

Report of:	Strategic Director of Finance, Governance and Support
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AGENDA ITEM 5

Submitted to:	Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee, 6 December 2018
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Subject:	Business Continuity – Annual Assurance Report
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Summary

Proposed decision(s)

That the Committee notes the Council’s approach to BC and planned improvements, and considers any further improvements it wishes to see over the next year.

Report for:	Key decision:	Confidential:	Is the report urgent?
Information	Not applicable	No	Not applicable

Contribution to delivery of the 2018-22 Strategic Plan

Business Imperatives	Physical Regeneration	Social Regeneration
Effective Business Continuity Planning will ensure the Council is able to recover maintain critical services that could be affected by an incident e.g. electricity failure.	Not applicable	Not applicable

Ward(s) affected

The proposals have no direct impact on wards within Middlesbrough.

What is the purpose of this report?

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

Why does this report require a Member decision?

2. Part of Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee's remit is to consider reports that ensure it is assured that the Council has an effective corporate governance framework in place. This report provides information to enable the Committee to be assured that the Council's BC arrangements are appropriate.

Report Background

3. The Council has a duty under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to develop and maintain BC plans to enable continued delivery of 'critical functions' during a 'business interruption' event.

The Council's approach

4. The Council's corporate BC plan defines critical functions 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.
5. A business interruption event:
 - 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.
6. If an event meets the above criteria, the Council will implement relevant BC plans. The Council has the following BC plans in place:
 - the corporate BC plan;
 - supporting departmental BC plans;
 - a relocation plan;
 - a fuel plan (held in abeyance);
 - a Flu Pandemic Plan; and
 - an ICT disaster recovery (DR) plan.
7. The Council does not publish its BC plans as they outline sensitive information around its critical processes, which could be misused, and contain personal information

relating to employees that have agreed to share personal contact details to enable the Council to get in touch with them quickly in the event of an incident. Therefore the paragraphs below outline the content of the Council's plans in broad terms.

8. The corporate BC 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 all plans will be maintained, tested and reviewed; and policies and procedures in place to support BC planning.
9. For each critical activity, there is a departmental-level plan which sets out information on buildings used to deliver that service, staff information, key equipment and supplies, key records, ICT systems and other key contacts.
10. 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.
11. 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 functions. The fuel, flu and ICT DR plans are the exceptions to this rule, created because of specific risks facing the Council in recent years, and the scale of the interruption that such events could cause over a period of months.
12. 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, but is not at this point in time part of the review schedule. If the risk of a national fuel shortage (e.g. following Brexit) was to increase, this plan would be updated and reinstated in the schedule.
13. The flu plan was created a number of years ago in response to the increased risk of a flu pandemic at that time. This plan is normally updated on a yearly basis, and has been reviewed and refreshed in line with the latest national guidance. The plan outlines how the Council would prioritise certain services and change operating practices to enable them to be able to continue to deliver critical functions in the event of a pandemic.
14. The ICT DR Plan focuses on maintaining ICT for critical functions, highlighting those applications which are hosted externally, and any services supported by the Council's key partners.

Plan testing

15. Each department has been required to test its plans at least once every 12 months, or to produce a lessons learnt report if a live BC incident occurred during the past 12 months.
16. This year this approach was replaced with a senior management exercise involving multiple plans in order to provide an enhanced test of the Council's preparedness and develop the skills of the Council's BC recovery team in the round. This year's exercise took place in November 2018 and tested:

- the application of the contents of BC plans, identifying areas for improvement in plans, procedures and resources;
- knowledge of the ICT DR and relocation plans;
- how communications would be undertaken and cascaded; and
- the adequacy of recovery checklists.

17. In late February 2018, the area suffered the 'Beast from the East' snow fall which affected critical functions across the Council. During this period, updates were provided to the Council's management team on a daily basis, to allow timely decision-making. Agile working proved successful, with a significant number of staff working from home without significant impact on delivery. At the peak of the event, only two critical services were suspended (the Integrated Transport Unit and nurseries). Overall, the event demonstrated the robustness of the Council's BC arrangements.

18. An ICT DR Plan has been developed this year, and identifies the Council's ICT recovery team and the procedures and checklists to be utilised in an event. An exercise took place in November 2018 to test this plan.

19. The lessons learned from these events and exercises will inform BC improvement planning for 2018/19.

Review schedule

20. BC 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.

21. This year's review has taken on board the increasing impact that agile working capabilities have had on the way services would continue to deliver critical functions within an interruption event, informed by the Council's learning from the 'Beast from the East' snow fall.

Improvement plan for 2018 – update

22. A Business Continuity improvement plan was developed which covered training; documentation; communication and equipment and location arrangements. Progress on this plan is set out below:

Training

23. Refresher training was provided for management team members on their and their managers' roles within the BC plan. Role cards have been developed for the corporate BC recovery team to provide clarity around the roles and responsibilities. The effectiveness of these were tested during this year's exercise.

Documentation

24. A review was undertaken of all critical staff and new identity badges issued with wording on the reverse to allow them to fulfil their role within BC during an event.
25. A review has been undertaken on the critical functions to ensure these are correct, and as a result of this three further plans were developed to cover activities delivered by Strategic Commissioning and Procurement, CCTV and Legal Services.
26. To strengthen the corporate BC plan, further information was included in relation to the strengthening of role definitions, identifying staff numbers within each building, services located on each floor, and incident wardens for each building with their contact details. Within all BC plans, a second alternate has been identified for key roles to further strengthen resilience. Loggists have been identified and included within the corporate BC plan, and the log form they utilise in an event was reviewed to ensure it is appropriate and fit for purpose.
27. All critical services have identified recovery teams and implemented the necessary measures to ensure that functions can be maintained and that the relevant individuals take their laptops offsite each night.
28. The BC section within the Major Incident Plan has been reviewed and updated to ensure that there is clarity of what will be undertaken by each of the relevant teams, and to ensure that both plans dovetail together.

Communication

29. Access to e-mail for all communications has now been expanded to the Head of Strategy, Information and Governance (BC Coordinator), the Corporate Strategy Manager and Risk Business Partner so should a BC message need to be sent out then the relevant staff have the correct access to facilitate this.
30. A lockdown procedure has been developed to enable the Council to implement a partial or full closure of buildings should an incident occur to protect staff. This procedure includes how staff will be communicated with on a lockdown and the training to be provided.

Equipment and locations arrangements

31. A number of actions have been undertaken to ensure that the relocation site identified within BC plans will be accessible, has appropriate ICT, and is stocked with copies of business continuity plans and supporting documentation in a secure location.
32. BC plans have been reviewed to identify any staff identified as critical in the event of an incident that have not been provided with a laptop. This information has been provided to ICT so the individuals can be picked up as part of the agile working roll out to further increase the resilience of the organisation.

Business Continuity activities for 2019

33. During 2019 further work will be undertaken to build on the progress made within the previous improvement plan. This work will cover training, documentation, communication and equipment and location arrangements. Planned work is set out in the table below:

Work Activity	Action
Training	To source and provide further training for the BC recovery teams on their roles and how it links with Emergency Planning. Also to undertake exercises to test the validity of the plans in place.
Documentation	To undertake a full review and update of all BC Plans to ensure they remain fit for purpose.
Communication	To develop a communication process which includes intelligence sharing between Communications Team BC Team around closures etc. To undertake a test of the lockdown alarm on one of the main buildings to ensure the procedures and communications for this work well in practice.
Equipment and location arrangements	To investigate how the BC Team might access mapping information during an incident at the relocation site.

What decision(s) are being asked for?

34. That the Committee notes the Council’s approach to BC and planned improvements, and considers any further improvements it wishes to see over the next year.

Why is this being recommended?

35. To support the Committee to discharge its responsibility to maintain an overview of corporate governance within the Council, which includes BC planning.

Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended

36. Alternative models for delivery of BC arrangements are available, however they would require significantly increased resources to be put in place e.g. for ‘live testing’.

Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)

Legal

37. BC is part of corporate governance, and the Council has a legal duty to ensure arrangements to comply with the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 are in place.

Financial

38. There are no new direct financial considerations in relation to BC as a result of this report. By having robust plans in place, the Council will mitigate any financial impacts from any BC event.

Policy Framework

39. This report will not result in an amendment to a policy framework document.

Equality and Diversity

40. There are no direct implications from this report on equality and diversity.

Risk

41. BC planning contributes to preventing the risk of the Council not having adequate governance processes in place to ensure that compliance is in place with all relevant legislation (O8-054). Should a large scale incident occur then the Council must ensure it has suitably robust plans in place which will allow business critical services to continue (O8-052) and these are tested on a regular basis to ensure they are fit for purpose and they allow for a diversion of resources if required (O8-037).

Actions to be taken to implement the decision(s)

42. Following endorsement of the Council's approach, actions will be taken during 2018/19 to further strengthen BC preparedness, as outlined in the report.

Appendices

None.

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee	Business Continuity – Annual Report	7 December 2017

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