FAREHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to
Audit and Governance Committee

Date   16 March 2015

Report of: Director of Environmental Services

Subject: BUSINESS CONTINUITY

SUMMARY

Councils are required to maintain adequate business continuity arrangements to ensure their critical services are maintained during and following any disruption that impacts upon service delivery.

The Committee has received previous reports that provided updates on the work that has been undertaken, progress that has been made and the arrangements that are in place for responding to and managing any disruption. This report provides a further update for members of the work that has been undertaken.

Part of this process has also involved a review of the Business Continuity Management Policy, which sets out the framework for the development, implementation, testing and review of the Council's Business Continuity Plans (BCP).

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is requested to:

Note the progress to date and the ongoing work that is being undertaken in the development and implementation of the Council's business continuity arrangements.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA)[1] classifies local authorities as a Category 1 responder. This gives the authority a number of duties in relation to planning for civil emergencies, which are summarised below:

   - **Assess the risk of emergencies** occurring and use this to inform contingency planning;
   - Put in place **emergency plans**;
   - Put in place **Business Continuity Management** arrangements;
   - Put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to **warn, inform and advise the public** in the event of an emergency;
   - **Share information with other local responders** to enhance co-ordination;
   - **Co-operate with other local responders** to enhance co-ordination and efficiency; and
   - **Provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management**

2. The inclusion of local authorities in the CCA recognises the role they have to play, both in direct operational response and in support of the 'blue light' emergency services during emergencies, which impact on their communities.

3. The duty to plan for business continuity ensures that the authority can continue to provide its critical services when it is involved in an emergency response and also when any of those critical services are faced with a disruptive challenge, for example, a power cut affecting the Civic Offices.

4. The process of business continuity planning, in simple terms, involves the following steps:

   - Identify the risks faced, and the impacts of those risks;
   - Identify the critical services the authority provides; and
   - Make plans to ensure those critical services are resilient to the risks faced.

5. Good business continuity planning requires a detailed understanding of the services provided, and the resources required to deliver those services. It should therefore be viewed as a process which enhances everyday business, as well as one which provides emergency procedures.

6. Business Continuity is not a one off process; it is an ongoing process which should account for changes to statutory responsibilities, service delivery, restructuring, and the risk assessment. The process needs to be reviewed and tested regularly to ensure plans are fit for purpose when activation is required.

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[1] See http://interim.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/preparedness/ccact.aspx [external website] for more information

BACKGROUND

7.   Over the years the Audit and Governance Committee has received a number of reports on the Council`s approach to business continuity, one of which reviewed the arrangements the Council has in place and reported on the development of a business continuity policy. The policy set out the framework for the development, implementation, testing and review of the Council's Business Continuity Plans (BCP) and this was approved by the Committee in April 2008.

8.   In September 2011, the Committee received a report that provided information on the progress in respect of the work that had been undertaken in the development, implementation and testing of the Council's business continuity arrangements. At this meeting the Business Continuity Policy was presented to the panel and approved and has been in place since this date.

9.   This report provides a further update on the work that has been undertaken.

BCP REVIEWS

10.   A report was presented to the Chief Executive's Management Team in October 2012 by the Director of Regulatory and Democratic Services, where all critical services were reviewed. Following this review the Head of Parking and Enforcement met with all Heads of Service who are required to have a BCP for their identified critical service. It is the responsibility of Individual Directors/Heads of Service to ensure their BCP's remain up to date and fit for purpose.

11.   Following the review, work has also been undertaken to refine and further simplify the business continuity process, templates have been changed and guidance on completion of plans have been provided to assist in the review process.

12.   In December 2014 The Head of Parking and Enforcement again met with all Heads of Service responsible for BCP's to be assured that they had all been reviewed and where required all had been updated to ensure they are fit for purpose. As stated above in paragraph 6 these will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they are fit for purpose.

13.   Each service the council provides will be reviewed as part of the development of BCP's to ensure the development of procedures and information is maintained in readiness for use in an incident to enable the Council to continue to deliver its critical services and functions at an acceptable pre-defined level. A critical service/function is defined as that which has to be performed in order to deliver the key services for the council in order to meet its most important service objectives. The Head of Parking and Enforcement will continue to ensure that all BCP's are reviewed on an annual basis.

BCP ACTIVATION/TESTING

14.   BCP's should be tested on a regular basis to ensure they are fit for purpose; this is carried out by the BCP owner. There are occasions when during an emergency the BCP is activated, this was tested in December 2012 when a severe flood warning was issued for Wallington which could have affected the depot services in Broadcut.

15.   The BCP was invoked and the depot evacuated as part of the plan, all employees were re-located to the Civic Offices, grounds maintenance, street cleansing and refuse and recycling operatives and vehicles were already out in the borough and were not immediately affected by this. The problem that could have arisen was at the point when all vehicles and operatives were due to return to the depot.

16.   The BCP had already identified this as a potential problem and therefore had made arrangements for the vehicles to be diverted to Lysses car park upon returning from their duties, which they did and it worked very well.

17.   Whenever there is an emergency planning exercise, within the scenario it is always intended to test a BCP from a Department within the Council to ensure they are fit for purpose.

RISK ASSESSMENT

18.   There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report.

CONCLUSION

19.   Over the next year the Council will review all BCP's and will also continue to develop all Corporate BCP's that relate to the loss of the Civic Offices and other major assets of the council including the Depot and those specific BCP's for the delivery of the Council's critical services.

20.   The Council's Business Continuity Management Policy will also be reviewed and brought back to the committee for approval when the review has been completed. It is anticipated that this review will refine and make the process of business continuity management more streamlined, while it continues to be fit for purpose.

Background Papers: None

Reference Papers: None

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Kevin Wright. (Ext 4359)