Veritau

Assurance Services for
the Public Sector

Emergency Planning 2017-18

City of York Council

Internal Audit Report

Business Unit: Economy and Place
Responsible Officer: Assistant Director Transport, Highways and
Environment
Service Manager: Emergency Planning Manager
Date Issued: 10/4/2018
Status: Final
Reference: 11060/005

	P1	P2	P3
Actions	0	2	1
Overall Audit Opinion	Reasonable Assurance		

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Summary and Overall Conclusions

Introduction

York was severely affected by flooding in December 2015 and the floods have had a significant financial impact on the Council, with £200k spent on recovery grants for businesses, and £1.7m of lost revenue from properties exempt from council tax and Non-Domestic Rates.

The impacts of emergencies go beyond purely financial, and can significantly affect the welfare of the residents of York.

A robust emergency planning system is essential for ensuring that any emergency is managed effectively, minimising its effects efficiently and reducing the overall costs.

Objectives and Scope of the Audit

The purpose of this audit was to provide assurance to management that procedures and controls within the system ensure that:

• Plans exist where necessary, and are of good quality
• Plans are adequately monitored to ensure they are up-to-date
• Plans are tested to ensure any weaknesses are identified and addressed.

This audit tested two of the high priority plans in detail: the flood plan (high impact), and the rest centre plan (higher likelihood).
It also reviewed the Emergency Handbook, and carried out testing on the monitoring of the city centre evacuation plan and the plan for assisted onward travel for stranded race goers.

Key Findings

The audit found that the plans reviewed met the Council's requirements and complement the multi-agency integrated major incident response system. Each plan had a framework for a response to a variety of risks and was exercised as required. The plans however did not contain a section outlining the provision for the carrying out of exercises although the audit did confirm that exercises had been carried out. Without a formal requirement within the plan, exercising could be at a manager's discretion and may not meet the requirements of the Council as a whole.

Issues found concerned the administration of the plans. The main issue related to the updating of the plans, specifically contact details and version control formatting. An action plan has been put in place to address these issues and can be found at Annex 1.

Overall Conclusions

The arrangements for managing risk were satisfactory with a number of weaknesses identified. An acceptable control environment is in operation but there are a number of improvements that could be made. Our overall opinion of the controls within the plans reviewed at the time of the audit was that they provided Reasonable Assurance.

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Action plan: Emergency Planning 2017/18

Action Number	Issue	Risk	Agreed Action	Priority[*]	Responsible Officer	Timescale
1	Plans reviewed held inaccurate contact information for key staff and, in some cases, the members of staff listed had left the council. There are potential Data Protection Act implications, as personal information of past employees is being held on file longer than necessary.	Out of date information could be detrimental to the response to an emergency.	Going forward – all plans will only contain titles/job roles. A separate contact list will be maintained. This contact list will be updated as and when required by a delegated officer/department (to be determined). Processes will need to be established for the update of the contacts list and ongoing responsibility.	2	Assistant Director, Transport, Highways and Environment	30 Sept 2018
2	There is no consistent method for the version / change control for paper copies of plans. There is not a documented process/procedure or checklist for reviewing/signing off a plan.	The current and most up to date version of the plan is not obvious. Officers may therefore use outdated information. An inconsistent review process can undermine the integrity of the documents.	All plans will have a change control notification as part of their introductions. Updates will be made as and when required. Plans will need reviewing either annually or 3 yearly depending on the plan, so by the end of 2021all plans will have been fully reviewed.	3	Assistant Director, Transport, Highways and Environment	30 Sept 2018

Action Number	Issue	Risk	*Agreed Action*	Priority*	Responsible Officer	Timescale
3	Whilst procedures are in place, they are not documented. For example, plans do not include an exercising testing/schedule as outlined in statutory guidance[1]	There is no robust framework to ensure that all plans are tested / exercised to a standard that ensures that they remain effective and current. Non compliance with statutory guidance.	All plans will include an explicit statement about the nature of the training, exercising to be provided and its frequency.	2	Assistant Director, Transport, Highways and Environment	30 Sept 2018

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[1] Cabinet Office, Civil Contingencies Act Enhancement Programme, October 2011

Audit Opinions and Priorities for Actions

Audit Opinions
Audit work is based on sampling transactions to test the operation of systems. It cannot guarantee the elimination of fraud or error. Our opinion is based on the risks we identify at the time of the audit. Our overall audit opinion is based on 5 grades of opinion, as set out below.

Opinion	Assessment of internal control
High Assurance	Overall, very good management of risk. An effective control environment appears to be in operation.
Substantial Assurance	Overall, good management of risk with few weaknesses identified. An effective control environment is in operation but there is scope for further improvement in the areas identified.
Reasonable Assurance	Overall, satisfactory management of risk with a number of weaknesses identified. An acceptable control environment is in operation but there are a number of improvements that could be made.
Limited Assurance	Overall, poor management of risk with significant control weaknesses in key areas and major improvements required before an effective control environment will be in operation.
No Assurance	Overall, there is a fundamental failure in control and risks are not being effectively managed. A number of key areas require substantial improvement to protect the system from error and abuse.

Priorities for Actions	
Priority 1	A fundamental system weakness, which presents unacceptable risk to the system objectives and requires urgent attention by management.
Priority 2	A significant system weakness, whose impact or frequency presents risks to the system objectives, which needs to be addressed by management.
Priority 3	The system objectives are not exposed to significant risk, but the issue merits attention by management.

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