

AUDIT REPORT 23'021
EMERGENCY PLANNING

Executive Summary

The annual audit plan for 2022/23 provides for an audit review of the Council's Emergency Planning arrangements. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004, places a legal obligation upon emergency services and local authorities to assess the risk of, plan, and exercise for emergencies, such as floods, severe weather, industrial accident or other emergencies that could have a significant impact on the community. Effective emergency planning is an essential component of the Council's overall governance arrangements to ensure the resilience of all key services in the event of a major incident. An Emergency Planning Officer supports Council Services' delivery of emergency planning arrangements.

The objective of this audit was to provide assurance over the adequacy and effectiveness of current controls over emergency planning. The audit scope reviewed that adequate training, planning and testing systems have been developed to ensure the Council is prepared in the event of an emergency. However, emergency planning arrangements cannot exist in isolation as effective business continuity plans are required to ensure the Council can not only deal with an emergency but also continue to function and recover effectively afterwards.

The audit was carried out in accordance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).

The audit found significant work has been undertaken to ensure the Council maintains effective emergency planning arrangements and the ability to respond operationally to emergency events. This has been achieved despite limited staff resources. The review highlighted the following key points:

- The Emergency Planning Policy and Procedures have not been updated since 2014. This document is currently being reviewed and provides guidance to officers for coordinating action in dealing with an emergency. The Emergency Planning Policy and Procedures should be updated to reflect current operating arrangements and staffing structures.
- Emergency Plans have been developed detailing actions to be undertaken in the event of an incident. It is appreciated the limited staffing resources available, however it was found that some plans still need to be reviewed and updated to reflect the current staffing structures of the Council and partner organisations. After updating, testing should be undertaken to ensure effectiveness and highlight any further improvements to Emergency Plans.

- It was noted the Council maintains a weekly rota of senior managers designated as Moray Emergency Response Co-Ordinators (MERC) in the event of an incident. However, it was found that limited training is provided or documented guidance and instructions to support officers in their duties. It was noted that work is being carried out to improve guidance available to MERC's. In addition, it was also found a need to update the emergency contact details of officers.

Recommendations

Risk Ratings for Recommendations						
High	Key controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved. Urgent attention required.	Medium	Less critically important controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved.		Low	Lower level controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved.
No.	Audit Recommendation	Priority	Accepted (Yes/ No)	Comments	Responsible Officer	Timescale for Implementation
Key Control: The Council's emergency planning arrangements are fit for purpose to respond effectively in the event of a major incident						
5.01	The Emergency Planning Policy and Procedures should be updated to reflect current operating arrangements and staffing structures.	Medium	Yes	A new Moray Council General Emergency Plan is in development / draft. Updating both the strategic and operational requirements of the Moray Councils Emergency Response arrangements and outlining the responsibilities	Emergency Planning Officer	31/05/2023

Risk Ratings for Recommendations						
High	Key controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved. Urgent attention required.	Medium	Less critically important controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved.		Low	Lower level controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved.
No.	Audit Recommendation	Priority	Accepted (Yes/ No)	Comments	Responsible Officer	Timescale for Implementation
				of responder partners.		
5.02	Regular meetings should be held between the Emergency Planning Officer and the Business Continuity and Risk Management Officer to ensure ongoing alignment of emergency and business continuity plans.	High	Yes	A Closer working relationship will continue between the Emergency Planning Officer and the Business Continuity and Risk Management Officer, to further develop alignment of emergency planning and business continuity plans.	Emergency Planning Officer / Business Continuity and Risk Management Officer	Ongoing

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No.	Audit Recommendation	Priority	Accepted (Yes/ No)	Comments	Responsible Officer	Timescale for Implementation
5.03	<p>Emergency plans should be updated to reflect current risks, working practices and staffing structures of the Council and partner organisations.</p> <p>After updating the emergency plans, testing should be undertaken to evidence their effectiveness and highlight any areas for further improvement.</p>	Medium	Yes	<p>Emergency Plans are being updated to reflect risks, and strategic and operational requirements. However this process requires commitment from the heads of services to ensure implementation of this recommendation</p> <p>Once developed, a test exercise schedule will be developed to stress test and learn lessons and update the agreed plans.</p>	Emergency Planning Officer	31/12/2024

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No.	Audit Recommendation	Priority	Accepted (Yes/ No)	Comments	Responsible Officer	Timescale for Implementation
5.04	Further training and documented guidance should be provided to Moray Emergency Response Co-Ordinators (MERC) to support officers in best practices to follow in the event of an emergency incident.	Medium	Yes	The Emergency Planning Officer has previously sourced, on a number of occasions, free Scottish Government Crisis Management training for officers. This training is now being re-run in May 2023 and all MERC's yet to undertake have been invited to attend. The Emergency Planning Officer has also sourced a MERC induction package from a neighbouring authority and this	Emergency Planning Officer / Senior HR Adviser	31/12/2023

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No.	Audit Recommendation	Priority	Accepted (Yes/ No)	Comments	Responsible Officer	Timescale for Implementation
				will be developed along with Organisational Development for future MERC training delivery. New Action Cards (step by step) guidance is in development for MERC's to use at time of incidents.		
5.05	Emergency contact details of the Moray Emergency Response Co-Ordinators (MERC) saved within Sharepoint should be restricted to only officers that require access to this information.	Medium	Yes	ICT/Sharepoint to provide the Emergency Planning Officer with a list of access names for review. The Emergency Planning Officer to	Emergency Planning Officer	31/07/2023

Risk Ratings for Recommendations						
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No.	Audit Recommendation	Priority	Accepted (Yes/ No)	Comments	Responsible Officer	Timescale for Implementation
				review and clarify those that need requirement and advise ICT accordingly.		
5.06	An Annual Report should be provided to elected members detailing the work undertaken and planned within emergency planning.	Medium	Yes	An Annual Emergency Planning Report will be submitted to members.	Consultancy Manager	31/03/2024
5.07	A review of the hyperlinks contained within emergency planning webpages should be undertaken to ensure they connect to the intended document or website.	Medium	Yes	The Emergency Planning Officer in Liaison with the Senior Communications Officer is making arrangements to progress updating of relevant hyperlinks.	Emergency Planning Officer/ Senior Comms. Officer	30/08/2023