

Audit and Governance Committee Report



Report of Head of HR, IT & Customer Services

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To: Audit and Governance Committee

DATE: 20 March 2013

Business continuity and risk management update

Recommendations

We invite Audit and Governance Committee to note our existing arrangements and the additional work we have undertaken since our last annual update report.

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide committee with an update on our business continuity and risk management arrangements.

Relationship with corporate plan

2. Having effective business continuity arrangements in place will help the council in meeting its strategic objective of 'effective management of resources'.

Background

3. The joint Business Continuity Strategy and the joint Risk Management Strategy require us to present regular reports to this committee on how we are managing our risks and to provide an update on our business continuity arrangements. We presented our last annual update to committee on 18 January 2012 with two separate business continuity reports being presented on 21 March 2012 and 26 September 2012.

Business continuity

4. In compliance with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and accompanying regulations, we are required to 'assess the risk of an emergency occurring and to maintain plans for the

purpose of ensuring that if an emergency occurs, the councils are able to perform their functions'. In other words, we need to ensure that we would be able to continue to deliver our services to residents in the event of a disruption.

5. We have a procedure in place which ensures that all business continuity plans are reviewed every quarter and amended where necessary. Officers also update the plans on an ad-hoc basis to ensure leavers are removed and new starters are added.
6. The plans are stored on the general drive as well as remotely in case access to the council network is restricted or unavailable during a disruption.
7. Since our last update, the Emergency Planning Unit (Oxfordshire County Council) conducted a business continuity and emergency planning simulated exercise, named Exercise Ping Pong. We reported the findings of the exercise to committee on 26 September along with confirmation that we had implemented all the recommendations made by the Emergency Planning Unit. We also provided details on the additional work we were undertaking to enhance our existing arrangements.
8. We had implemented all the recommendations made by the Emergency Planning Unit. One area we had identified as needing further work was the production of a testing and rehearsal schedule to include training of key officers. The schedule is attached as an annex for your information.
9. The joint Business Continuity Strategy is currently being reviewed and updated. We will present this at the next committee meeting.

Risk management

10. The council still has seven operational risk registers and seven risk champions, one for each service. We continue to review and update the registers every quarter in accordance with the Risk Management Strategy. We consider the risk registers to be confidential documents and therefore have not attached them to this report.
11. The strategic management board has recently reviewed the strategic risk register to ensure it is up to date, the risks remain relevant and also if any further action is required. We will review it again in April 2013 and update if necessary. There are currently four strategic risks recorded:
 - partnerships
 - joint working arrangements
 - housing provision
 - recession
12. The joint Risk Management Strategy is currently being reviewed and updated. We will present this to committee for approval at the next committee meeting.

Financial, legal and any other implications

13. There are no financial or legal implications arising from this report, other than to note that by having business continuity arrangements in place, the council is meeting its obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

Conclusion

14. We continue to have robust and effective risk management and business continuity arrangements in place. Our business continuity plans are up to date, we are managing our risks effectively and are aware of those risks which need further management.
15. We will bring the joint Business Continuity Strategy, the joint Risk Management Strategy and the business continuity testing and rehearsal schedule to the next committee meeting for approval.

Recommendation

16. We invite Audit and Governance Committee to note our existing arrangements and the additional work we have undertaken since our last annual update report.

TESTING AND REHEARSING SCHEDULE

Test type	2013 – 2014				2014 – 2015			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Crisis management plan walkthrough – to ensure the strategic crisis team are familiar with the format and content of their plan (duration one hour)	√		√		√		√	
Business continuity plan walkthrough – to ensure plan holders are familiar with the format and content of their plan (duration one hour)	√		√		√		√	
Strategic crisis team rehearsal – to lead the strategic crisis team through a realistic, simulated disaster scenario (duration one to two hours)		√ *		√ **		√ *		√ **
Business continuity exercise – to ensure that all plans are tested against a realistic, simulated disaster scenario (duration three hours maximum)		√***				√***		
Call-out cascade test – to ensure all members of staff can be contacted in an emergency (duration up to three hours)	√		√		√		√	

* in office hours

** out of office hours

*** dependent on EPU availability and schedule (at least annually)