



Governance Committee

Item
12

19 January 2016

Report of

Assistant Chief Executive

Author

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Title

Annual Review of Business Continuity

Wards
affected

Not applicable

This report reviews the Business Continuity work undertaken for the period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015.

1. Actions Required

- 1.1 Consider and note the business continuity work undertaken during the period.
- 1.2 Consider and comment on the review of the Business Continuity Strategy.
- 1.3 Consider and note the intended work plan for 2016.

2. Reason for Scrutiny

- 2.1 The Risk Management Strategy, which forms part of the policy framework, identifies the Governance 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.

3. Supporting Information

- 3.1 Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 the Council has two duties relating 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.
- 3.2 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 in Corporate and Financial Management. 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. The duty to provide advice and guidance to local businesses also sits within the Corporate Governance Team.
- 3.3 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.

4. Summary of Work Undertaken

4.1 Regular Work Items

- 4.1.1 Work was undertaken on all of the three main areas in the plan for 2015, these were:
- Audit of the service plans, to ensure that they still met operational needs following the changes to the organisation.
 - Developing links with significant partners.
 - Further development of the training programme to ensure that all staff can access appropriate material on the Hub.
- 4.1.2 The key business continuity risks were reviewed and they continue to be loss of IT and buildings.
- 4.1.3 The annual business continuity self- assessment was carried out in January 2015. This benchmarked Colchester against the rest of the Essex Authorities. Overall Colchester is slightly above the Essex average and there was an increase in the score for 'embedding processes'.
- 4.1.4 The Corporate Governance Manager and the Resilience Officer represented the service at several events including the annual parish councils meeting and county wide training exercises.

4.2 Project Items

- 4.2.1 Following the creation of the Corporate Governance Team in 2014, where the Emergency Planning and Business Continuity functions were bought together, a significant amount of work has been undertaken in reviewing and refreshing the plans and procedures to ensure that there is one set of documents that supports both roles. A dedicated Resilience Officer was appointed to co-ordinate both functions and this has resulted in a much more cohesive approach to managing incidents.
- 4.2.2 The Council is a member of Resilience Direct, which provides a secure on-line tool for storing and retrieving Business Continuity and Emergency Planning documents. This has allowed us to store all plans and associated documents such as maps and contact details, that can be accessed by authorised users, wherever they have an internet connection. It also enable access to neighbouring authorities plans and data, so that a much more co-ordinated approach can be taken in the event of a large incident.
- 4.2.3 The Corporate Governance Manager and the Resilience Officer attended a seminar held by South Oxfordshire District Council. This was an overview of the arson attack that occurred at their offices in January 2015 and presentations were made by the Council, Police and Fire Brigade. It was a very open account of the issues that they faced by immediately at the time of the incident and later during the recovery phase. Several of the lessons learnt have been incorporated into our disaster recovery plans including storage of building plans and designated roles.
- 4.2.4 Work has been undertaken with the Procurement team to ensure that prospective suppliers provide details of their Business Continuity arrangements when contracting to supply goods or services to the Council.

5. Business Continuity Strategy for 2016

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 Therefore a review has been undertaken and the strategy has been updated for 2016. The revised strategy is attached at appendix 1. It is considered that the strategy continues to meet the needs of the organisation and therefore there are no fundamental changes to the strategy or the business continuity process.

6. Work plan for 2016

- 6.1 With regard to the self assessment, the following areas will be the primary focus for developing business continuity further in 2016:
- Testing of Service Plans to ensure that they are complete and fit for purpose
 - Developing a comprehensive self-serve presence on the Hub for both management of plans and training.
 - Mapping Business Continuity plans with significant partners and contractors.

7. Proposals

- 7.1 To note and comment upon the Council's progress and performance with regard to business continuity during 2015, the Business Continuity Strategy and work plan for 2016.

8. Strategic Plan Implications

- 8.1 The ability of the Council to carry on providing critical services, even when dealing with a major disruption, is a fundamental part of customer excellence.

9. Risk Management Implications

- 9.1 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.

10. Other Standard References

- 10.1 There are no direct Publicity, Financial, Consultation, Equality and Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety or Health and Safety implications as a result of this report.