

## POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	Audit Committee		
DATE:	18 November 2024		
TITLE:	Business Continuity – annual update		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Monitoring		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Leader		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Dave Robson – Environmental Health Manager		
OPEN/EXEMPT	Open	WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	No

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

PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:
<p>The report outlines the current position of the Council's business continuity arrangements, summarises progress made since the last update on 16 January 2024 and describes work that is planned to be undertaken over the coming months.</p>
KEY ISSUES:
<p>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.</p>
OPTIONS CONSIDERED:
<p>Not applicable; the Council must have plans in place under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.</p>
RECOMMENDATIONS:
<p>The Audit Committee are asked to review progress made and endorse the approach being taken to the Council's business continuity arrangements.</p>
REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:
<p>To ensure that members are kept informed about the Council's business continuity arrangements.</p>

## 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:

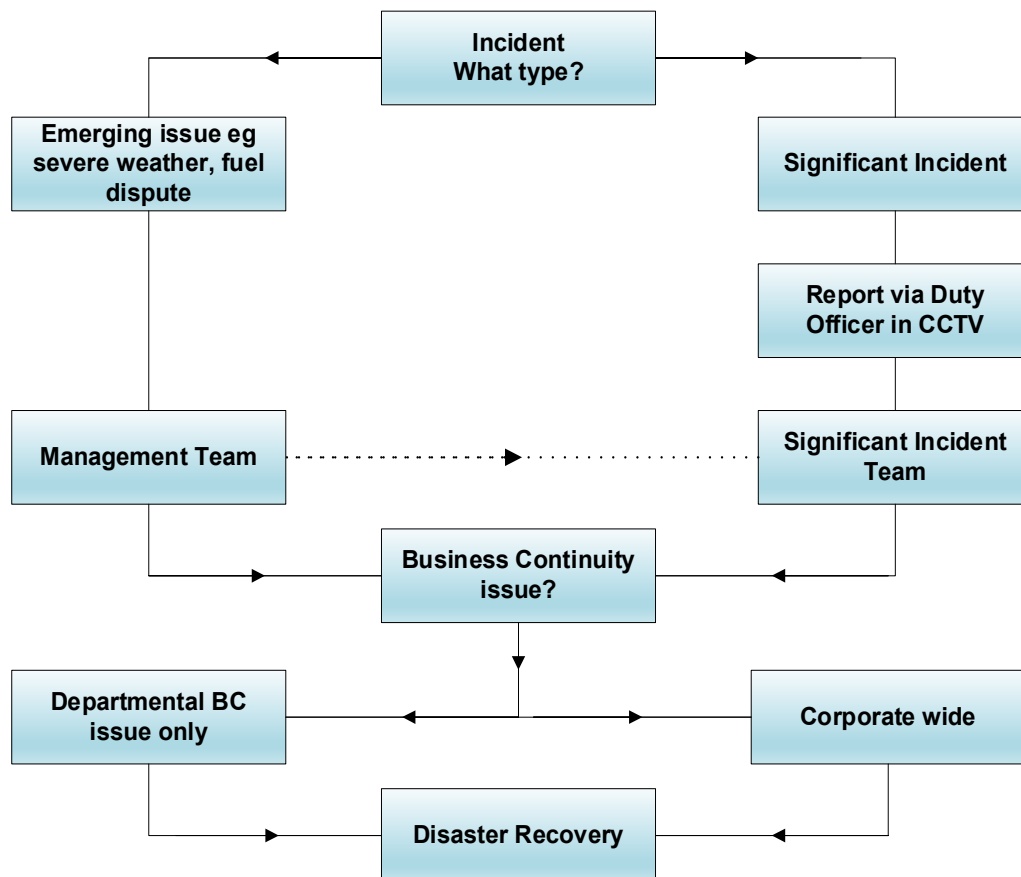
- deal with any emergency
- ensure that the impact of the emergency on the council's day-to-day activities is kept to a minimum, and
- ensure that, so far as possible, vital services for the community can be maintained at appropriate levels.

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



1.3 The Assistant Director, Operations and Commercial is responsible for business continuity in this authority, 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.

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 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
- Personnel – 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 updated in September 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. This is currently being reviewed.

### **3 Progress since last report**

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

- Meetings of the Business Continuity Officers Group (BCOG) have been held.
- Annual 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 details have been updated and circulated.
- A Communications Task & Finish Group was held to review the communication requirements during a BC incident.
- An Emergency Telephony Call Plan Task & Finish Group has been established to look at options for redirecting calls.
- All critical and non-critical bronze plans were reviewed by September 2024.
- Review of council building information sheets have been completed.
- The annual business continuity exercise took place in November 2023 which was a Tabletop Exercise relating to the impact of severe weather on the ability of the Council to deliver its services. This involved the Leader, Senior Leadership Team and Critical Teams.

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:

- Exercise Metis 24 will be held in December 2024 to test the response arrangements for a business continuity incident, portfolio holder for business continuity and the new Chief Executive 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 Management Team following exercise Metis 24.

- Review business continuity arrangements for the insourcing of Alive West Norfolk.
- Plan for exercise Metis 25.

## **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**

None identified, current Strategy being updated.

## **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 identified.

## **13 Risk Management Implications**

Business continuity arrangements are included on the council's risk register. The current Policy and Strategy, along with the active BCOG provide mitigation should a BC incident occur.

## **14 Environmental considerations**

None identified.

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

None identified.

## **16 Background Papers**

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