

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

Audit Committee

Date: 3rd FEBRUARY 2012

Report of: Service Director, Safer Bristol

Title: Business Continuity Annual Report

Ward: City-wide

Officer presenting report: Jim Gillman

Contact telephone number: 92 24313

RECOMMENDATION:

To note the contents of the report and support the recommendations included

Summary:

This paper intends to update members of the Audit Committee of Business Continuity (BC) progress since January 2011.

1. Policy

1.1 Business Continuity requirements are set out in the Civil Contingencies and Business Continuity Policy Statement, available on [the Source](#).

1.2 The aim of the business continuity programme is to build 'organisational resilience' - to ensure that the Council is able to keep critical services running during emergencies, such as flooding, and disruptions to usual working conditions, such as a loss of IT services.

1.3 The BC programme supports the wider civil contingencies agenda delivered by the Civil Protection Unit.

2. Context

2.1 Adopting a managed approach to business continuity is a statutory duty under the Civil Contingencies Act, 2004. The Civil Protection Unit lead the delivery of BC, providing an annual plan review schedule, training

workshops, risk assessment and plan templates and support in plan testing. The Corporate Civil Contingencies Group (CCCG) oversee this process. The CCCG is made up of 2nd tier Directorate Champions from across Directorates.

Main Report

3. Developing the BC Process

3.1 The annual cycle for reviewing the list of critical services, training critical service managers and reviewing critical service and Directorate plans has been completed for 2011.

3.2 Directorate plans for new and merged Directorates (Corporate Services and Neighbourhoods and City Development) have been drafted and are in the process of being signed off by Directorate Champions. These plans provide Directorates with a framework for responding to incidents and identify key roles, responsibilities and recovery objectives. Links between Directorate plans and corporate plans have been strengthened and the responsibilities conferred on Directorates and staff have been made consistent across plans.

3.3 This has allowed the reviewed City Emergency Plan to include more accurate information regarding the ability of critical services to provide emergency response functions (such as the Customer Service Centre providing a public helpline following an incident). It has also allowed critical services to consider more accurately the roles that they might be asked to undertake in an emergency and the resources they need to deliver these and maintain an acceptable level of 'everyday' service.

3.4 The Civil Protection Unit have been working with the Enabling Commissioning board to build business continuity issues into new procurement processes. This will include a 'built in' continuity assessment in the new procurement software to inject appropriate continuity elements into the procurement process and provide information and templates for commissioning staff.

3.5 The work to include IT service continuity requirements in IT Service Level Agreements (signed between corporate ICT and individual services) has progressed and, with the information gathered through the critical service continuity plans, has allowed IT to build a more accurate picture of the requirement for critical IT systems. It has also informed teams / services of the level of resilience in the IT services they rely on and the recovery process should services be disrupted.

3.6 Consequently a single IT continuity plan, linking technical disaster recovery planning with business requirements and covering all of the critical systems provided by IT has been compiled and has been signed off by the Service Director ICT.

3.7 The next annual continuity cycle re-starts now with a review of the critical service list by the Corporate Civil Contingencies Group.

3.8 Participation in the Core Cities Business Continuity Group and the LGA Emergency Planners Advisory Group have allowed us to compare continuity arrangements across similar Local Authorities and consider the best way to align more closely with BS 25999, the British Standard for business continuity management to which the Cabinet Office would like all Category 1 Emergency Responders (including Local Authorities) to comply.

4. 2011

4.1 2011 saw severe weather at the beginning of the year, episodes of social unrest, public protests and industrial action. Combined with the continuing budgetary pressure placed on the Council, it was potentially a challenging year.

4.2 Fortunately, no major incidents significantly affected service delivery. However, the lessons learned by events have been incorporated into planning. In particular, the lessons learned following 2 severe winters has informed and coordinated planning across the Council.

4.3 The Civil Protection Unit have continued to work with teams tendering for major contracts to increase supply chain resilience. This included the waste contract and school food and catering contracts.

5. Internal Audit Reports

5.1 Previous audits of Directorate business continuity arrangements have highlighted areas of weakness. CYPS in particular, have failed to produce a complete set of continuity plans for their critical services either for the initial 2009 audit or for the 2011 follow-up audit. Internal Audit have escalated this with the Strategic Director, CYPS and the CYPS Contingency Champion has committed to ensuring a full set of plans are produced within the 2012 BC cycle (by July 2012). However, continuity training was delivered to CYPS critical service managers in 2011, CYPS have been active in preparing for snow and the CYPS Risk, Resilience and Wellbeing team continue to provide an incident management capacity for the Directorate.

5.2 Two of the corrective actions identified by previous audits; putting continuity responsibilities in job descriptions or performance assessments (PMDS), and finding the time and resource to test plans and arrangements, remain problematic across Directorates.

Recommendation 1: support the insertion of a BC element into job descriptions and PMDS of all critical service managers and other key staff with BC responsibilities.

6. 2012 risks, challenges and priorities

6.1 Change management

6.1.1 Addressing continuity issues in the face of significant change will continue to be a priority. With the pace of change rapid, staying aware of how and when systems and structures change is difficult across a large organisation. Resources that were available one day may not be available the next, with the impact not fully understood until after changes have been enacted.

6.1.2 Measures to increase long term capability may leave the Council vulnerable at key moments. Closing sites, migrating Data Centres, out-sourcing services may happen without the knowledge of the 'wider Council' generally and responding officers in particular. Sensitivity around some areas of proposed changes can also inhibit the passing of timely information and full discussion of the impact of change.

6.1.3 Although change management on the macro scale lies outside the scope of the business continuity programme, ensuring service level inter-dependencies and priorities are understood and that Directorates can pull strong decision making teams together quickly when incidents arise are both central to delivering service continuity. Using the Corporate Civil Contingencies Group to anticipate potential issues and work across Directorates to resolve them also provides mitigation against this risk.

Recommendation 2: To ensure all critical areas subject to change programmes have business continuity issues embedded in programme plans.

6.2 Commissioning, not providing

6.2.1 With the Council likely to provide fewer services in future and commission more, direct control over significant resources and services (staff, vehicles, buildings, plant, equipment) is reduced with restricted guarantees that independent providers will do what we require of them during emergencies or disruptive incidents. There is a continuing risk that the Council will remain the 'provider of last resort' should independent providers be unable to manage incidents or fail completely.

6.2.2 Carefully managed procurement processes and appropriately written contracts will offer some mitigation. The Civil Protection Unit is involved in the Enabling Commissioning Programme to ensure business continuity requirements are embedded in procurement processes. However, there is still work to do with commissioning staff working in high risk areas of service delivery to ensure awareness.

6.3 Budget restraint / cuts

6.3.1 Efficiency drives and new ways of working will see fewer staff, Council buildings, vehicles, plant and equipment, resulting in less 'redundancy' in the system and fewer 'spare' resources to re-deploy to manage emergencies and disruptions. The willingness of teams to release staff for emergency volunteering, continuity training and exercising is also likely to diminish.

6.3.2 This increases the requirement for clear, simple planning and for staff with continuity planning responsibilities to be clearly identified, supported, and given the time and resources to make and test plans and arrangements.

6.3.3 The CCCG are aware of challenges to continuity presented by cuts and re-organisations.

6.4 Increased demand on resources

6.4.1 Climate change models predict increases in severe weather events in coming years. The recently completed Strategic Surface Water Flood Risk Assessment illustrates what some of the impacts for Bristol may include. The Civil Protection Unit are working with the Council's Flood Risk Manager to understand the implications of the risk assessment for Council property and services as well as the wider community. Ensuring critical services plan for severe weather events is a requirement of the Council's Climate Change and Energy Security Framework.

6.4.2 2012 could bring further public protests against austerity measures, including the possibility of further industrial action. The Civil Protection Unit continues to work closely with partners to support planning for the Olympics and associated events.

6.5 Engaging the wider community

6.5.1 In addition to the resilience work being undertaken internally, the Civil Protection Unit is looking to promote awareness of local risks and business continuity issues to the wider community. Community resilience schemes, building on the Neighbourhood Watch network and the work done to recruit community snow wardens and a strategy to promote business continuity awareness to local businesses are planned.

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

No implications arising from this report

8. Legal and Resource Implications

Legal: None sought

Financial: None sought

9. Appendices: None