

## POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	Audit Committee		
DATE:	16 January 2024		
TITLE:	Business Continuity – annual update		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Monitoring		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Leader		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Ged Greaves – Senior Corporate Governance & Risk Officer/Climate Change Manager		
OPEN/EXEMPT	Open	WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	No

### **REPORT SUMMARY/COVER PAGE**

<b>PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:</b>
The report outlines the current position of the Council’s business continuity arrangements, summarises progress made since the last update on 26 September 2022 and describes work that is planned to be undertaken over the coming months.
<b>KEY ISSUES:</b>
The Council has a responsibility as a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to develop and maintain plans to ensure that, as far as is reasonably practicable, key services can continue to be performed in the event of a disruption or emergency.
<b>OPTIONS CONSIDERED:</b>
Not applicable; the Council must have plans in place under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>
The Audit Committee are asked to review progress made and endorse the approach being taken to the Council’s business continuity arrangements.
<b>REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>
To ensure that members are kept informed about the Council’s business continuity arrangements.

## 1 Background

1.1 The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a duty on Category 1 responders (as defined by the act and which includes all local authorities) to develop and maintain plans for the purpose of ensuring that, so far as is reasonably practicable, if an emergency occurs they are able to continue to perform their key services / critical activities. This means that, in the event of a disruption or emergency, the Council must have plans available to ensure that it can mobilise the functions it needs to:

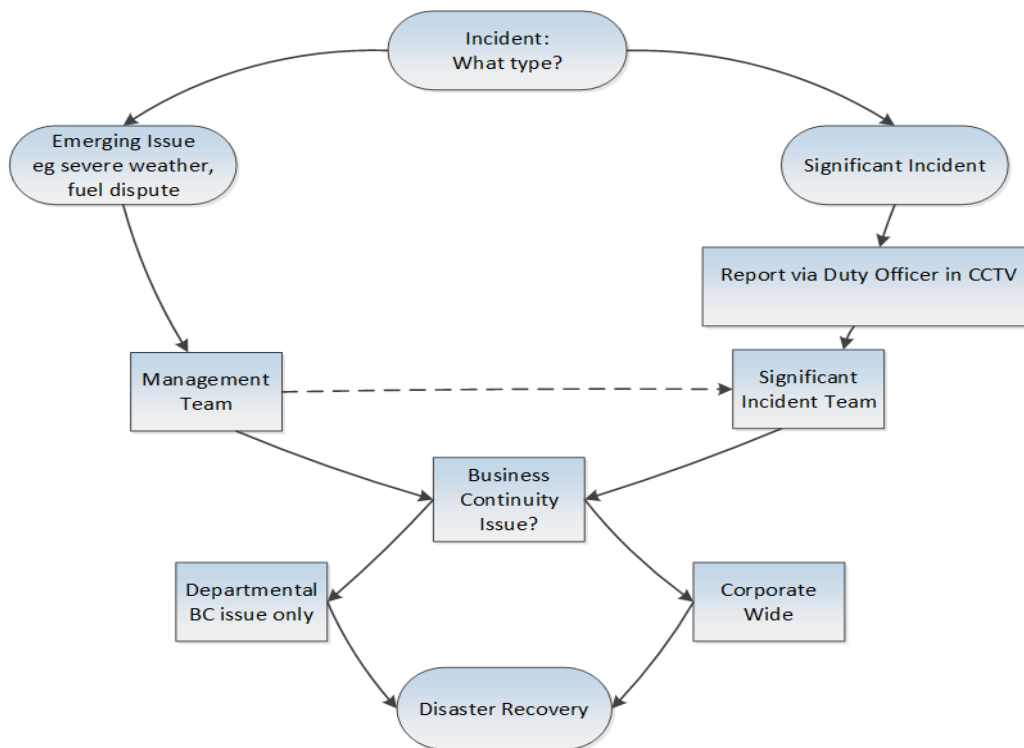
- deal with any emergency
- ensure that the impact of the emergency on the council's day-to-day activities is kept to a minimum, and
- ensure that, so far as possible, vital services for the community can be maintained at appropriate levels.

1.2 Business continuity management in the authority is based around a framework of documents as shown below:



1.3 The responsible officer for business continuity in this authority is an Executive Director, assisted by a group of officers from across the council – the Business Continuity Corporate Officer Group. Implementing business continuity is the responsibility of the Council's Management Team. However, all members of staff have a responsibility to be aware of the plans that affect their service area and their role following invocation of any business continuity plan.

1.4 Incidents are broadly of two types. An emerging incident where sufficient notice is given such as in the case of prolonged severe weather or an incident that happens without prior warning but requires immediate senior management attention. The initial Council response in those scenarios differs and is summarised in the following chart.



- 1.5 The Significant Incident Team will usually be the first point of contact for an incident requiring immediate senior management attention. Such an incident may be an unexpected death or tragic event. Equally, it may be an event causing injuries, a fire in a council building or damage to a facility that could result in injury to staff and/or the public at large. It may also be an event that may attract significant or adverse media interest and is linked to the council's activities, this may include issues such as a lost child in the resort where the child hasn't been located within a 'reasonable' time and the search by our staff and police is escalated.

## 2 Current position

- 2.1 Critical activities are those services that protect life and safety or are considered essential to support such activity and are considered critical to restore and deliver in the event of a disruption or emergency. The Council's critical activities are:

- Customer Information Centre – response to customer contacts
- Corporate Communications – including website
- CCTV responsive functions control room
- Emergency Planning – response to recovery and incidents
- Homelessness
- ICT – to support other teams
- Incident Management Team – Executive Directors and support staff
- Personnel – for staff contact details (not normal business)
- Property Services – for building access/maintenance (not normal business)
- Electoral Services – if during a critical time
- Env Health – Food Safety / Health & Safety– if during an incident
- Env Health – Environmental Quality – if during an incident

- 2.2 A risk assessment has been undertaken to identify the potential threats to the critical activities. A 'threat card' is in place for each of the threats to guide the Incident Management Team in their consideration of response. The currently agreed threats to the critical activities are listed below. The threat cards were updated in May 2023 and include:

- Loss of Staff
- Loss of ICT
- Loss of King's Court
- Fuel Shortage

2.3 The Council's business continuity policy and strategy was agreed in 2022 by the Chief Executive under delegated powers.

### **3 Progress since last report in September 2022**

3.1 Activities undertaken by the corporate officer group since September 2022 are shown below:

- Exercise Metis 22 was held on 30 September 2022 to test response arrangements for a business continuity incident involving loss of mains external power. A recommendation was to urgently test the Kings Court generator.
- National Power Outage (NPO) task and finish group was formed to create a business continuity response plan for a longer-term power outage such as which may occur during a NPO or during severe weather. If a NPO was to occur, Kings Court would host the western Local Coordination Group with resilient comms available to other key Norfolk sites. An essential task was to co-ordinate a full load test of the Kings Court generator on 25 January 2023. Issues identified during the testing have been addressed by officers with another test to be scheduled to take place during the hot weather. A threat card for NPO is being created.
- BC Comms task and finish group has reviewed how we communicate to staff and members during a BC incident including and how we use the BC portal in response to the recommendations from Exercise Metis 21 and the Business Continuity Audit.
- The internal business continuity Incident Response Plan was reviewed and published.
- Annual review of the high level business impact assessment, this is a review of all business activity against a set of criteria to confirm in which order services should be recovered in the event of a disruption.
- Out of Hours Contact Card details revised and circulated.
- All critical and non-critical bronze plans reviewed in August 2023.
- Exercise Metis 23 was held on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at the Town Hall to test response arrangements for a business continuity incident during extreme weather conditions

3.2 Periodic updates on business continuity have been published in Internal Affairs and the Members Bulletin that remind staff and members of the importance of business continuity and how to access the Council's business continuity portal following an incident.

### **4 Forward work plan**

4.1 The corporate officer group has a work plan in place for the next 12 months. Our planning and exercise programme is based upon the agreed threats and is cyclical in nature. Work to be undertaken includes:

- Review and debrief live incidents after the event and ensuring the lessons identified are implemented in future planning.
- Progress actions agreed by Management Team following exercise Metis 23.
- Plan for exercise Metis 24.

## **5 Conclusion**

The Council's business continuity arrangements are aligned to the principles of ISO22301 – which aims to minimise the impact of disruptive incidents. Business continuity is not a static process; it is therefore important that, as the nature of the organisation changes, our business continuity arrangements reflect those changes.

## **6 Recommendation**

The Audit Committee are asked to note progress made, endorse the approach being taken to the Council's business continuity arrangements and confirm that annual updates are required.

## **7 Corporate Priorities**

Not applicable, statutory requirement.

## **8 Policy Implications**

The policy was last reviewed in 2019 but publication initially delayed to 2020 pending the senior management restructure and then by the ongoing requirements of the Covid-19 response. Revised version is in development.

## **9 Financial Implications**

None in this update.

## **10 Personnel Implications**

None in this update.

## **11 Statutory Considerations**

The Council is a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and therefore has a duty to develop and maintain plans of this nature.

## **12 Equality Opportunity Considerations**

None in this update.

## **13 Risk Management Implications**

Business continuity arrangements are included on the council's risk register.

## **14 Environmental considerations**

None in this update.

## **15 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted**

None in this update.

## **16 Background Papers**

Business Continuity Policy Statement and Strategy  
Civil Contingencies Act 2004  
ISO22301 Business Continuity Management Standard