18 January 2022

Report of	**Assistant Director of Corporate and Improvement**	Author	**Hayley McGrath** ☎ **508902**
Title	**Annual Review of Business Continuity**		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Colchester Borough Council provides a wide range of services to the local community. Any unexpected interruption to those services can have a negative impact on both the community and the authority. As such, the Council has established a Business Continuity process to minimise, as far as possible, the likelihood of an incident occurring and the potential impact if it does happen.

1.2 This report provides Members with an overview of the of the Council's Business Continuity activity for the period from 01 October 2020 to 30 September 2021.

2. Recommended Decision

2.1 Consider and comment on the business continuity work undertaken during the period.

2.2 Endorse the Business Continuity Strategy for 2022.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

3.1 The Risk Management Strategy, which forms part of the policy framework, identifies the Governance & Audit Committee as being responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of the risk management process and reporting critical items to Cabinet as necessary. Business continuity is an integral part of the risk management process and it is appropriate that a detailed progress report is provided to this Committee.

4. Alternative Options

4.1 There are no alternative options to consider

5. Background Information

5.1 Whilst Business Continuity primarily relates to the delivery of the Council's own services, it sits alongside the Council's responsibilities for Emergency Planning, where the Council is required to assist the emergency services in dealing with events in the borough (such as flooding) as set out in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. Under the act there are two duties relating specifically to business continuity:

1. To be able to carry on providing its own services in the event of a disruption
2. To provide advice and guidance relating to business continuity to local businesses and voluntary organisations.

5.2   The responsibility for ensuring that the Council has effective business continuity plans rests with the Chief Operating Officer and the function is delivered by the Corporate Governance Team. The role is to provide advice and guidance to services including the co-ordination of individual service plans as well as the overall Council plan. Issue specific plans, such as responding to a flu pandemic, are also required.

5.3   Business continuity issues are primarily reported to the 'First Call Officer' group, this consists of the senior management team and other key staff. The primary role of this group is to provide the strategic management of any emergency – either internal or external. The group meets every two months to review plans and consider emergency planning and business continuity issues.

6.   Summary of Work Undertaken

6.1   The primary focus for 2021 has been dealing with the continuing COVID19 Pandemic. This has required a significant input from the Resilience Officer (RO) to ensure that CBC participates in tactical coordination groups (TCG's) and provide support for the First Call Officer attending the Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG's). The RO has also been providing support to those service areas who were significantly affected by the pandemic.

6.2   The pandemic has highlighted how important it is for services to have up to date, tested and exercised business continuity plans. The RO began reviewing and testing plans from October 2020 and throughout the pandemic. There is a review timetable for each service area, and reports of completed and outstanding plans are regularly provided to the First Call Officer group.

6.3   Specific Business Impact Assessments are being introduced for the critical services. Having these will enable the recovery to focus on returning the critical services to business as usual following a disruption. The business continuity plan will also focus on the critical services and those services not classed as critical will be included in the overall service plan.

6.4   Staff training is being rolled out with the development of an online e-learning course, available for all staff. This will give them a better understanding of business continuity and the important role they play.

6.5   Stage 1 of the Fuel Plan was activated in September 2021 in response to the sudden fuel supply issues. This was a good live exercise of the plan which identified some areas where the plan needed to be updated, such as assumptions about which services were critical and how that information is communicated. Fuel supply issues will continue to be monitored to ensure critical services have access to fuel.

6.6   The goods supply issues throughout the country are also being monitored, to enable early identification of potential impacts on the Council.

6.7   The RO attended and passed the Certificate of the Business Continuity Institute (CBCI) Examination which will enable her to be able to further embed the Business Continuity Framework and programme.

7.0   Business Continuity Strategy for 2022

7.1   The Business Continuity Strategy was agreed for the first time in 2009. A requirement within the strategy, and also of the regular internal audit assessment, is that it is reviewed annually to ensure that it is still appropriate to the Council's needs.

7.2   Therefore a review has been undertaken and the strategy has been updated for 2022. The revised strategy is attached at appendix A. It is considered that the strategy continues to meet the needs of the organisation and therefore there are no changes to the strategy or the business continuity process.

8.   Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

8.1   There are no equality, diversity or Human Rights implications as a result of this report.

9.   Strategic Plan References

9.1   The ability of the Council to carry on providing critical services, even when dealing with a major disruption, is fundamental to ensuring the achievement of the strategic plan objectives.

10.   Risk Management Implications

10.1   The failure to adequately manage a business interruption may have an effect on the ability of the Council to achieve its objectives and operate effectively.

11   Environmental and Sustainability Implications

11.1   There are no environmental or sustainability implications as a result of this report.

12.   Other Standard References

12.1   There are no particular references to consultation or publicity considerations or financial; community safety or health and safety implications.

Appendices

Appendix A – Business Continuity Strategy for 2022