taking of the risk.

The following risk appetite levels have been adopted by Thurrock Council:

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
Avoid	Avoidance of risk and uncertainty is a key objective. Exceptional circumstances are required for any acceptance of risk.
Minimal	Preference for the ultra-safe options that have a low degree of risk and only have a potential for limited benefits.
Cautious	Preference for the safe options that have moderate degree of risk and may only have limited potential benefits.
Open	Willing to consider all options and choose the one that is most likely to result in successful delivery. Risk will be minimised while also providing an acceptable level of business benefit.
Seek	Eager to realise benefits and to choose options to achieve this despite the higher risk

The Council has not yet defined its risk appetite. This will be progressed as part of the wider Risk Management Action Plan. It is envisaged that the Council’s defined risk appetite will be in place by April 2025. In the meantime, the Council will seek to minimise unnecessary risk and manage residual risk by taking risks in pursuit of its ambitions for its community where it has sufficient assurance that:

1. The risks have been properly identified, assessed, and mitigated where possible.
2. The risks will be appropriately managed, including the taking of mitigating actions and the regular review of risk.
3. The potential benefits to residents justify the level of risk to be taken.

The Council does not intend to pursue opportunity risk. However, this will be periodically reviewed, in consultation with Members and the Senior Leadership Team.

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8. LEVELS OF RISK	
All Council's risks will be recorded and monitored via the Council's Risk Management system. This will include all levels of risk which are detailed below:	
CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Strategic	If they occurred, would have a significant impact on the Council as a whole (or significant part of) and / or the successful delivery of its corporate / strategic outcomes and its ability to exercise its functions.
Directorate	If they occurred, would seriously inhibit the achievement of the aims and objectives of the directorate. They differ from corporate risks in that they usually only impact on one directorate, rather than cutting across several directorates.
Service	If they occurred would usually concern failure to achieve service objectives. Service risks are those concerned with maintaining an appropriate level business service to existing and new service users.
Team / Operational	Those risks concerned with team related objectives. These will be lower order risks, often those regarded as operational/business as usual.
Project	Their impact is limited to the programme/project's outcomes, budget or timescales.

9. REVIEW AND REPORTING OF RISKS	
The following table outlines the review and reporting arrangements for risks.	
Risk Level	Reporting Arrangements
Strategic	All strategic risks must be owned by a Director, and as such should be reviewed and updated, together with their directorate risks on a monthly basis. They should be reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team quarterly and reported quarterly to Cabinet for oversight and the Audit Committee for noting.
Directorate	Directorate risk registers must be reviewed on at least a quarterly basis at their respective directorate meetings (DMT). Directors and their DMT's are responsible for approving recommendations for a directorate risk to be considered as a corporate risk.
Service / Team / Operational	Service level risks registers must be reviewed at least quarterly by service managers and team managers and their leadership teams. Risks may be recommended for escalation to DMT to consider for inclusion in Directorate risk registers.
Project	Project related risks are identified from the outset during the initial risk assessment. Further risk assessments should be undertaken at the beginning of every new stage of the project. Regular monitoring of progress in managing these risks as well as horizon scanning should take place and should be escalated to directorate or corporate level following review if applicable.

10. CLASSIFICATION OF STRATEGIC RISKS

All of the Council's Council strategic risks will be recorded and managed on a corporate risk matrix, which will be held on the Council's approved Risk Management system.

A risk will be defined as strategic when it meets the following criteria:

1. Significantly impacts on one or more of the Council's corporate priorities / objectives.
2. Results in significant external scrutiny with potential to cause reputational damage.
3. Significantly impact on the use of Council resources
4. Significant disruption to one or more critical Council services
5. Significant political implications for the Council

Strategic risks can be new risks to the organisation, or existing risks which have been escalated from the Directorate or Service Risk Registers.

Each risk on the Strategic Risk Register should be reviewed periodically to ensure it continues to meet this criteria.

11. RISK ESCALATION

Risks may be escalated from one level of the organisation to another (e.g. from Directorate to Corporate level). The factors to be taken into consideration when escalating risks include:

A risk may be moved to a higher level in the organisation (escalation) for the following reasons:

- The risk becomes unmanageable at current level.
- The risk is outside of the Council's risk appetite.
- The risk remains very high (severe) after control measures have been fully implemented.
- The risk impacts on more than one directorate/service area.
- The risk is directly related to an organisational objective.

12. RISK DE-ESCALATION

A risk may be moved to a lower-level risk register (de-escalated) for the following reasons:

- The risk can be controlled and managed at a lower level.
- The risk rating has decreased significantly or is not considered to be critical to the achievement of a corporate / directorate objective.
- The risk is below the Council's risk appetite.
- The risk only affects one directorate / project / programme or service area.

13. RISK CATEGORIES

Thurrock Council will identify risks under the following categories:

RISK CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Environmental	Risks which relate to hazards which may impact the environment, or environmental hazards which could impeded the Council from achieving its objectives.
Financial	Risks which focus on areas where financial features play an important part such as budget control and revenue generation.
Compliance / Regulatory	Risks relating to ensuring regulations, laws and guidelines that govern the business of the Council.
Contracts / Partnerships	Risks relating to the various contracts held within the organisation and the service which our customers receive. Also risks associated with working with private or public sector organisations to achieve common goals and objectives.
Innovation	Risks which focus on long term goals and plans.
Political	Risks arising from political instability or changes.
Reputational	Risks involving, amongst others, the safekeeping and protection of all important data held within the organisation and the conduct of members & staff.
Safety and Safeguarding	Risks relating to provision of services to vulnerable adults and children provided by the Council. This would also include wellbeing and safety of residents.

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14. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Members, Senior Management and Officers should be aware of and confident in, the application of the Council's risk management arrangements within their areas of responsibility.

The roles and responsibilities for the Risk Management at Thurrock Council is set out below:

<p>Cabinet Elected Members Chief Finance Officer</p>	<p>Own the Council's Risk Management Strategy. Contribute to defining the overall risk appetite for the organisation. Discuss new and existing significant risks with the relevant Director.</p>
<p>Audit Committee</p>	<p>Monitors the effective development and operation of risk management and governance in the Council. Oversees and approves the Council's Risk Management Strategy. Receives periodic updates on threats and opportunities which impact on the Council's objectives / outcomes. Contributes to defining the overall risk appetite for the organisation. Members consider any risks they wish to be passed to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further scrutiny.</p>
<p>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p>	<p>Provides scrutiny for any risks escalated from Audit Committee.</p>
<p>Senior Leadership Team</p>	<p>Ensures that escalation processes are in place for designated parts of the Council for risk reviews. Ensures participation in the delivery of risk management within the organisation. Owns individual corporate risks (as delegated by the Chief Executive), and approves corporate risks as escalated from directorate management teams Set the tone for risk management, promote the benefits of effective risk management and lead by example in embedding the risk management framework. Overall accountability for risk management across the Council including ensuring the corporate risk register is a live and up to date record of the current risk exposure. Contributes to defining the risk appetite. Regularly discuss and review the corporate risk register and associated risk reports. Ensures all directorates nominate a Risk Champion and Deputy.</p>

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14. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

<p>Directorate Management Teams</p>	<p>Ensures directorate and services are identifying and managing corporate, strategic, operational, project and partnership risks effectively. Reviews and challenges risk registers for their directorate and services on a quarterly basis. Makes recommendations on risks/issues to escalate to SLT. Take ownership for risks within their function and ensure risk registers are regularly discussed, reviewed, updated and escalated as appropriate. Sets priorities for dealing with unacceptable risks and to reduce risks. Ensures that risk management roles and responsibilities are included within appropriate targets. Ensure adherence with the Risk Management Strategy and Guidance. Champion the benefits of effective risk management.</p>
<p>Internal Audit</p>	<p>Reviews the Risk Management Strategy and Guidance. Supports and reviews the risk management process. Focuses internal audit work on significant risks. Provides the Risk Management Team with updates on risks identified from audits. Provides assurance on risk management across the Council, based upon reviews through audit risk assessments.</p>
<p>Project, Strategic and Operational Boards Senior Responsible Owners</p>	<p>Participates (as appropriate) in the identification, assessment, planning and management of threats and opportunities. Understands the Risk management Strategy and their accountabilities. Implements the risk management processes within their areas of responsibility. Escalates programme, project, strategic and operational risks as appropriate. Records and lessons learnt actions are put in place to reduce or eliminate risks before new projects are implemented. Ensures risk management is at the heart of decision making and key information is delivered through management groups.</p>
<p>Risk Champions</p>	<p>Promoting, steering and monitoring risk management for the Council. Set the tone for risk management in their directorates, promote the benefits of effective risk management and lead in embedding the risk management framework. Regularly discuss and review the Corporate Risk Register and associated risk reports. Revision and scrutiny of all corporate and directorate red risks on a quarterly basis or more regularly if required. To review any risks, on recommendation by senior officers to be added to the Corporate Risk Register and make a recommendation to Senior Leadership Team for inclusion / non-inclusion. To receive suggestions made by the Audit Committee on areas of corporate risk that need further consideration. To keep under review the outcome of the Audit Committee risk oversight / challenge sessions and consider wider corporate lessons learnt.</p> <p>Further details on the role of Risk Champions is included at APPENDIX A</p>

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14. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

<p>Chief Risk Advisor</p> <p>Risk Management Team</p>	<p>Facilitates the Risk Management Strategy and Guidance implementation.</p> <p>Develops plans to improve the management of risk.</p> <p>Implements and embeds a risk management system throughout the council.</p> <p>Changes the culture of Risk Management within Thurrock.</p> <p>Develops risk management guidance and training and supports risk and control owners in delivering their role.</p> <p>Ensures appropriate staff and Members are adequately trained in risk management.</p> <p>Carries out ongoing management of risk process reviews, benchmarking scrutiny, and challenge.</p>
<p>Directors</p> <p>Service Managers</p>	<p>Participates (as appropriate) in the identification, assessment, planning and management of threats and opportunities.</p> <p>Understands the Risk Management Strategy and Guidance and their accountabilities.</p> <p>Maintenance of the risk registers in their area of responsibility, ensuring that all risks are added to the Council’s risk register.</p> <p>Escalating risks of a corporate nature to the attention of their Directorate Management Team / Senior Leadership Team.</p> <p>Undertakes risk assessments for their service in relation to service / business planning and budget setting process.</p> <p>Identifies partnership and contractual arrangements where there are shared risks, ensuring these are recorded and properly managed.</p> <p>Reviews risks and risk assessments on a regular basis and discusses the management of risks with relevant team members.</p>
<p>Risk Owners</p> <p>Control Owners</p>	<p>Ensures effective action is taken to manage risk.</p> <p>Ensures the integrity of information recorded on the risk register.</p> <p>Oversees control measures and reviews proposed mitigating actions. Monitors progress against mitigating actions.</p> <p>Reports to their management teams on significant changes in risks.</p>
<p>All Council Employees</p>	<p>Aware of the Risk Management Strategy and Guidance.</p> <p>Understands their responsibilities in managing risk.</p> <p>Participate (as appropriate) in the identification, assessment and control of threats.</p> <p>Immediately reports to their manager any incident, accident, ‘near misses’ or any other concerns that they may have with regards to risks.</p>

15. RISK MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Thurrock Council's Risk Management process encompasses 4 stages:

1. Risk Identification and Assessment	To determine and prioritise how risks should be managed.
2. Risk Treatment	Options to treat risks to manage risks to an acceptable level.
3. Risk Monitoring	The design and operation of insightful and informative risk monitoring.
4. Risk Reporting	Timely, accurate and useful risk reporting to enhance the quality of decision-making and support management oversight in meeting responsibilities / objectives.

The Risk Management process at Thurrock Council, will take place continuously, and at least at quarterly intervals, to identify new risks, or existing risks which require escalation. This continuous process will ensure the risk management process is fully embedded into the culture and practice of the Council.

The Risk Management process will be fully embedded into all corporate and service planning, policy / strategy creation, decision making and project / programme management.

Further details on the following elements will be developed as part of the wider **Risk Management Framework – Risk Management Guidance**:

- Risk Identification
- Recording of risks on the Risk Management system
- Risk Assessment
- Risk Mitigation
- Risk Reporting

16. RISK MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

The Council will periodically review the effectiveness of its risk management arrangements through an external benchmarking exercise or review, internal audit review or self-assessment.

The Council's Risk Management Strategy will be the subject of an annual review.

An independent peer review of the Council's risk management arrangements will be commissioned at least every 3-yearly basis.

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17. RISK MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

The following actions will be completed, in-line with this Risk Strategy:

ACTION	IMPLEMENTATION DATE	ACTION OWNER
Including Risk Implications into future Cabinet / Committee decision making reports.	September 2024	Risk Management Team
Addressing all actions from the May 2023 Best Value Inspection report.	April 2025	Risk Management Team
Procurement and Implementation of Risk Management software.	September 2024	Risk Management Team
Development and implementation of the wider Risk Management Framework: - Review and update of the Corporate Risk Register. - Review and update of Directorate and Service Risk Register. - Development of Risk Management Guidance. - Activities to establish and defining Thurrock Council's Risk Appetite.	April 2025	Risk Management Team
Re-commencement of routine risk reporting to Directorate Management Teams, Senior Leadership Team, Cabinet and Audit Committee.	January 2025	Risk Management Team
Identification and recruitment of Risk Champions across all Council services.	September 2025	Risk Management Team
Incorporating Risk Management practice into all business planning, policy / strategy development and decision making.	April 2025	Risk Management Team and Senior Leadership Team
Delivery of Risk Management training and ongoing training programme for relevant Members and officers.	January 2025	Risk Management Team
Review of Risk Management resources and recruitment.	January 2025	Head of Internal Audit, Risk and Insurance
Networking with other Risk Management professionals to share good practice.	Ongoing	Risk Management Team
To commission an independent review of the Council's Risk Management arrangements.	April 2025	Risk Management Team

These actions will enable the Council to fully embed Risk Management into all Council activities and to secure a risk maturity level of Risk Managed.

18. RISK DEFINITIONS

Risk	<p>Risk is the effect of uncertainty on objectives.</p> <p>Risk is usually expressed in terms of causes, potential events, and their consequences.</p> <p>A risk is an event which has not yet occurred.</p> <p>Risk can be positive, negative or both and can address, create or result in opportunities and threats.</p> <p>Risk is usually assessed in terms of the impact and likelihood of the risk materialising and impeding the organisation from achieving its objectives.</p>
Issue	An ISSUE is a problem which has already arisen and is impeding successful completion of objectives, or a project / programme.
Risk Management	The planned and systematic approach to identify, evaluate and manage the risks to the achievement of objectives.
Opportunity Risk	A risk can have a positive effect on objectives. This is classed as Opportunity Risk
Risk Appetite	The level of risk an organisation is willing to take to meet their strategic objectives.
Risk Tolerance	The level of risk with which an organisation is willing to operate.
Risk Maturity	An assessment of how well embedded Risk Management arrangements are within an organisation. This can be defined as (1) NAÏVE, (2) AWARE, (3) DEFINED, (4) MANAGED OR (5) ENABLED.
Risk Culture	The values, beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and understanding about risk shared by a group of people with a common purpose.

19. FURTHER GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Further information on the Council's Risk Management arrangements can be located [here](#)

Enquiries about the Risk Management process can be sent to Risk.Management@Thurrock.gov.uk

Alternatively, please contact:
Kelly McMillan – Chief Risk Advisor
Kelly.McMillan@Thurrock.gov.uk

APPENDIX A - THE ROLE OF RISK CHAMPIONS

A Risk Champion will usually be an existing member of a Directorate Management Team who supports the Risk Management process within their Directorate.

Risk Champions will have sufficient authority to drive the Risk Management inline with the Council's Risk Management Strategy and Guidance.

A Risk Champion is a person with the skills, knowledge and leadership required to champion the Risk Management cause. A key part of this responsibility involves escalating key risks for the attention of the Senior Leadership Team.

The Risk Champion also adds value to the Risk Management process by providing guidance and support to manage "key" risks.

Risk Champions are responsible for embedding best Risk Management practice within their respective Directorates.

Risk Champions will:

- Attend and contribute to the Risk Champions Group.
- Represent the Directorate at the Risk Champions Group meetings.
- Provide the necessary support on the management of risks to Heads of Service and other managers within the Directorate.
- Facilitate the required updating of risks and control measures on the Risk Management system, in conjunction with the Heads of Service and other managers.
- Encourage the identification and reporting of emerging risks.
- Ensure consistency and compliance in the methodology used to manage risks and controls.
- Act as the main contact for the Directorate on the subject of risk, and its management, including liaising with or escalation to the Risk Management team.
- Promote the benefits of Risk Management to services and managers and to communicate corporate information and requirements to them.
- Ensure that significant risk issues are brought to the attention of the group and to ensure any such issues are being properly addressed.