

16 January 2018

Report of	Assistant Director of Policy & Corporate	Author	Hayley McGrath
Title	Annual Review of Business Continuity		☎ 508902
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 January 2017 to 31 December 2017.

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 2018

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 Alongside the normal process of working with services to review and update plans, the following work has also been completed:
- 6.2 In conjunction with the Essex Resilience Forum, flu & mass death plans have been developed, working with services to determine requirements, and in respect of the mass death plan, the capacity of the cemetery and crematorium.
- 6.3 Senior officers participated in Exercise Cygnus, a national operation to test responses to a major flu pandemic, that was co-ordinated by the Department of Health.
- 6.4 The bomb threat and fire processes were reviewed, to incorporate national guidance.
- 6.5 Several officers were actively involved in a live multi agency operation to evacuate residents of Tendring and Colchester, following a warning of potential coastal flooding. The Environment Agency issued a flood warning for West Mersea and as a result CBC worked in conjunction with Essex Police and Essex Fire and Rescue to identify vulnerable residents, implement evacuation plans and set up rest centres.
- 6.6 The Council uses the Resilience Direct website to store Emergency Planning information. This allows remote access to plans in the event that the Council's IT systems are unavailable and also allows collaboration with other authorities in Essex. The Councils Business Continuity plans have now been added to the website, and the incident above was an opportunity to test ease of use during an emergency and enabled partners plans to be shared easily.

7.0 Business Continuity Strategy for 2018

- 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 2018. 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 fundamental 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. Other Standard References

- 11.1 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 2018