

<b>5 March 2014</b>		<b>ITEM: 5</b>
<b>Standards &amp; Audit Committee</b>		
<b>Thurrock Council Business Continuity</b>		
<b>Report of:</b> Gavin Dennett – Environmental Health & Trading Standards Manager		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Key	
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Lucy Magill – Head of Public Protection		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Darren Henaghan –Director of Environment		
<b>This report is</b> Public		
<b>Purpose of Report:</b> To set out the strategic overview for the Council on Business Continuity		

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Civil Contingencies Act contains a statutory duty for the Council to put in place plans so it can perform its functions in case of disruption for example, through loss of electricity, referred to as business continuity.

In order to provide a robust business continuity management programme it is necessary to ensure that the Council has strategic plans in place to make it more effective in dealing with disruptive events that pose a threat to the provision of critical Council services.

The business continuity policy and corporate business continuity plan provide the foundation from which all the other business continuity plans stem from.

Since Thurrock Councils' Corporate Business Continuity Plan was noted by Cabinet on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2013, the corporate plan and policy have been updated to reflect the latest guidance from the Business Continuity Institute to comply with the latest best practice from the Business Continuity Institute and legislation change from BS25999 to ISO 22301 for Business Continuity.

### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**That Standards and Audit Committee agree:**

#### **1.1 To note the Thurrock Council Business Continuity Policy and plan.**

**1.2 To note that the testing carried out this financial year has not resulted in any changes to the Thurrock Council Business Continuity Plan since agreed by Cabinet in May.**

**1.3 To note the plan for testing of team business continuity plans.**

## **2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:**

2.1 The Council are required by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to make arrangements to continue the delivery of services during and following disruption. Disruption in this context could result from natural occurrences such as flood or disease outbreak or from industrial disputes or other issues impacting on the normal provision of council services.

2.2 In May 2013 Cabinet agreed an updated Business Continuity Plan for Thurrock Council.

2.3 Cabinet requested that the report be referred to Standards and Audit Committee for consideration and to make recommendations, if necessary back to Cabinet at a future date.

2.4 Due to the wide ranging activities of a unitary authority such as Thurrock the practical way to recover Council critical functions is to have business continuity plans in place for services and have the recovery from disruption co-ordinated by management, assisted by the information in a corporate business continuity plan.

2.5 The overarching arrangements for business continuity remain unchanged since the corporate business continuity plan was approved by Cabinet in 2013 as they are based on the escalation of business recover responsibilities through the Councils management structure to Heads of Service and ultimately to Directors Board, this provides the chain of command for operational officers working to provide services following disruption and has not changed.

2.6 Successive changes in staff and reallocation of responsibilities for services between different managers have occurred since 2010. This has been necessary to accommodate staff turnover and service restructuring. Additionally the Councils strategic partner has changed from Vertex to Serco. The updated corporate plan incorporates links to the revised service business continuity plans to ensure plans remain available that correspond to the Councils current staffing and the business continuity arrangements of its strategic partner. Alongside the updated plan the policy and business continuity exercising plan have been added for clarity and to incorporate the latest best practice and change in legislation from BS 25999 to ISO 22301 for business continuity.

### 3. ISSUES, OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS:

- 3.1 Reductions in the risk to the business continuity of the Council have been achieved by joint working, for example the legal partnership between Thurrock and the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham which has led to improved capacity to deliver emergency legal work during disruption. This would be significant if, for example, disruption of access to Civic Offices led to a delay in the ability of either Council to apply for interim child protection orders, as this could be administered by the other Council during the recovery period.
- 3.2 In addition to partnership working, the transformation project is contributing to an improvement in the resilience of business functions by the implementation of hot-desking reducing the reliance of services on access to a specific office location and instead allowing for priority work to be undertaken from all available networked areas. The anticipated roll out of mobile working across services that is being proposed will mean networked activity from locations outside of the area affected by any disruption.
- 3.3 The attachments that accompany the Thurrock Council Corporate Business Continuity Plan are working documents which contain confidential staff and volunteer contact information and are updated on a regular basis and are therefore not included with this report.

Three table top business continuity exercises for the following service areas have taken place during 2013/14:

- Street Cleansing and Highways:  
*Critical function:* provision of burial and cemetery services.

*Outcome of this exercise:* was to include trigger levels for the number of burials that could be completed in a day with limited staff in their Business Continuity plan.

- Thurrock Choice Homes:  
*Critical function:* ensuring that customers are able to bid including placing bids on behalf of any vulnerable persons on the Thurrock Choice Homes computer system

*Outcome of the exercise:* to include a statement in the business continuity plan that the bidding process would be unaffected in the event of ICT failure as the service provider - EELC- East London Landlord Company could continue to operate the web based service.

- Provider Services:  
*Critical function:* Extra Care Housing.

*Outcome of the exercise*; to add a list of voluntary agencies that may be able to assist if Thurrock Council staffing levels were impacted for any reason, pandemic flu etc.

#### **4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:**

- 4.1 Business Continuity needs to be effective and practical, the Corporate Business Continuity Policy and Plan are the overarching documents for Directorate and Service business continuity plans that provide sufficient information to senior managers or directors to inform the decision making process.
- 4.2 The aim of service business continuity plans is to specify steps that could be taken to continue a particular service following disruption caused by a number of foreseeable events.
- 4.3 The aim of the corporate plan is to lay out the response to a disruption to Council Services through the management structure as appropriate.
- 4.4 The business continuity plans of services have been tested since 2010; this is continuing and a programme of testing has been developed to monitor testing over the next year. All current service business continuity plans have been signed off by Directors.
- 4.5 Business continuity remains on the corporate risk register; through regular review, exercising and revision of Thurrock Councils' business continuity plans Thurrock Council will become more robust in its ability to recover critical functions as quickly as possible and recognise where gaps occur and address those.

#### **5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT**

- 5.1 Corporate and team business continuity plans are essential to ensure that in case of disruption the Council can run critical services to enable it to meet its vision and priorities.
- 5.2 Business continuity arrangements cover services provided by Thurrock that impact on delivery of all the Councils priorities.

#### **6. IMPLICATIONS**

##### **6.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**  
Telephone and email: **01375 652771**  
**mjones@thurrock.gov.uk**

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

## 6.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**  
Telephone and email: **07875 397764**  
**David.lawson@bdtlegal.org.uk**

There are no additional legal implications aside from those already listed within the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (as amended). The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a legal requirement on all Category 1 Responders to have Business Continuity Plans in place. As well as the requirement to be legally compliant, general principles of good governance require that the Council should identify risks which threaten its ability to achieve its strategic aims, and to operate its business, and put into place key controls in the form of business continuity plans to mitigate these risks.

## 6.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**  
Telephone and email: **01375 652472**  
**nwarren@thurrock.gov.uk**

There are no direct diversity implications associated with this report.

## 6.4 **Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

There are no other risks identified with this report

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):**

- Thurrock Council Corporate Business Continuity Plan
- Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (as amended)
- ISO 22301 Business Continuity Management

### **APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:**

- Thurrock Council Business Continuity Policy
- Thurrock Council Corporate Business Continuity Plan
- Thurrock Council Business Continuity Exercise Program 2013-2014

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