

TITLE	Update Response to Overview and Scrutiny Resolutions regarding Business Continuity and Resilience
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee on 13 October 2014
WARD	None Specific
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR	Graham Ebers

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Ensuring resilient and continuous services enables the Council to continue to deliver services at times of adversity and protects the most vulnerable in the community.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) To note the report;
- 2) To decide whether any further updates or information is required.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

In February 2013 the Council suffered a loss of ICT services for several days. Overview and Scrutiny Committee has had updates on this and general business continuity planning in March, May and September 2013 and most recently on 16 January 2014.

This report contains an update on the work in this area and a response to the specific resolutions passed at the Committee's meeting in January.

In general business continuity planning and community resilience plans are proposed as adequate and whilst ongoing work is planned as part of business as usual no further updates on this matter are proposed.

Background

At its meeting on 16 January 2014 this Committee made the following resolutions (the matter was subsequently moved to later on the forward plan at the request of the Chair):

RESOLVED: That an update report be prepared for the July 2014 Committee meeting setting out:

- 1) any further business continuity lessons identified as a result of the planned exercises of service level Business Continuity Plans;
 - 2) Indicative information on costs for the graduated provision of virtual server contingency.
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Analysis of Issues – Response to Resolutions

- 1) any further business continuity lessons identified as a result of the planned exercises of service level Business Continuity Plans;

At the Committee meeting in January it was reported that business continuity plan exercises would begin when service restructures were complete and new Heads of Service and Service Managers in post. This was because most plans would require updating and relevance to larger business areas. This work is now complete although exercises have been delayed by the absence of a key officer. Interim arrangements have been put in place to ensure the Council has adequate cover in this role using a very experienced officer. This is a shared part time role with Reading Borough Council which has benefits in terms of information sharing and efficiency of operation.

The review of business continuity planning is progressing well with testing being conducted where there is a significant risk – either likelihood or impact of an event. For instance there is a major exercise due to be run in early 2015 on the risk of a breach of the reservoir at Southlake.

As well as test scenarios, there have been real life events which have required Services to enact their Business Continuity plans.

The primary example was recent flooding in the Borough which led to widespread disruption of transport and some infrastructure. Many lessons were learned from this and these have been captured and documented in other reports.

Another recent example is the water outage at Grovelands Park in August which resulted in all residents being without water for a number of hours. The Housing Business Continuity plans were utilised during this incident and reviewed afterwards to identify any gaps or areas for improvement.

Other actions include:

- Introduction of the practice of 'Trigger Point' meetings which are used to share and cascade information. The Trigger Point meetings were used during the flooding events to co-ordinate approach and feedback.
- Improved set of alternative contact information in the event of e-mail outage. We have promoted Mitel handset phonebook facility via the Emergency Working

Group and the Grapevine.

- Improved information gathering capability for situation assessment. It was noted that staff could not use Council Blackberry cameras to capture photographic evidence e.g. river levels – Blackberry policies are now updated to allow this
- Recruitment of 4x4 vehicle volunteers to assist with continuing service delivery e.g. visiting vulnerable clients
- Improvements to mapping software & usage. There is a project to update GIS software and training sessions have already taken place to ensure staff can map incidents on current software in the meantime

2) Indicative information on costs for the graduated provision of virtual server contingency.

At the January meeting it was noted that whilst the Council has some levels of resilience in the design of its IT infrastructure there is only one operational datacentre and it is possible to split services across two datacentres to allow fallback operations for all services or to reduce risk by splitting location of services. The Committee asked for an indication of the cost of this sort of provision and Northgate were asked to provide an indicative quote for set up and operation of enhanced resilience, assuming all Tier A services (those most used & critical) were available from 2 datacentres.

The response proposes the following costs:

Infrastructure	£275,000
Set Up services	£100,000
Annual Service Charge	£100,000

Officer comment on the above option is a recommendation that, for the time being, this option is not taken up. The reasons for this are;

- a) That the Council reaches a break point in the Northgate contract in December 2015. Whilst a decision about future ICT supply options is not finalised there is a risk we might invest a large sum which is then only of use of a very short period.
- b) In the scoping of future ICT supply, either with Northgate or another option, then there is an opportunity to consider improved resilience and negotiate this as part of provision which probably means the Council secures better value.
- c) Emerging Cloud computing options have an inherent resilience and should be part of consideration for future infrastructure

At a previous meeting the Committee was concerned that recent IT disaster recovery exercises could not been completed successfully. This matter has been addressed and almost completely resolved. Northgate conducted a full Disaster recovery test of the IT infrastructure, which includes testing of ability to recover key applications from back up. This was satisfactory and provides reassurance to the Council. A small piece of work regarding applications remains outstanding.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	No expenditure is recommended		
Next Financial Year (Year 2)			
Following Financial Year (Year 3)			

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

N/A

List of Background Papers

Previous reports to this Committee on dates listed above.

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