POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	Audit Committee		
DATE:	16 November 2026		
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:
This report outlines the current status of the Council's business continuity arrangements, summarises the progress achieved since the last report to Audit Committee on 17 November 2025, and details the programme of work planned to further strengthen organisational resilience over the next 12 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:
Audit Committee is requested to: 1. Note the progress made in strengthening the Council's business continuity arrangements; 2. Endorse the approach being taken to business continuity management and organisational resilience; and 3. Confirm that annual updates on business continuity arrangements should continue to be reported to the Committee.
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 statutory duty on Category 1 responders, including all local authorities, to develop and maintain business continuity arrangements. These arrangements must ensure that, so far as reasonably practicable, the organisation can continue to deliver its critical functions and key services during and following an emergency. In the event of a disruption or emergency, the Council must have plans in place that enable it to:

- respond effectively to the emergency;
- minimise the impact of the incident on normal Council operations; and
- maintain essential services to the community at an appropriate level wherever possible.

1.2 The Council's Executive Team has overall responsibility for ensuring effective business continuity arrangements are established and maintained. However, all employees have a responsibility to understand the business continuity plans relevant to their service area and to be aware of their role and responsibilities should a plan be activated.

1.3 Incidents can broadly be categorised into two types:

- Emerging incidents, where advance warning is available, such as prolonged periods of severe weather; and
- Sudden incidents, which occur without warning and require an immediate response from senior management.

1.4 The response to a civil emergency will initially be coordinated by the Council's Emergency Planning Team and may involve a multi-agency response through the Norfolk Resilience Forum (NRF). This emergency response operates separately from, but may run concurrently with, the Council's business continuity response. The NRF maintains its own arrangements and plans for managing civil emergencies across the county.

2 Current position

Incident Management Team

2.1 The Council's Incident Management Team arrangements have been reviewed and strengthened to enhance organisational resilience. Gold and Silver response teams, comprising members of the Executive and Corporate Leadership Teams, provide a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week on-call capability. This ensures that appropriate strategic and operational leadership is available at all times to coordinate and manage the Council's response to significant incidents.

2.2 Gold and Silver representatives act as the initial point of contact for incidents requiring immediate senior management involvement. Such incidents may include:

- an unexpected death or tragic event;
- serious accidents or incidents resulting in injury;
- fires or structural damage to council buildings causing injury to staff and/or the public;
- incidents that pose a risk to the safety of staff, residents, or visitors; and
- events likely to attract significant media attention or generate reputational risk for the Council.

Strategic and Operational Business Continuity Groups

2.3 The Strategic Business Continuity Group is responsible for promoting, coordinating, and embedding Business Continuity Management (BCM) across the organisation at a strategic level. Its purpose is to strengthen organisational resilience and ensure effective arrangements are in place for preparedness, response, and recovery.

2.4 Since its establishment in October 2025, the Group has met on two occasions and has delivered a workshop focused on Business Impact Assessment (BIA) requirements arising from Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The Group continues to provide strategic oversight of the Council's business continuity arrangements and resilience priorities.

2.5 The Operational Business Continuity Group supports the Strategic Business Continuity Group by implementing agreed actions and ensuring that effective business continuity arrangements are maintained across the authority. The Group is responsible for progressing work programmes, sharing good practice, and monitoring compliance with business continuity requirements. Since the last update to the Audit Committee, the Group has met on three occasions.

Critical activities

2.6 Critical activities are those functions that are essential to the protection of life, health, safety, and wellbeing, or which directly support the delivery of such functions. These activities are considered a priority for restoration and continuation in the event of a disruption or emergency. The council's critical activities are as follows:

- 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

Current Threats

2.7 A Threat Card has been developed for each identified threat to provide the Incident Management Team with guidance when assessing and coordinating an appropriate response. These cards outline the potential impacts, key considerations, and response actions associated with each threat scenario.

2.8 The current threats identified as having the potential to affect the Council's critical activities are listed below. The Threat Cards were most recently reviewed and updated in December 2025 as part of the Metis 25 exercise, ensuring that they remain relevant, robust, and aligned with current risk assessments and organisational requirements.

- Loss of Kings Court
- Loss of Staff
- Loss of ICT
- Fuel Shortage
- Loss of operational sites
- Viral infection (bacterial and chemical)
- Terrorism Attack (lone and coordinated attack)
- Impact of LGR on business continuity arrangements

2.9 The Council continues to strengthen its cyber security arrangements through enhanced system monitoring and the implementation of advanced security technologies that provide continuous surveillance of potentially suspicious activity. These measures are supported by 24/7 specialist oversight, enabling the rapid identification, assessment, and response to potential cyber threats. To further raise awareness and understanding of cyber risks, a dedicated Cyber Security briefing was delivered to Audit Committee members and senior managers in January 2026.

2.10 A dedicated Resilience page is available on the Council's intranet for both staff and members. The page provides a central repository for business continuity and emergency planning information, including key policies, plans, guidance, and supporting documentation. It ensures that users can quickly access the resources they need to support preparedness, response, and recovery activities during an incident or disruption.

3 Forward work plan

3.1 The Corporate Officer Group has established a 12-month work programme to ensure the Council's business continuity arrangements remain effective, up to date, and aligned with organisational priorities. The Council's planning and exercising programme is based on the agreed threat profile and follows a cyclical approach of review, testing, learning, and improvement. Key activities scheduled for the next 12 months include:

- Reviewing the corporate Business Impact Assessment (BIA) for all service areas against agreed criteria to confirm recovery priorities and timescales in the event of a disruption.
- Updating and distributing the Out of Hours Contact Card to relevant officers.
- Implementing the key action identified within the 2025/26 Annual Governance Statement, requiring all service areas to maintain an up-to-date Bronze Plan. A revised MS form based template will be introduced across all Council functions to support a consistent approach.
- Completing the annual review of Council building information sheets.
- Delivering the annual business continuity exercise in December 2026 involving the Gold and Silver response teams.
- Reviewing and debriefing all live incidents to identify lessons learned and ensure that improvements are incorporated into future plans, procedures, and exercises.

4 Conclusion

4.1 The Council's business continuity arrangements are aligned with the principles of ISO 22301, the international standard for business continuity management, and are designed to minimise the impact of disruptive incidents on the delivery of critical services.

4.2 Business continuity is an ongoing process rather than a one-off exercise. As the Council's services, operating environment, and organisational structure continue to evolve, it is essential that business continuity arrangements are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they remain effective, relevant, and fit for purpose.

5 Recommendation

5.1 Audit Committee is requested to:

1. Note the progress made in strengthening the Council's business continuity arrangements;
2. Endorse the approach being taken to business continuity management and organisational resilience; and
3. Confirm that annual updates on business continuity arrangements should continue to be reported to the Committee.

6 Corporate Priorities

6.1 Not applicable, statutory requirement.

7 Policy Implications

7.1 None.

8 Financial Implications

8.1 None.

9 Personnel Implications

9.1 None.

10 Statutory Considerations

10.1 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.

11 Equality Opportunity Considerations

11.1 None.

12 Risk Management Implications

12.1 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.

13 Environmental considerations

13.1 None.

14 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

14.1 None.

15 Background Papers

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