



Business Continuity

City of York Council

Internal Audit Report 2013/14

Business Unit: Housing & Community Safety
 Responsible Officer: Assistant Director - Housing & Community Safety
 Service Manager: Emergency Planning Co-ordinator
 Date Issued: 22/07/2014
 Status: Final
 Reference: 11060/003

	P3	P2	P1
Findings	2	1	0
Overall Audit Opinion	Substantial Assurance		

Summary and Overall Conclusions

Introduction

The council's responsibilities for business continuity are defined in The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 which states 'The council should ensure that they can continue to deliver their functions in an emergency 'so far as is reasonably practicable'.

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for ensuring that the council has a business continuity plan with the responsibility for co-ordinating individual plans being delegated to the Emergency Planning Unit (EPU). The EPU works with directorates to ensure that business continuity plans have been produced by directorates and that these are reviewed and tested at appropriate intervals. However, it is up to senior managers within each council directorate to ensure that key services are not interrupted when an incident occurs.

The council's move to the West Offices has meant that although the council has the same responsibilities to provide key services in an emergency, some of the risks and threats to providing them may have changed. Therefore business continuity plans needed to be reviewed to reflect the move the West Offices, while the council's overall approach to business continuity was also refreshed.

Objectives and Scope of the Audit

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

- Risks and threats to critical services have been identified and assessed.
- Business continuity plans have been produced and approved to ensure key services can be continue to be provided in an emergency.
- There is an agreed process for invoking the council's business continuity plans when emergencies occur.
- Testing has been done on business continuity plans and staff have been given training as to how they should be implemented.
- Business continuity plans have been communicated to relevant staff and published where appropriate.

In areas where the work has not yet been completed to reflect the council's move to the West Offices, the audit reviewed the work that has already been done together with the proposed plans to complete outstanding tasks.

Key Findings

Good progress is being made in refreshing the council's approach to business continuity and in updating the individual plans to reflect the move to West Offices and other recent changes. Most service level plans have been updated and reviewed and there are plans in place to continue this process up to directorate and corporate level plans. In addition to the completion of these higher level plans, specific outstanding issues

identified during the audit relate to the production of plans for services within the Office of the Chief Executive, the consideration of telephone service requirements and the availability of hard copy business continuity plans.

Overall Conclusions

It was found that the arrangements for managing risk were good with few weaknesses identified. An effective control environment is in operation but there is scope for further improvements in the areas identified. Our overall opinion of the controls within the system at the time of the audit was that they provided **Substantial Assurance**.



1 Issue/ Control Weakness Risk

Business continuity plans have not been completed for all council services. Services may not be re-instated following an emergency.

Findings

At the time of the audit it was found that business continuity plans had not been produced for all council services. In order to monitor whether business continuity plans have been produced and reviewed for all council services, the Emergency Planning Unit have been using a list of services compiled from directorate structure charts on COLIN and discussions with relevant Assistant Directors. This list was also reviewed and it was found that services within the Office of the Chief Executive had not been included. This includes the Economic Development, Performance & Innovation and Communications service areas. Business impact assessments and business continuity plans for these services have therefore not been submitted by the service area or reviewed by the Emergency Planning Unit.

1.1 Agreed Action

Business continuity plans will be requested from the Economic Development, Performance & Innovation and Communications service areas. Once submitted these plans will be reviewed by the Emergency Planning Unit to confirm they contain all the necessary details. [managers within the services will be responsible for the completion of the plans]

Priority	2
Responsible Officer	Emergency Planning Officer & Business Continuity Advisor
Timescale	31 August 2014

2 Issue/ Control Weakness Risk

Consideration has not been given as to the necessary phone requirements to maintain services following an emergency.

Critical services cannot be restored because consideration has not been given to the necessary phone requirements or whether the service could be maintained without a phone service.

Findings

There is no section within either the business impact analysis or business continuity plan template to detail the service’s telephone requirements or the impact a loss of telephone service would have. Some services included telephones in the section listing office equipment but half of a sample of plans tested included no reference to telephone requirements at all. Since telephones could be a critical requirement for some services, it would be preferable to explicitly include this in the templates to ensure their importance is not missed when plans are drafted.

2.1 Agreed Action

The templates for the business impact analysis and business continuity plans will be updated to include a section detailing the service’s telephone requirements. Service areas will be required to complete or transfer existing details into this section when the business continuity plans are reviewed in August.

Priority	3
Responsible Officer	Emergency Planning Officer & Business Continuity Advisor
Timescale	31 August 2014

3 Issue/ Control Weakness Risk

The arrangements for storing hard copies of business continuity plans at both the West Offices and Hazel Court depot have not been determined. Hardcopies of the business continuity plans are not available following an emergency resulting in a delay in re-instating services.

Findings

Service level business continuity plans are currently being stored in electronic format in both the Emergency Planning Unit's filing area as well as that of each individual service area. Although it has been discussed that hard copies of business continuity plans should be stored at both the West Offices and Hazel Court depot, arrangements for storing these plans have not been determined and no hard copies are currently available.

3.1 Agreed Action

A report is being prepared for the Corporate Management Team that will recommend that copies of business continuity plans are printed out and held in a secure location at the West Offices and Hazel Court Depot.

Priority	3
Responsible Officer	Assistant Director - Housing & Community Safety
Timescale	31 August 2014

Audit Opinions and Priorities for Actions

Audit Opinions	
<p>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.</p> <p>Our overall audit opinion is based on 5 grades of opinion, as set out below.</p>	
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.
Moderate 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.