

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	Audit Committee		
DATE:	17 November 2025		
TITLE:	Business Continuity – annual update		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Monitoring		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Leader		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Michelle Drewery – Deputy Chief Executive/Section 151 Officer		
OPEN/EXEMPT	Open	WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	No

BUSINESS CONTINUITY – ANNUAL UPDATE

PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:
The report outlines the current position of the council's business continuity arrangements, summarises progress made since the last update on 18 November 2024 and describes work that is planned to be undertaken over the coming months.
KEY ISSUES:
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.
OPTIONS CONSIDERED:
Not applicable; the council must have plans in place under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
RECOMMENDATIONS:
The Audit Committee are asked to review progress made and endorse the approach being taken to the council's business continuity arrangements.
REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:
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:

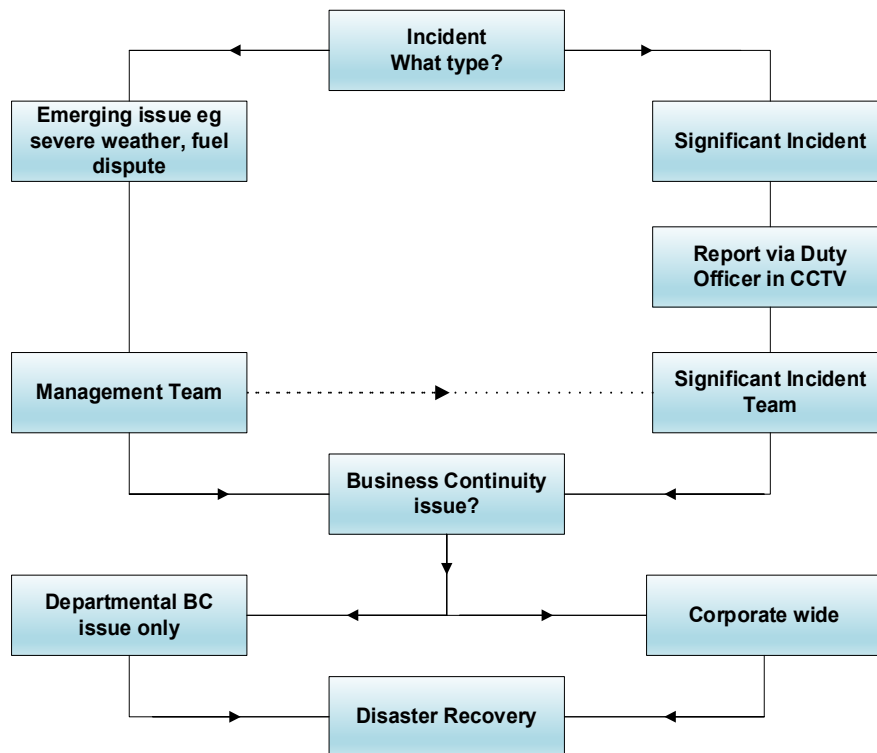
- deal with any emergency
- ensure that the impact of the emergency on the council's day-to-day activities is kept to a minimum, and
- ensure that, so far as possible, vital services for the community can be maintained at appropriate levels.

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



1.3 Implementing business continuity is the responsibility of the council's Executive 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.
- 1.6 The response to a civil emergency will be initially led by the Emergency Planning Team and may involve a multi-agency response through the Norfolk Resilience Forum (NRF). This response is separate to the council's own business continuity response which may operate concurrently. The NRF have separate plans in place to deal with civil emergencies should they arise.

2 Current position

- 2.1 A review of the business continuity corporate officer group has concluded with the creation of a strategic group and an operational group. The Deputy Chief Executive/Section 151 Officer is responsible for business continuity in this authority and leads the strategic business continuity corporate officer group. Revised Terms of Reference are included in the 2025 Business Continuity Policy and Strategy and is available on the intranet.
- 2.2 The Assistant Director Operations and Commercial leads the operational business continuity corporate officer group assisted by officers across the authority responsible for critical activities and customer facing services.
- 2.3 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
- Electoral Services
- Emergency Planning – maintain response and recovery to civil emergencies
- Homelessness
- ICT – to support other teams
- Incident Management Team – Senior Management and support staff
- HR – for staff contact details (not normal business)
- Property Services – for building access/maintenance (not normal business)
- Env Health – Food Safety / Health & Safety– if required during a civil emergency
- Env Health – Environmental Quality – if required during a civil emergency

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 reviewed in September 2025 and include:

- Loss of Staff
- Loss of ICT including Cyber Incident
- Loss of Kings Court
- Loss of operational sites and buildings
- Fuel Shortage

2.3 The Council's business continuity Policy and Strategy was reviewed and agreed in October 2025 by the Chief Executive under delegated powers, in consultation with the Leader.

3 Progress since last report

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

- Review of the membership of the BC Corporate Officer Group has concluded with the creation of a strategic group and an operational group to assist in maintaining, reviewing and testing the suite of documentation which form the council's BC management arrangements
- Three meetings have been held of the Corporate Officer Group
- Policy and Strategy was reviewed and agreed in October, next review will be in 2027
- A new threat card has been created for loss of operational sites and buildings and the loss of ICT now includes instruction in relation to a cyber incident
- Review of the high-level business impact assessment has been completed, 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 has been updated and circulated to key officers
- Review of all critical and non-critical bronze plans

- Annual review of council building information sheets
- Business continuity exercise took place in December 2024 which was a tabletop exercise relating to a cyber incident and outage of the Microsoft 365 services. This involved the Corporate Leadership Team and critical services.

3.2 Periodic updates on business continuity have been published in the staff newsletter 'our news' 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:

- Exercise Metis 25 will be held in December 2025 to test the response arrangements for a business continuity incident, Corporate Leadership Team will be invited to attend along with bronze plan holders of critical services
- Review and debrief live incidents after the event and ensuring the lessons identified are implemented in future planning
- Progress actions agreed by Corporate Leadership Team following exercise Metis 25
- Plan for exercise Metis 26
- Implement new meeting schedule for strategic and operational groups
- Look at the implications on business continuity as we move forward with LGR.

5 Conclusion

5.1 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

6.1 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

7.1 Not applicable, statutory requirement.

8 Policy Implications

8.1 None.

9 Financial Implications

9.1 None.

10 Personnel Implications

10.1 None.

11 Statutory Considerations

- 11.1 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

- 12.1 None.

13 Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 Business continuity arrangements are included on the council's risk register, R5 Continuity of service. The current Policy and Strategy, along with the active BC corporate officer groups provide mitigation should an incident occur.

14 Environmental considerations

- 14.1 None.

15 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

- 15.1 None.

16 Background Papers

2025 Business Continuity Policy Statement and Strategy
Civil Contingencies Act 2004
ISO22301 Business Continuity Management Standard