

COMMITTEE REPORT

CORPORATE AFFAIRS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

7th DECEMBER 2017

BUSINESS CONTINUITY – ANNUAL REVIEW

STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, GOVERNANCE AND SUPPORT, JAMES BROMILEY

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to outline the Council's approach to Business Continuity planning and to testing those plans, present a summary of the findings from this year's tests and detail the review schedule to provide the Committee with assurance that the Council has robust business continuity arrangements in place.

BACKGROUND

2. The Council has a duty under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to develop and maintain Business Continuity plans to enable continued delivery of critical functions during a business interruption event. The council's Business Continuity plan states that critical activities are those which, if interrupted could result in:
 - risk of serious injury
 - risk of death
 - massive financial losses; or
 - significant damage to the Council's reputation.
3. Business interruption events are incidents that affect service delivery. The Council's approach is that if an interruption meets the criteria set out below, it will implement its plans:
 - is likely to last for more than half a working day;
 - affects a vulnerable group of service users;
 - impacts on the delivery of key critical activities;
 - restricts access to one of the key council buildings;
 - could generate significant damage to the Council's reputation; or
 - is highly likely to escalate into one of the above categories.
4. The Council has the following Business Continuity plans in place:
 - the Corporate Business Continuity Plan;
 - supporting Departmental Business Continuity Plans;
 - Relocation Plan;
 - Fuel Plan (held in abeyance); and

- the Flu Pandemic Plan.

Business Continuity – the Council's approach

5. The Council does not publish its Business Continuity plans as they outline sensitive information around its critical processes, which could be misused. They also contain personal information relating to staff where they have agreed to share personal contact details to enable the Council to get in touch with them quickly in the event of an incident. The paragraphs below outline the content of the Council's plans in broad terms.
6. The Corporate Business Continuity plan is the overarching plan for the organisation. It sets out the structure used to identify and prioritise critical functions; the mechanisms for enacting the plan; how Business Continuity plans will be maintained, tested and reviewed; and policies and procedures in place to support Business Continuity planning.
7. For each critical activity, there is a plan which sets out information on buildings used by the service, staff information, key equipment and supplies, key records, ICT systems and other key contacts.
8. The Relocation Plan sets out how critical staff would be relocated to other buildings within the Council or sent home to work using agile working solutions if one or more buildings became inaccessible.
9. The Council's approach is, in the main, not to write numerous plans for the different risks, which if they occurred, could interrupt delivery of critical services. The Fuel and Flu plans are the exceptions to this rule, created because of the specific risks facing the organisation at that time and the scale of the interruption which national fuel shortage or a flu pandemic could cause over a period of months.
10. The Fuel plan outlines how the Council would respond to a fuel strike to ensure critical staff that need to be mobile are able to continue to work. This plan was created when there was a significant risk of a national fuel strike. At this point in time it is not part of the review schedule. If the risk of a national fuel strike was to increase, this plan would be updated.
11. The Flu Plan was created in response to the increased risk of a flu pandemic which has been widely broadcast in the media. This plan is normally updated on a yearly basis, in line with the Council's review schedule for Business Continuity. This plan has been reviewed and refreshed in line with the latest national guidance. This plan outlines how the Council would prioritise certain services and change operating practices to enable them to be able to continue to deliver critical services.

Plan testing

12. Each department is required to test its plans at least once every 12 months, or to produce a lessons learnt report if a live Business Continuity incident has occurred

during the past 12 months. This year this was replaced with Exercise Ironstone, which provided an enhanced test of the Council's business continuity plans.

13. Operation Ironstone was a Business Continuity and Emergency Planning exercise undertaken in June 2017. This exercise brought together the Business Continuity Team and the Emergency Management Response Team for the first time to deal with an incident in the Town Centre which involved an impact on the wider community as well as the Council's service areas. There were a number of lessons learnt for both teams from the exercise and actions have been taken to strengthen Business Continuity Planning as a result and further actions are also planned in relation to further role based training, improved documentation, clearer communications plans between the two teams and equipment/local arrangements. The implementation of the actions are progressing well.
14. Within the year there has been much progress made on Council's resilience planning but in particular in two key areas.
15. The roll out of agile working reduces reliance on a traditional relocation plan, however there is an increasing reliance on ICT to support continued service delivery. As a part of the review of the departmental business continuity plans this year, further information has been collated on the ability of services identified as critical to have staff work on an agile basis, rather than requiring an office base. This information has been mapped against the requirements for critical teams who may need to relocate to other buildings and this has informed the review of the Relocation Plan.
16. LMT have agreed that managers responsible for critical services will take steps to ensure sufficient staff take agile working equipment off site on a night to maximise the resilience available from agile working capabilities.
17. A further key development has been the implementation of a second Data Centre that has been built and is now in use which has increased ICT resilience. To take on board the changes that have been implemented the ICT service are now taking steps to update the Disaster Recovery Plan.

Review schedule

18. Business Continuity plans are updated every six months and reviewed on an annual basis. The scale of the review is dependent on the level of organisational change that has occurred in the intervening period. In some years this means that only minor updates (e.g. contact details) are required; in others fundamental reviews will be required to reflect changes to the Council's structure or other significant developments e.g. where services have been outsourced or brought back in house.
19. This year's review has reflected the revised management structure and the increasing impact that agile working capabilities have had on the way services would continue to deliver critical functions as this programme has been rolled out further. In the reviewing of the Business Continuity Plans this year the Risk Business Partner has met with all critical services plan owners to review and

identify any weaknesses or gaps in their arrangements. As a result of these meetings it was identified that a number of critical service areas with agile working in place leave their laptops within the office. Currently there is no requirement for individuals to take their laptops home so should an invocation happen which prevents them accessing their normal place of work then they would need to be relocated as well as being provided with ICT equipment.

Conclusions

20. Based on this and the actions that have been taken in the last 12 months, LMT consider that the Council's approach to Business Continuity is fit for purpose.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

21. There are no new direct financial considerations in relation to Business Continuity as a result of this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

22. It is recommended that the Committee considers the Council's approach to Business Continuity.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

23. Not applicable.

AUTHOR

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