

**REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting: 23rd July 2013

Subject: Business Continuity Update

Responsible Officer: Tom Whiting
Corporate Director of Resources

**Scrutiny Lead
Member area:** Councillor Jerry Miles – Policy Lead
Corporate Resources
Councillor Kamaljit Chana –
Performance Lead Corporate
Resources

Exempt: No

Enclosures: None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out an update on Business Continuity activity as requested by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Business Continuity is a function of the Civil Contingencies Team with a regular reporting line to the GARM Committee.

Recommendations: To note the report

Section 2 – Report

Introduction

The Civil Contingencies Team, also known colloquially as the “Emergency Planning & Business Continuity Team”, is one of the distinct teams that sit within the Finance & Assurance Division of the council.

The Civil Contingencies Team is a small, but effective unit of three staff. The team provide a corporate service delivering Emergency Planning, Business Continuity, and Civil Protection, as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004; and is the Counter Terror link with the Police Service and HM Government.

Business Continuity is a management process to assist an organisation cope with an incident such as loss of staff or facilities, e.g. pandemic influenza, fire or flood. It is linked to, but distinct and separate from IT Disaster Recovery, which is the restoration of IT by the IT Service. A separate report on IT DR is being made by the IT Service to the P & F Committee.

This report will provide an activity update on Business Continuity, as requested by the O & S Committee, and regularly discussed at the GARM Committee, the most recent being on 23rd January 2013, minute 218.

Business Continuity

Background and process

The council's Business Continuity plans and ethos are firmly embedded in the council. In order to explain the current issues, risks, and deliverability, it is useful to explain the background and process that led us here.

The council's approach to Business Continuity was based on the British Standard BS25999 'bottom – up' process. The 'bottom – up' process began in 2006, with Business Continuity workshops being delivered to service managers (and similar grades) to identify and classify the council's essential and critical services. Over 130 key service areas were identified.

During 2007, Business Continuity training sessions were held with divisional directors (and similar grades) to develop Business Continuity plans for the key service areas within their divisions. From these Business Continuity plans, key infrastructure and IT requirements were identified.

In 2008, table top exercises were held to simulate a major incident occurring, such as fire, flood or explosion; and to practice the response of individual departments, to see if their Business Continuity plans were viable, and to test the corporate response to infrastructure and IT demands. The key learning point identified was the dependency on IT, and in particular the 34 key IT applications, out of the council's 200 plus legacy IT applications.

During 2009, the 34 key IT applications that had been identified were taken into account as part of the IT Disaster Recovery project, and the wider 'LBH Anywhere' proposal. This was going to provide a credible overall Business Continuity response to a major incident occurring.

The council now has Business Continuity plans for all its key 37 departments. These were reviewed, refined and tested at director level. The departmental Business Continuity plans now feed into a corporate Business Continuity plan, an overarching plan for the whole council. The end had been reached to the 'bottom – up' process.

As part of the corporate Business Continuity plan, arrangements were made for key staff to be deployed to a remote location, in the event of a major incident occurring at the civic centre complex. These key staff were identified through a series of table top exercises: 280 key staff were identified in total, with 150 being allocated seats at the remote site known as 'relocators', and 130 being expected to work from home or another location being known as 'isolators'. This plan was physically tested during a live exercise in 2010, with key managers driving to the remote site and setting up as if dealing with a real incident.

During 2011, the departmental BC plans were reviewed and updated by directors and their service managers. The council then went through a restructuring period for two years with major changes to directorate and divisional management. The review of departmental BC plans during 2012 was limited to key contact details. As part of the Olympic preparation, the council's corporate BC plan and key departmental BC plans were tested during Exercise Torch Relay, a London-wide exercise developed by the Local Government Association, London Councils, London Resilience and London Fire Brigade.

During 2013, we have begun a full review and update of all the departmental BC plans and the corporate BC plan, to bring them up to date with the council's new structure and the new international standard ISO22301. This is an important piece of work that has been delayed due to the council's restructure and a post being vacant.

Risks and weaknesses

One of the key dependencies of the overarching business continuity plan is the provision of IT Disaster Recovery (DR) by the IT Service. The key IT systems have been identified through BC workstreams which commenced in 2009.

There are some IT arrangements in place to meet this requirement (including an annual IT DR test) and some improvements are being developed for recovery capabilities as part of the new Capita IT contract. This subject matter is covered in a separate report by the IT Service to the P & F Committee. A brief summary from the IT Service has been provided below.

The original intention had been to locate a primary data centre in Capita's West Malling site with a secondary data centre in Laindon, which would place all the risk and responsibility for IT DR with Capita, but at a cost. However, the continuing financial situation and budget constraints had led to a proposal to retain the primary data centre in Harrow with the secondary data centre in West Malling, which would reduce costs but also return an element of risk (as landlord and 'host' of the centre) to the Council.

The IT Service has negotiated a remote access arrangement which would allow critical staff to work anywhere and would lessen the need for the contracted remote facility. There is an increased risk of an IT DR situation arising because the data centre here is not built to the same standards as a

commercial Tier 1 data centre. However, the wider business continuity plans acknowledge this with the use of paper based systems, and the risk is no greater than it has been historically over a number of years.

Deliverability of the plans

The council's corporate Business Continuity plan and 37 departmental Business Continuity plans are tested and reviewed on an annual basis. The plans are workable and are amended to reflect any staff or structural changes.

The departmental BC plans are tested and reviewed each year at the annual Gold Training for corporate directors and divisional directors, usually in February. Any amendments or changes to improve the plans are made after the test exercise to make sure that the plans are workable and robust.

HR issues

The council's 37 departmental Business Continuity plans take into account three generic issues to plan for: non-availability of ICT, denial of access to the building, and reduced staff attendance.

Reduced staff attendance is the main HR issue that Business Continuity planning takes into account. This planning takes place because lower staff attendance could happen for a number of reasons, e.g. severe weather, travel disruption or influenza pandemic. During the recent influenza pandemic during 2009, extensive planning was conducted with managers and HR to ensure Business Continuity plans were in place to deal with staff absence rates of 25% and 40%.

Communications issues

The main communications issue during a Business Continuity incident is the ability to communicate with all staff in a timely and effective manner. During a major incident we may not have access to the building or be able to use ICT, so Business Continuity plans have been developed and tested to ensure that key messages can be given to staff.

Each manager of a service has as part of their Business Continuity arrangements, a staff contact list, including personal and home telephone numbers. These arrangements were made in consultation with HR and the trade unions, to ensure that these contact details were only used in an emergency or during the annual test.

We test these communications arrangements each year as part of the Business Continuity Phone Cascade Test, usually in November. The test is carried out of hours on a non-specified date. We initiate the test by contacting Corporate Directors, who in turn call their Divisional Directors, who call their Service Managers, who then contact their staff members.

For the past two years we have included the Leader of the Council, Group Leaders, and their Deputies, so that elected members are included in the

process; so make sure Democratic Services have your up to date contact details.

IT Disaster Recovery

As mentioned above, this is an important area with links to BC, but managed by the IT Service. The work has been done to identify which IT applications are critical and the timescale that they are required to be reinstated. The decision on how to deliver the IT Disaster Recovery arrangements has to be based on cost / benefit analysis, within the Capita IT contract. There is a difference between the IT DR requirements and costs of a major bank and that of a local authority. This area is managed by the IT Service and is the subject of a separate report by the IT Service to the P & F Committee.

There are priorities and timescales for agreed IT systems. In addition to the IT DR arrangements that the IT Service have in place, the other linked area is ensuring the business has manual BC plans in place to operate until IT systems are recovered. This highlights the importance of keeping BC plans up to date and holding regular BC testing and reviews with directors, service managers and key staff.

Industry Standards and Benchmarking

It is worth bearing in mind the cost / benefit spectrum, and the difference in dynamic between the private and public sector. In general, local authorities were not as reliant as the private sector on sophisticated IT systems to deliver income streams from a cash-flow perspective following a disaster, but required data and communications to support vulnerable individuals and groups and to meet statutory obligations.

The council's BC strategy and plans are based on the British Standard BS25999, an internationally recognised process. The BS25999 was recently upgraded to an international standard ISO22301. There have been some slight adjustments between the old standard and new standard. We are currently developing our BC plans to follow the new standard where practicable.

The council's Civil Contingencies Team is a member of the Business Continuity Institute and keeps up to date with the latest BC good practice and guidelines. At a local level we fully participate in the West London Business Continuity Group with the sharing of best practice and peer review of our arrangements.

Our BC plans and wider Civil Contingencies arrangements are subject to regular professional independent review under the auspices of the London Resilience Forum and London Fire Brigade. We received an overall 'Green' status in the most recent Minimum Standards for London review in 2012.

Financial Implications

None

Performance Issues

None

Environmental Impact

None

Risk Management Implications

None

Equalities Implications

None

Corporate Priorities

Keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe

The Civil Contingencies Team helps the council keep neighbourhoods and the borough as a whole safe, by developing, exercising and reviewing: emergency plans, business continuity arrangements, and assisting the emergency services in civil protection

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Steve Tingle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 8 th July 2013		
Name: Jessica Farmer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 9 th July 2013		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Kan Grover

Service Manager – Civil Contingencies

(Emergency Planning & Business Continuity)

020 8420 9319

kan.grover@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers:

None