

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 1 NOVEMBER 2011

### FROM RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 25<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2011

#### ARC70: BUSINESS CONTINUITY POLICY AND STRATEGY

The Performance and Efficiency Manager presented the report and explained that the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 placed a duty on Category 1 responders (of which the Council was one) to develop and maintain plans to ensure that if an emergency occurred, the authority was able to continue to perform its critical activities and key services.

Members were informed that there was a clear distinction between the emergency planning and business continuity requirements. The emergency planning function was to respond to external civil events. Business continuity was an internal facing function and would ensure that the Council's critical services were up and running as soon as possible should an event/incident occur.

The Committee was informed that it was over two years since the current version of the Business Continuity Policy Statement and Strategy was adopted, during which time responsibility for the function had moved to the Deputy Chief Executive. Work had been undertaken during 2011 to review and update the Policy Statement document, as well as wider Business Continuity Management (BCM) arrangements.

Members were advised that the details of the work undertaken to review and update documents and BCM arrangements were provided in the report.

The Performance and Efficiency Manager explained that it was considered best practice for the Policy Statement to be reviewed regularly and therefore, earlier in 2011, Management Team set up a group of five officers from across the authority, led by the Deputy Chief Executive, to review the Council's Policy and Strategy, as well as the wider BCM arrangements.

The Performance and Efficiency Manager explained that there were no financial implications in adopting the policy. However, in the event that the Council needed to bring business continuity plans into operation, it would mean that an event had occurred which would threaten service provision in some way. It was therefore highly likely that this would also bring about additional expenditure/lost income and the financial implications would need to be met from the Council's general fund balance and/or its reserves.

Members were informed that the next steps were to review, refresh and produce the documentation referred to in the report. The importance for business continuity to be embedded throughout the Council was highlighted. To achieve this, the Business Continuity Corporate Officer Group (BC COG) would continue and

- Assist in rolling out the new template for team/departmental Business Continuity Plans across the authority where appropriate.

- Plan for further testing and validation of arrangements and plans, ensuring that learning is realised from the testing undertaken.

The Performance and Efficiency Manager informed the Committee that business continuity planning was a statutory requirement and aimed at managing risk after the occurrence of an event/disruption. Plans were not aimed at prevention of an event, but at mitigating the impact of any serious interruption to the business of the Council.

The Performance and Efficiency Manager talked the Committee through the policy document and drew Members' attention to any changes.

Councillor de Winton suggested that a pre-Council briefing be arranged inviting all Councillors to attend on Business Continuity, to include the plans in place should the Council's ICT service be disrupted. The Performance and Efficiency Manager agreed to schedule a date for the pre-Council briefing.

In response to questions from Councillor J Collop relating to plans in place where Councils were in partnership working, the Performance and Efficiency Manager explained that the officers were aware of this requirement and would keep the Business Continuity Plan under review and amend as necessary.

Councillor Loveless commented that he also would like a pre-Council briefing to be scheduled and asked if the detailed actions regarding business continuity planning would be available to the general public by publishing them on the Council's website, etc. In response, the Performance and Efficiency Manager explained that it was not common practice to publish detailed information on the website which the public could access. The District Emergency Planning Officer commented that if the information was accessible to the public, this could highlight any weaknesses and could lead to an attack on the Council. Threat cards had been produced and would identify any risks and outline how the Council would respond.

Councillor Humphrey asked where the ICT secure back up off site was located. The District Emergency Planning Officer explained that all plans were held within ICT and back up copies were also held in a secure location. The Performance and Efficiency Manager undertook to liaise with the Council's ICT Manager and forward the requested information to the Committee.

**RESOLVED:** That Cabinet be advised that the Resources and Performance Panel – Audit and Risk Committee supports the recommendation as set out in the report to Cabinet as follows:

That Cabinet accept the new version of the Business Continuity Policy Statement and Strategy, attached, and that they recommend acceptance by Full Council.