

# **Barnsley Council Risk Management Policy and Framework**

## **Policy Statement**

Barnsley Council recognises that it has a responsibility to manage the risks it faces effectively in order to:

- Ensure that statutory obligations and policy objectives are met
- Prioritise areas for improvement in service provision and encourage meeting or exceeding customer and stakeholder expectations
- Safeguard its employees, clients and service users, Members and all other stakeholders to whom the Council has a duty of care
- Protect its property and assets including buildings, equipment, vehicles, information and all other assets and resources
- Identify and manage potential liabilities
- Maintain effective control of public funds and the efficient deployment and use of resources to achieve "Value for Money"
- Preserve and promote the reputation of the Council
- Support the quality of the environment
- Engage effectively with its partner organisations and wider community
- Learn from previous threats, opportunities, successes and failures to inform the future management of risks

Risk management is an integral part of the Council's corporate governance arrangements and has been built into the management processes as part of the Authority's overall framework to deliver continuous improvement. All Members and Officers have a responsibility and a role to play in managing risk.

The Council will seek to achieve effective Risk Management by:

- Implementing a Risk Management Framework that is fit for purpose and which compliments the other governance processes of the Council
- Equipping all employees and Elected Members with the skills required to identify and assess risk and communicate this appropriately and effectively
- Acknowledging that increasingly risks are shared across partner organisations, which can increase the complexity of analysis and reporting, and, also that assurances regarding the level of risk may need to be sought from third parties as well as internal sources
- Annually reviewing the effectiveness of Risk Management and reporting the results as part of the Annual Governance Statement
- Considering on an on-going basis that the Councils approach remains in line with good practice, whilst reviewing the Policy and Framework formally every 2 years

Signed:

Councillor Sir Steve Houghton  
Leader of the Council

Sarah Norman  
Chief Executive

## **Risk Management Framework 2024 - 2026**

### **1. Introduction**

Barnsley Council recognises the importance of the effective identification, evaluation and management of all key strategic and operational risks. Risk management is at the heart of good management practice and is a key part of the Council's corporate governance arrangements.

Our risk management arrangements are proactive and enable decisions and day-to-day management to be based on properly assessed risks with the aim of ensuring that the right actions are taken at the right time.

By implementing effective management of our risks, we will be in a stronger position to deliver:

- Improved Strategic Management – greater ability to deliver against objectives and targets within finite resources
- Improved Operational Management – reduction in interruptions to service delivery and/or in managerial time spent dealing with the consequences of a risk event having occurred
- Improved Financial Management – informed decision making and reduction in losses or claims against the Council, reduction in insurance premiums, and
- Improved Customer Services and Outcomes – minimal service disruption, increased levels of satisfaction and optimal service delivery.

This document outlines how Barnsley Council is taking on its responsibility to manage risks and opportunities as outlined in the Risk Management Policy, using a positive and enabling approach. It sets out:

- What we mean by risk management?
- Why we need a Risk Management Framework – why is it important?
- An overview of the risk management process
- Delivery of the strategy
- An outline of the roles and responsibilities for members, senior officers and staff

### **2. Definitions of Risk – what do we mean by risk management?**

Risk is the chance, possibility or concern of loss, damage, injury or inability to achieve objectives caused by an unwanted or uncertain action or event. Risk is an inevitable part of everyday business and cannot be eliminated – but it can be managed.

Risk management is a planned and systematic approach to the identification, evaluation and control of those risks, issues and concerns which can threaten the assets or financial and organisational wellbeing of the Council. Risk management is a key element in the Council's Governance Assurance Framework and is a key part of day-to-day business processes to deliver improvements.

### **3. Why is risk management important?**

Effective and efficient risk management is critical to the success of any organisation. It is an important tool for senior management to ensure that the organisation's objectives are achieved, and its responsibilities discharged. How organisations deal with risk can have a major impact on the achievement of the key business goals and organisational objectives.

The Council recognises that it has a responsibility to manage risks effectively in order to control its assets and liabilities, protect its employees and community against potential losses, minimise uncertainty in achieving its goals and objectives and maximise the opportunities to achieve its vision.

Risk management is an integral part of the Council's corporate governance arrangements and has been built into the performance management processes of the Council, and forms part of the overall framework to deliver continuous improvement.

### **4. An Overview of the Risk Management Process**

#### **4.1 Risk Management System and Approach**

The Council's risk management approach is embedded into business as usual within the Council, with regular reviews and challenge of the Strategic Risks being undertaken by the Senior Management Team (SMT) on a quarterly basis and also by the Audit & Governance Committee at every meeting.

The system is user friendly, has easily accessible risk recording templates which are quick to complete and can easily be used on a variety of electronic devices. The process has a simpler RAG rating and assessment of risk, and a greater emphasis on the effective mitigation of actions to address the risk. The system is designed to be "self-service" for Risk Managers and their teams, enabling risks to be proactively owned, updated and managed by teams across the Council.

The approach introduces the concept of 'concerns', 'issues' and areas of focus. The term 'risk' is therefore used generically to cover these three concepts

#### **4.2 Risk Analysis – Identification, Description and Assessment of Risk**

Unlike traditional risks systems which focus on the avoidance of failure with risks being prefaced with the description of "failure to...", the risk management system has a more positive enabling approach. The system focuses on an assessment of confidence, encouraging risk managers to focus on matters requiring attention, assurance and intervention; and to consider what actions are required and by when to mitigate the risk.

Risk consideration is around:

- Are we satisfied that we are doing everything reasonable to influence and manage risk?
- What do we need to have in place to ensure we do all the right things in the right way?

To determine and identify risks, managers need to think about and capture areas of focus, issues and concerns in their area. These can be defined as follows:

- **Concerns** – something that is likely to happen in future – concern regarding the achievement of an objective, or the need to meet future requirements e.g. new legislation or maintaining/meeting specific service levels
- **Issues** – something that has gone “wrong” – live problems that need a specific response – e.g. arising from a complaint, enforcement action against the Council or a failure of a contractor
- **Areas of focus** – likely to be important strategic or operational objectives which need to remain in the focus of the management team – e.g. Glassworks Development as a strategic focus, or a new IT system as an operational focus

The system requires a narrative description of the risk. This may relate to something that has happened or something that may occur, it can be a local concern or can be linked to national influences, or a major activity, project or initiative that the team should have a focus on.

A narrative assessment of the risk helps to identify the main issues. For a **concern** (the forward look), considerations include:

- What is giving us a concern and why?
- Do we know when the concern may arise?
- What do we need to ensure we have in place that means we can address the concern?

For an **issue** (the response to something that has already happened), considerations include:

- What has gone wrong?
- What was the cause?
- What has not been complied with?
- Is there a missing control or is it a matter of non-compliance?
- Could this have been prevented, minimised with improved controls etc?

For an **area of focus** (the longer-term aspects of service delivery), considerations include:

- What assurances do we need regarding the project / initiative / objective that ensures its successful delivery?
- Are all the arrangements in place to provide the right oversight and timely information that would enable the necessary interventions and influence?

### 4.3 Risk Evaluation

All risks need to be evaluated to determine the relative severity or seriousness of the issue, concern or area of focus. This in turn aids management in determining the relative prioritisation of their risks and assists them to determine the necessary actions for each risk.

The revised approach has a more simplistic intuitive assessment process reflecting what is happening now:

- Is the impact of the risk actual or potential?
- What is the current status of the risk actual or potential?

- What is the response rating of the risk, i.e. how urgently do we need to act – High priority (action required within 1-3 months), Medium priority (action required within 3-6 months) or Low priority (monitoring of the risk up to a 12 month timeframe)

#### 4.4 Risk Management and Mitigation and Governance Domains

For each risk, managers need to consider the actions required to understand, manage and respond to the risk.

- For an **issue**, actions will be largely corrective based on a “diagnosis” of what went wrong, to enable a focus on specific, owned and tracked actions to respond.
- For a **concern**, the actions are likely to revolve around getting assurances about the necessary arrangements in place to enable the future matter to be dealt with effectively, and therefore avoiding any issues, where something goes wrong.
- Similarly, with **areas of focus**, the actions are likely to focus on obtaining assurances to enable the appropriate oversight and influence.

The system enables managers to identify up to 8 actions for each risk.

Each action includes a description of what is to be done, by whom (the Action Owner) and by when (completion or review dates). A simplistic progress update (red, amber or green) is included, which provides a visual guide to assist management in determining the relative prioritisation and attention to be afforded to the action.

Each action should be linked to a governance domain. These governance domains link the action to the wider governance assurance and control framework that all Business Units/Management Teams are required to comply with. In effect the domains provide a simple accountability/compliance framework which identifies the underpinning infrastructure of governance and control used across the Council (and indeed all organisations) to manage its finances, people, assets, information, partnerships, performance, contracts, projects, legislative responsibilities, decision making, conduct and resilience.

Linking the risk actions to a governance domain explicitly recognises that everything that happens in an organisation is achieved through these broad themes or domains, and that the management, effectiveness and compliance with these domains is a key aspect of good governance within an organisation. Every manager and ultimately every employee have a responsibility to comply with and ensure good governance in their work and area of the organisation.

Each governance domain has a strategic level owner the “Domain Lead” (someone accountable to an Executive Director for the organisational wide management of that area) e.g. the Director of Finance - is responsible for financial management and has oversight and responsibility for regulation and compliance requirements in that area. Analysis of actions by governance domain will be shared with the Domain Leads; and will form an intrinsic part of the Council’s review of governance, in order that trends, issues and areas requiring corporate input or support can be identified.

#### **4.5 Risk Assurance and Review**

The Senior Management Team (SMT) will receive quarterly reports on strategic risks as part of their Quarterly Performance Review meetings. These will be prepared by the Corporate Assurance Manager. There will be dedicated time for consideration, debate and challenge on the risks at these Quarterly Performance Meetings.

The Audit and Governance Committee will receive regular updates on the strategic risks and will have the opportunity to drill into specific risks with individual Executive Directors invited to attend and update the Committee to discuss risks in their area.

Cabinet will receive six monthly reports on strategic risks. The named Lead Member for Risk Management is the Cabinet Spokesperson for Core Services.

Directorate Management Teams and Business Units will have their own risk registers. The minimum review requirement recommended for these is on a quarterly basis at management meetings.

Heads of Service will have their own risk registers, the recommended review period for these being monthly.

Quality Assurance feedback will be shared with Directorate Management Teams and Business Units on a quarterly basis.

### **5 Delivery of the Framework**

A good understanding of risk management and a strong commitment from both Members and Officers exists within the Council which will support the delivery of the new risk management approach. Roles and responsibilities to support the delivery of the framework are outlined in Appendix 1.

The Corporate Assurance Manager will work closely with Business Units, Directorates and Boards/Project Teams to continue to embed the risk management processes into their teams.

Guidance materials to support managers with the risk management system are available and include step by step user guides/notes to support the completion of the risk management templates, training packages for staff to complete on POD, and the Risk Management Policy Statement.

Continual development and regular review of strategic and operational risk registers will be undertaken by managers with support and input from the Corporate Assurance Manager as necessary.

## Risk Management Roles and Responsibilities

In order to ensure that the Council's risk management arrangements are implemented and delivered successfully, it is important that everyone within the organisation understands how their responsibilities fit into the risk management framework.

The table below summarise the roles and responsibilities of various groups and individuals across the Council in relation to the delivery, support and assurance necessary to establish and embed an effective risk management system

**The following groups and/or individuals will assist in the delivery of effective risk management:**

Group or Individual	Roles and Responsibilities
Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that an effective system of risk management is in place</li> </ul>
Elected Members (individually or collectively)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the importance of risk management and its benefits, which includes attending relevant training</li> <li>• Contribute to the identification of strategic risks</li> <li>• Consider the risk management implications contained within Cabinet and other reports as part of the Council's decision-making process</li> </ul>
Cabinet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote and demonstrate the behaviours and values that support well informed and considered risk taking</li> <li>• Ensure open and frank conversations about risks, ensuring appropriate reporting and escalation as required.</li> </ul>
Chief Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure effective risk management arrangements are in place and to lead the embedding of the risk management culture within the Council</li> </ul>
Senior Management Team (SMT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the Council manages risk effectively through the Risk Management Policy</li> <li>• Actively consider, own and manage the key strategic risks of the Council</li> <li>• Keep the Risk Management Framework and Policy under regular review</li> <li>• Promote and demonstrate the behaviours and values that support well informed and considered risk taking, while maintaining accountability</li> <li>• Encourage open and frank conversations about risks, and ensure appropriate reporting and escalation of risks as required</li> </ul>
Directorate Management Teams (DMT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible for the effective and robust management of risk within the Directorate</li> <li>• Escalate risks to the Senior Management Team as appropriate</li> <li>• Maintain Directorate Risk Registers and update risks at least quarterly (or more frequently if required)</li> </ul>
Business Units (BU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible for the effective and robust management of risk within the Business Units</li> <li>• Escalate risks to the Directorate Management Team as appropriate</li> <li>• Maintain Business Unit Risk Registers and update risks monthly</li> </ul>

<b>Group or Individual</b>	<b>Roles and Responsibilities</b>
Service Managers/Project Managers/Partnership Lead Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage risks effectively in their service area, project or partnership for which they are responsible</li> </ul>
Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible for the effective and robust management of risks within the Board</li> <li>• Escalate risks to the relevant Executive Director / Senior Management Team as appropriate</li> <li>• Maintain a Board Risk Register and update risks at least quarterly</li> </ul>
All Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain an understanding of risk management and its benefits, which includes attending relevant training</li> <li>• Identify new or changing risks in their job and feed these to their line manager</li> </ul>

**The risk management framework is supported by:**

Head of Corporate Assurance (Head of Internal Audit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible for the overall monitoring of strategic risks across the Council</li> <li>• Responsible for ensuring that risk management resources are appropriate</li> <li>• Provides independent assurance and an annual opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Councils risk management, assurance and control framework</li> </ul>
Corporate Assurance Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and maintain the Risk Management Framework and Policy, management guidance and support resources</li> <li>• Facilitate the maintenance of an up to date Strategic Risk Register, and provide reports on strategic risks to the Senior Management Team</li> <li>• Facilitate the risk management process within the Council.</li> <li>• Assist key individuals with implementing and embedding risks across all Council areas, provide guidance, training and support as required</li> </ul>

**The risk management framework is assured by:**

Audit and Governance Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide assurances to the Council on the adequacy and effectiveness of the risk management framework ensuring it is fit for purpose</li> <li>• Receive regular reports on the Council's risk management arrangements and the management of key risks</li> </ul>
Corporate Assurance Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the effectiveness of the risk management framework and the control environment in mitigating risk</li> <li>• Periodically provide an independent view of the robustness of the risk management framework and compliance with it</li> <li>• Review and comment on the content and relevance of Risk Registers in supporting the delivery of Business Plan objectives when undertaking risk-based audits</li> </ul>