

<b>24 September 2015</b>		<b>ITEM: 12</b>
<b>Standards and Audit Committee</b>		
<b>Thurrock Council BCP and DR status</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Key	
<b>Report of:</b> Gary Staples, ICT Commercial Manager		
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Kathryn Adedeji		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> David Bull		
<b>This report is Public</b>		

### **Executive Summary**

For clarity, it would be beneficial for the Committee to understand the context in which this report has been constructed relating to Business Continuity Planning (BCP) and Disaster Recovery (DR) interpretations:

- **Business Continuity Plan** – means an overarching plan pertaining to each Service delivered by the Council. The BCP outlines how that particular Service / Services will continue to be delivered in the event that one of these four events disrupts it:
  - **People** - Loss of staff e.g. as a result of pandemic flu
  - **Premises** - Denial of access to buildings e.g. in the event of a fire or flood
  - **Resources** - Loss of access to data e.g. failure of one or more of the council's servers
  - **Suppliers** - Products and services supplied by third parties e.g. loss of utilities including gas, water, electricity or telecommunications.
  
- **Disaster Recovery** – means a separate BCP in its own right that outlines how the Council will recover in the event that one of the four events above specifically affects the primary data centre at Civic Offices in Grays, Essex.

This report sets out the position at Thurrock Council regarding the following requirements identified at previous committee meetings:

- It outlines the progress with updating non-Serco Disaster Recovery (DR) plans
- It outlines the availability of an offsite location in the event of DR invocation
- The results of Thurrock Council's DR Test

- It gives a summary of the ongoing activity to future proof Business Continuity for Thurrock Council.

## **1. Recommendation(s)**

**1.1 Standards and Audit Committee approve that, following ICT transformation completion (3 months following transfer back), officers carry out a new Business Impact Analysis (BIA) across Directorate Services to establish realistic Recovery Time Objectives (RTO) for each Service and report back in March 2016.**

**1.2 That officers, post transfer, correlate the Recovery Time Objective (RTO\*) information from the Services and determine the appropriate DR solution required in order to meet them and report back in March 2016.**

*\*The RTO is the maximum sustainable time possible without critical ICT availability before a Service reaches an unacceptable level of risk towards:*

- *Endangering human life / well-being*
- *The Council suffering significant financial loss*

**1.3 Officers complete an appropriate DR solution that better suits the Council's modern technology, way of working and increased freedom to collaborate with other Local Authorities and report back in March 2016.**

## **2. Introduction and Background**

For the past eleven years Thurrock Council has outsourced, amongst other services, its ICT service to Serco and has had very limited control over how the service has been delivered in order to meet the stipulations outlined in the agreement (the SSPA) that was made by the two parties in 2005.

Recently it has been agreed that the contract between the two parties no longer reflects both parties' requirements and a mutual termination has been agreed.

**DR Plan update** – Whilst the Serco ICT DR plan is quite comprehensive with regards to the detail it contains, it was found to still have a number of areas that require further review and updating. This is primarily to bring it in line with current staff positions; for example the ICT Commercial Manager is not included as a key Council staff member in the plan since the role didn't exist back in March 2015 when the plan was last reviewed. The plan was also found to have a different list of Critical Council Services to those that the Council felt needed to be prioritised in the event of invoking DR.

**Off-site location availability** – Whilst the Culver Centre has previously been identified as a suitable site to recover to in the event of a catastrophic failure at Civic Office there are two important things to bear in mind:

- The Culver Centre will no longer be a useable Thurrock Council property as of a yet to be determined date in 2016.

- The Culver Centre is less than 4 miles away from the location of the Council's primary data Centre. Any major incident affecting the primary DC is likely to also affect the secondary location when they are this close.

**Off-site ICT DR Equipment** – Thurrock's main focus over at least the last two years has been to concentrate its resourcing and funding to procure and install a very resilient virtualised infrastructure at the main data centre in the Civic Office.

This transformation of ICT is almost complete and following its completion the Council will be in a position to run virtually 100% "live-live" data replication to an off-site facility.

**DR Tests** – The majority of the Council's Server, Desktop and Application infrastructure is "virtual" and the infrastructure is spread across two separate halves of a server farm. There is a regular out of hour's monthly maintenance window that allows the ICT teams to work on each half of the farm in turn without any interruption to end-users. The nature of the work emulates the virtual environment effectively "failing" and for many months now work has been carried out on the virtual environment with 100% success and zero downtime thus proving its resilience and stability.

The Council's hosted key Enterprise Applications such as Oracle, that underpins the HR and Finance systems, are carried out annually and the results are analysed by ICT and any improvements made accordingly.

**On-going activity** – Following the appointment of its ICT Commercial Manager Thurrock Council has recently established a BCP & DR Group to commence the reviewing of the current BCP and DR plans. This group consists of:

- Corporate Risk Officer
- ICT Commercial manager
- A Service representative from each Directorate.

In order to take proactive advantage of its new flexibility available to it once services have transferred back to the Council, conversations have already commenced in order to share potential facilities with local authorities that can support a more appropriate off-site DR solution.

### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

- 3.1 Issues and options can only be analysed following a review of the requirements and cannot form part of this initial report.

### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 As a result of the SSPA termination and the transition back in-house of ICT Services, Thurrock Council is in a perfect position to carry out a fresh review of its business requirements as far as BCP and DR resources. Once the review is complete, options for any BCP/DR changes required to meet the Council's needs be submitted to the Director's Board for approval.

As with all BCP and DR requirement vs solution debates it is always critical to be mindful of the balance between criticality and cost.

### **5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

- 5.1 Consultation and approval has been sought and granted at the Council's Digital Board.

### **6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

- 6.1 None.

### **7. Implications**

#### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Sean Clark**  
**Head of Corporate Finance**

There are no financial implications as a direct result of this report. However, as options and solutions are considered, there could well be additional costs that may require budget approval.

#### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**  
**Deputy Head of Legal & Governance**

There are no legal implications at this stage of the report.

#### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**  
**Community Development and Equalities  
Manager**

There are no diversity and equality implications at this stage of the report.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

N/A

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. **Appendices to the report**

- None

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