CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Audit and Governance Committee

Date of Meeting: 30th June 2011
Report of: Head of Policy & Performance
Subject/Title: Business Continuity Update

1.0   Report Summary

1.1   A paper was submitted to the Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting on 29th March, 2011 outlining the steps taken by the Council to develop business continuity plans to ensure that key functions can be delivered in an emergency. A copy of that report is attached at **Appendix A**. The Committee asked to be updated on business continuity arrangements on a quarterly basis, and this report aims to provide a summary of progress and key current issues.

2.0   Recommendation

2.1   That the Audit and Governance Committee note the actions in place to ensure that the Council is prepared to deliver key functions in an emergency.

3.0   Reasons for Recommendations

3.1   Business continuity management is an essential element of risk management, helping to create a resilient organisation and one which is able to provide continuous service delivery and effective use of resources. As Audit & Governance Committee has a key role in providing an oversight of the effectiveness and embedding of risk management processes, it is considered good practice for this Committee to review business continuity arrangements as part of this, in order to gain assurance that the Authority is well prepared and able to continue with its service provision in the event of an emergency.

4.0   Wards affected

4.1   Potentially all.

5.0   Local Ward Members

5.1   Potentially all.

6.0   Policy Implications (including Climate Change/Health)

6.1   The effects of climate change are likely to increase the instances of environmental emergencies such as heatwaves, drought and flooding, and it is important that the Council anticipates and prepares to respond to such events.

7.0   Financial Implications (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

7.1   Effective business continuity planning can lead to reduced costs by protecting assets, working more efficiently, assurance of third party providers of services (who may be required to demonstrate effective resilience as part of any tender), and lower insurance premiums, where the Council can demonstrate proactive management of continuity risks.

8.0   Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

8.1   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.

9.0   Risk Management

9.1   Business Continuity planning is managed and coordinated by the Risk Team within Compliance. It is, therefore, an integral part of risk management within the Authority.

10.0   Update

10.1   **Developing plans**

It is important to identify and prioritise key services to be delivered in an emergency. Departments have categorised activities into three priorities:

Priority 1 – to be delivered within 0-5 days of an incident
Priority 2 – to be delivered within days 6-14 on an incident
Priority 3 – can be suspended for at least 14 days

Appendix B details the activities which it is considered must be delivered within 0-5 days of an emergency, i.e. Priority 1.

Services have developed plans to ensure that they can deliver Priority 1 activities. In developing the plans, various scenarios are considered, e.g:

- reduction in staff due to illness, bad weather, road network problems
- loss of building, due to site evacuation or loss of utilities
- loss of IT, key systems, telephony, network

In addition, scenarios are considered which might be particularly relevant to certain services, for instance, fuel shortages, or which might be particularly critical at certain times of the year, e.g. year end for Finance. In developing plans, Services consider all resources required to deliver the critical activities, and identify any internal and external interdependencies, including, and especially, key suppliers and partners. Services are encouraged to ensure they are confident with the level of continuity planning undertaken by their key suppliers. Plans also include arrangements for communicating with staff and the public and with other internal and external stakeholders in an emergency.

11.0 Community resilience and support for local businesses

11.1 The Risk and Business Continuity Team recently attended an event for local businesses in the Macclesfield area, arranged by the Economic Regeneration Unit, in order to promote more self-resilience, and it is planned to attend similar events in the future.

12.0 Joint working with other Local Authorities

12.1 Regular meetings are routinely held with Cheshire West and Chester Business Continuity Representatives and Shared Services representatives to ensure that there are robust continuity plans in place for HR, Finance and IT.

12.2 In addition, in conjunction with the Joint Cheshire Emergency Planning Team (who currently coordinate Emergency Planning for Cheshire East Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council), discussions are in progress with Halton Borough Council and Warrington Borough Council to pursue opportunities for more joint working.

13.0 Access to Information

13.1 The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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