

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**AUDIT COMMITTEE****26 October 2020****BUSINESS CONTINUITY – UPDATE REPORT****1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide an overview of, and continued assurance regarding, the business continuity (BC) arrangements within North Yorkshire County Council.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Resilience and Emergencies Team (RET) has the remit of ensuring that all North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) directorates and service areas have robust arrangements in place to ensure they are able to deal with a variety of impacts, capable of disrupting their provision of service, to the communities of North Yorkshire.
- 2.2. The business continuity (BC) arrangements for NYCC ensure that directorates and service areas have defined plans to mitigate and manage any disruptive incidents, focused on the impacts such as loss of staff, buildings, equipment or disruption to information technology and supply chains.
- 2.3. BC has been severely tested throughout 2020, as all service areas and directorates have had to come to terms with the series of unprecedented challenges derived from the ongoing impacts of Covid-19. All service areas have had to deploy their BC plans to meet the evolving challenges in a fast changing landscape. The impact on staffing, planned and unplanned loss of buildings, disruptions to supply chains, changes in information technology requirements and established ways of working, have all required significant changes to how NYCC continues to provide business as usual and priority services. Day to day BC impacts have been managed at the lowest appropriate level by service areas, with any required escalation via the regular NYCC Silver meetings.
- 2.4. The RET continue to work closely with Veritau to ensure audit validation and assurance on the progress made with BC against evolving challenges and a changing landscape. This progress was acknowledged in the last Veritau audit report of December 2018, indicating Reasonable Assurance for BC arrangements within NYCC.

- 2.5. In the past 18 months, two members of the RET have received training and passed their professional Business Continuity Institute (BCI) examinations to enhance their understanding and application of business continuity within NYCC.

3. Corporate Business Continuity Policy

- 3.1. Corporate BC and disruption to NYCC services is addressed through an embedded assessment considering impacts such as loss of staff, equipment, technology, buildings and key suppliers.
- 3.2. The BC policy has been key to Covid-19 impact assessment with risk and mitigation measures documented in service area BC plans.
- 3.3. The Corporate Director (Strategic Resources) continues to have overall responsibility for Business Continuity, with the function coordinated and facilitated by the named officers from the RET. The executive portfolio for resilience, emergency planning and business continuity continues to sit with Leader of the Council, Cllr. Carl Les.
- 3.4. Policy adherence is overseen by named RET officers, designated with the task of reviewing service area BC arrangements. A reporting regime is in place and every directorate has a designated BC champion to oversee their business continuity arrangements, to take ownership of the process and to represent their directorate at the Corporate Risk Management Group.
- 3.5. The Corporate Risk Management Group has strategic oversight for business continuity and BC champions work closely with relevant directors to ensure satisfaction with information and a robust process to provide annual statements of assurance. Directorates are required to report a BC RAG (Red, Amber, Green) status update to the Corporate Risk Management Group every quarter.

4. Business Continuity Planning

- 4.1. NYCC BC plans consist of two key documents;
 - 4.1.1. Business Impact Analysis (BIA) - The Business Impact Analysis looks at priority business functions and quantifies the impact a loss of those functions may have.
 - 4.1.2. Incident Management Plan (IMP) - The Incident Management Plan helps a service area plan a process to respond to and work around a range of impacts on their provision of priority services during any period of disruption.

- 4.2. A Corporate NYCC Business Continuity policy and framework is in place, agreed by Management Board, and continues to ensure a consistent and coordinated response across the organisation during any disruptive incidents.
- 4.3. Each directorate works with their named RET officer to assess their most likely risks and develop appropriate BC plans.
- 4.4. Designated officers within the RET provide on-going support for directorate BC champions and relevant staff within each directorate. The RET officers work with the directorate BC Champions to ensure that service areas have the knowledge and support to meet their BC responsibilities and that incident response, training and exercising continue to be part of an auditable annual work-plan.
- 4.5. The RET facilitate BC exercises with directorates to raise awareness and train relevant staff. A number of Covid-19 specific exercises were held in March, June and September 2020 to ensure that relevant directorate staff were provided with realistic and current scenarios dealing with a number of impacts including evacuation, concurrent incidents and health and social care challenges. This learning was embedded into future response policy and protocol.
- 4.6. The structured BC framework, including links with the multi-agency Response to Major and Critical Incidents (RMCI) framework, enhances information management and ensures that senior management is kept informed of impacts across the organisation, enabling them to identify priority BC areas.
- 4.7. The RET continues to ensure that NYCC takes appropriate opportunities to ensure on-going learning and development for BC. NYCC has worked collaboratively with a wide spectrum of multi-agency partners and has hosted and facilitated BC focused workshops and exercises together with Local Resilience Forum (LRF) partners, government departments and internal directorates.
- 4.8. The RET continues to ensure that any organisational learning from incidents is captured by a robust de-brief process and recommendations embedded for organisational learning.
- 4.9. The corporate BC share-point site is the central portal for all relevant service-area and directorate documentation and is monitored and overseen by a Senior Resilience & Emergencies Officer, ensuring compliance and currency.
- 4.10. The share-point site is easily accessible, regularly updated and provides service area practitioners and management, with up to date information, allowing informed business continuity decisions to be made.

5. Business Continuity challenges – recent, ongoing and future

- 5.1. BC has been severely tested throughout 2020 as all service areas and directorates have had to come to terms with the series of unprecedented challenges derived from the ongoing impacts of Covid-19.
- 5.2. All service areas have had to deploy their BC plans to meet evolving challenges in a fast changing landscape. The impact on staffing, planned and unplanned loss of buildings, disruptions to supply chains, changes in information technology requirements and established ways of working, have all required significant changes to how NYCC continues to provide business as usual and priority services.
- 5.3. The requirement for staff who normally work from offices to work from home had a very significant impact and, coupled with changes to or closure of parts of the NYCC estate under Covid-19 restrictions, accelerated new ways of working. Widespread expanded use of technology (including Skype and Teams) has been pivotal to managing services and staff in Covid-secure ways including home working.
- 5.4. The immediate impact of Covid-19 will continue for some months and there will be an even longer recovery period.
- 5.5. Other recent challenges include:
 - 5.5.1. Preparation for the potential impacts of Brexit and the end of the EU Exit Transition – an ongoing risk into 2021.
 - 5.5.2. Severe weather, including severe flooding in 2019 and 2020 with a significant impact on some service provision – an ongoing risk that is likely to increase in frequency and intensity because of climate change.
 - 5.5.3. The UCI 2019 Road World Cycling Championships (held during a period of severe weather).
 - 5.5.4. The threat of cyber-attacks – an ongoing risk.
- 5.6. The NYCC BC arrangements provide a solid foundation for dealing with all of these events and incidents. Covid-19 impacts have reinforced the need for BC to be a key part of overall resilience and that BC planning continues to be an evolving process. RET and directorate BC Champions are committed to continuing this process. BC is a natural element of service planning, and should be continuously running in all aspects of NYCC activities.

- 5.7. Early conversations are underway with BES to look at how the North Yorkshire Highways Teckel (due 01/06/21) can be incorporated into the existing BC arrangements. This will be a substantial piece of work to ensure a smooth transition, made even more challenging by the possible impacts of the winter season.

5.0 Recommendations

- 5.1 The Audit Committee is asked to note the business continuity arrangements across the Council and with partners.

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8 October 2020

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