

AUDIT REPORT 22'008

BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Executive Summary

The annual audit plan for 2021/22 provides for an audit review to be undertaken of the Council's management arrangements for Business Continuity. Business Continuity Management concerns how the Council identifies and prepares for potential incidents and how the risk is managed to ensure it can continue to deliver essential services in the event of an emergency, or during a disruption of normal day-to-day activities. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 provides the statutory framework for business continuity management and requires Councils to have in place effective business continuity plans for critical functions.

The scope of the audit was to review the Council's Business Continuity arrangements to confirm up to date policies, procedures and plans are regularly tested and reviewed, and that an appropriate level of awareness of Business Continuity is held throughout the organisation.

The audit has confirmed the Council has approved a Business Continuity Policy in 2006. However, implementation of the requirements detailed within the policy has not been universally implemented across all services. A check of the central Business Continuity Library noted examples where some business continuity plans are still recorded as draft, plans dated from a number of years ago etc. Limited evidence was also noted of any central support provided to services, or training available to officers to assist in the implementation of business continuity policies and procedures.

The audit has therefore found that further development is required regarding the Council's business continuity arrangements. There is a requirement for plans to be updated, policies and procedures to be reviewed etc. In addition, consideration should also be given to provide further assistance to officers through training, guidance etc., that should assist in easier implementation and compliance with the Business Continuity Policy.

However, despite the points noted within this audit, it should be noted that essential services have continued to be maintained throughout the Covid19 pandemic demonstrating that continuity in services has been achieved in practice.

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

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 Business Continuity Policy has been formally approved, is reviewed at regular intervals and is supported by procedures and guidelines for consistent application across the organisation.						
5.1	The Council's Business Continuity Policy should be reviewed and updated as required. Policies and procedures once implemented should be reviewed at regular, stated, intervals.	Medium	Yes		Head of Governance, Strategy & Performance	28/02/2022
Key Control: Business Continuity Plans are in place for all critical service areas and these plans are fully tested and regularly reviewed.						
5.2	Current and finalised Business Continuity Plans, should be held covering all critical services identified by the organisation.	Medium	Yes	Corporate co-ordination with ownership of Business Continuity Plans to rest	Head of Governance, Strategy & Performance	31/10/2022

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
				with managers of relevant service areas.		
5.3	All Business Continuity Plans should be reviewed and tested on at least an annual basis, with outcomes analysed and documented, to ensure plans are capable of supporting an effective recovery position.	Medium	Yes	Will be suggested to be carried out alongside annual risk register update.	Head of Governance, Strategy & Performance	28/02/2023
Key Control: Business Continuity is embedded into the culture of the organisation with all relevant officers appropriately trained and sound central governance arrangements in place.						
5.4	A training programme should be developed to assist officers in the preparation and implementation of the business continuity management process.	Medium	Yes		Head of Governance, Strategy & Performance	30/06/2022
5.5	The roles and responsibilities of the Business Continuity Officer as detailed within the Business Continuity Policy	Medium	Yes	Role of the Business Continuity Officer will	Head of Governance, Strategy & Performance	28/02/2022

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No.	Audit Recommendation	Priority	Accepted (Yes/ No)	Comments	Responsible Officer	Timescale for Implementation
	should be undertaken.			depend on the review of the Business Continuity Policy at 5.1 above.		