

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY

COUNCIL AUDIT COMMITTEE

25 October 2021

BUSINESS CONTINUITY – UPDATE REPORT

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the current business continuity (BC) arrangements for North Yorkshire County Council and to provide continued assurance for the management of risk within directorates and service areas.

2 Background

- 2.1 The NYCC Resilience & Emergencies Team (RET) is tasked with ensuring that all 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 arrangements have evolved to ensure that directorates have plans in place to mitigate and manage disruptive incidents such as a loss of staff, buildings, equipment or disruption to information technology or supply chains.
- 2.3 The Covid pandemic, as an unprecedented generational emergency, has stress tested numerous aspects of the Councils business continuity processes. Service areas have been required to readjust their expectations on accessing, previously critically identified, resources. This has created a number of additional benefits to ensure the delivery of critical services as well as create a number of risks as more services rely on the access to IT systems and applications. The constant malicious CYBER threat should not be underestimated as the attack on Redcar and Cleveland Council in February 2020 proved.
- 2.4 The NYCC Resilience and Emergencies Team continue to consider internal audit reviews and work with NYCC BC Champions via the Corporate Risk Management Group (CRMG) to maintain a dialogue with each service area, to focus on reducing bureaucracy, improving engagement and transparency and ensuring a consistent corporate process for business continuity across North Yorkshire County Council.
- 2.5 The decision on the Local Government Review creates a number of business continuity opportunities and risks but the new authority should find itself in a strong position with its Business Continuity process. Service Level Agreements have existing between the NYCC Resilience and Emergencies Team and six of the District and Borough Councils since 2004 (Scarborough Borough Council 2009). Although Harrogate Borough Council maintain their

own business continuity arrangements a fundamental consistency in approach between the majority of services should allow for manageable transition.

3. NYCC Business Continuity process

3.1 Corporate Business Continuity (BC) and disruption to NYCC services continue to be addressed through an embedded assessment considering loss of staff, equipment, technology, buildings and key suppliers. These impacts are risk assessment and mitigation measures documented in service area BC plans.

3.2 The NYCC Business Continuity plans consist of two key documents for all service provision;

Business Impact Analysis (BIA) - The Business Impact Analysis looks at priority business functions and quantifies the impact a loss of those functions may have.

Incident Management Plan (IMP) - The Incident Management Plan helps a service area plan a process to respond to and work around a range of possible impacts on their provision of priority services during any incident.

3.3 The NYCC corporate Business Continuity 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 from the Resilience and Emergencies Team, ensuring compliance and currency.

3.4 The share-point site is easily accessible and regularly updated providing service area practitioners and management, with up to date information, allowing informed business continuity decisions to be made. This also provides a framework for assurance during any disruption of service, information for the Corporate Risk Management Group and a mitigation pathway for loss of priority services.

3.5 The NYCC Corporate Business Continuity Policy states that each directorate is required to work with their allocated RET officer to assess their BC planning and their most likely risks. RET continue to facilitate BC exercises with all directorates to raise awareness and train relevant staff. This ensures that staff are regularly provided with realistic and current scenarios and what to expect during any relevant incident.

3.6 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 now 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 (CRMG).

3.7 The Corporate Director (Strategic Resources) continues to have overall responsibility for Business Continuity within NYCC, with the function coordinated and facilitated by the designated officers from the Resilience and Emergencies Team. The Corporate Risk Management Group oversee the

BC process. The executive portfolio for resilience, emergency planning and business continuity continues to sit with Leader of the Council, Cllr. Carl Les.

- 3.8 The CRMG have strategic oversight for business continuity and BC Champions work closely with relevant directors to ensure satisfaction with information and process to provide annual statements of assurance. Directorates report a BC RAG (Red, Amber, Green) status update to the CRMG every quarter.
- 3.9 A Corporate NYCC Business Continuity Plan is in place, ratified by NYCC Management Board and continues to ensure a consistent and co-ordinated response across the organisation during any disruptive incidents.
- 3.10 The provision of a structured BC framework across NYCC directorates, including links with the multi-agency Response to Major and Critical Incidents (RMCI) plan has enhanced management of information and supported a communication strategy that informs senior management across the organisation enabling them to identify priorities in the restoration of priority services.

4 BCP 2021 Update report

4.1 Since the last Audit Report

- 4.1.1 Since the last report in October 2019 NYCC has been continuing to maintain critical services during the global pandemic. The lack of access to buildings and equipment, the loss of staff due to isolation and the restrictions of moving around the County has all led to services area rethinking the resources required to deliver their most critical activities. The improvements of IT systems and applications, such as Officer 365 and Teams, have created new ways of working to support business continuity arrangements. Recently the council has also had to consider the impacts from the disruption to fuel supplies.
- 4.1.2 Although there has been a realistic expectation on the updating of business continuity documents during the height of the pandemic the RET continued to ensure that NYCC took every opportunity offered to support on-going learning and development for BC. During this time HAS have been drilled deeper into their Extra Care service area to a locality team level.
- 4.1.3 NYCC have worked collaboratively with a wide spectrum of multi-agency partners through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to ensure any interdependencies in service delivery or risks to critical services were co-ordinated and supported where required.
- 4.1.4 A number of single and multi-agency debriefs have occurred which assist in organisational learning from incidents. Lessons identified have been captured by a robust de-brief process and recommendations embedded for future practice.

4.2 Current position

- 4.2.1 Designated officers within the RET continue to provide on-going support for directorate BC champions and their staff within each directorate. Working together they look to ensure that service areas have the knowledge and support to meet their BC responsibilities.
- 4.2.2 Although there has been the annual expectation that service areas undertake a review of their BIAs and IMPs the priority of BCP for 2021 has been the loss of critical computer applications.
- 4.2.3 With many Covid ways of working now being embedded as business as usual NYCC RET have worked alongside Technology and Change during 2021 so that the risks of CYBER incidents, and the business continuity impacts, have formed the basis of the workshops and events. Working through the lessons identified from previous national CYBER incidents NYCC look to ensure that we can anticipate, prevent, respond and recover from loss of critical applications for a protracted period.
- 4.2.4 The RET have continued to work collaboratively with a wide spectrum of multi-agency partners within Local Resilience Forum (LRF). An Organisational Resilience Group has now been created to support planning for the multi-agency Cyber risks alongside sharing of Business Continuity processes and interdependencies.

4.3 Priorities for the next 12 months.

- 4.3.1 As we move into the winter period the impacts from Covid may continue to stress test the councils business continuity processes. The disruption in the fuel supply also reminds us that many front line services still require to travel around the County. The Resilience and Emergencies Team will continue to anticipate and co-ordinate the business continuity process for the Council.
- 4.3.2 Working with Technology and Change colleagues additional cyber workshops will be run at a Directorate/Service level to ensure BIA and IMP's are updated to reflect this eventuality.
- 4.3.3 Feedback from these workshops will be used to build up best practice on a number of areas to support services, such as communication (internal and external), relevant mitigations will support the ongoing delivery in services if there is a complete IT failure and Technology and Change can review the critical systems and look at appropriate additional options to speed recovery.
- 4.3.4 This work will feed into the wider LRF work in ensuring all organisations have their own Cyber Response Plans in place and that the LRF is prepared to support other organisations in the event of an attack whilst also responding to other emergencies at the same time.
- 4.3.5 It is planned that a corporate wide Cyber workshop will be run in the second quarter of next year to ensure all inter-dependencies are captured between services that will be effected by a significant Cyber incident.

4.3.6 Over the next few months the County Council will continue to embed the new ways of working. This will allow service areas to reconsider the resources that are required to provide critical services. Although services areas will be expected to update their business continuity documents on an on-going basis it is anticipated that the April 22 – April 23 reviewed period will be the best opportunity to discuss these changes.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Audit Committee to note the recent challenging incidents that have been managed by the NYCC Directorates, overseen by the Business Continuity Champions and fully supported by the Resilience & Emergencies Team and the continued efforts of all service areas at North Yorkshire County Council to embed resilient practice.

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