

North Somerset Council

Report to the Audit Committee

Date of Meeting: 24 November 2022

Subject of Report: Business Continuity co-ordination

Town or Parish: ALL

Officer/Member Presenting: Alex Stafford, Emergency and Business Continuity Manager

Key Decision: NO

Reason: Information item

Recommendations

That the Audit Committee notes the update on Business Continuity co-ordination.

1. Summary of Report

Business Continuity (BC) planning, preparedness and response underwent significant change in the 21/22 FY, as responsibility for BC co-ordination was brought back in house. This reversed a decision made in 10/11 FY to separate BC from emergency management functions and transfer BC to One West.

The reasons for the decision to re-integrate BC into the Emergency Management Unit's (EMU) overall remit are summarised below:

- Previous arrangement relied on good will as it didn't include response to BC events
- There are many synergies between Emergency Management and Business Continuity with BC and emergency plans dovetailing and complimenting each other
- The response structure within the BC Corporate Plan relies on the structures and roles within EMU procedures
- Following lessons learned from the COVID pandemic response, BC was identified as an area for improvement.

This paper provides an overview of the response structures of the EMU and the activities to improve and reintegrate BC into the EMU's programme of work. It also highlights the ongoing work to ensure critical services continue to function during Business Continuity impacts.

2. Policy

North Somerset Council's Business Continuity Management Strategy 2019-20 provides the Council's overarching strategy for Business Continuity Management (BCM) The Strategy's aim and objectives are:

- Direct available resources to ensure that the council's critical services and resources have robust, reliable and effective business continuity plans in place, which are subject to regular review and testing

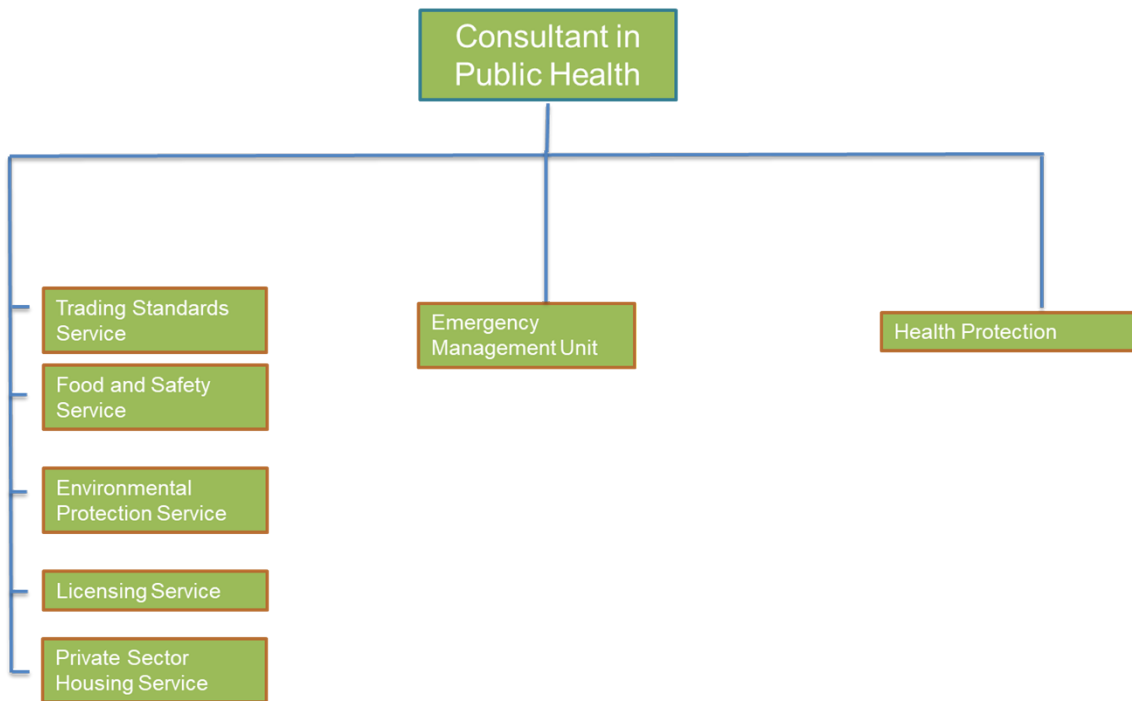
- Improve the integration of business continuity management into the culture and working practices of the council, its partnerships, contracts and the civil sector
- Meet the relevant requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- Obtain commitment from all responsible officers for the implementation of all the actions specified in the annual Business Continuity Management action plan.

It should be noted the strategy is yet to be updated following the transfer of BC to the EMU.

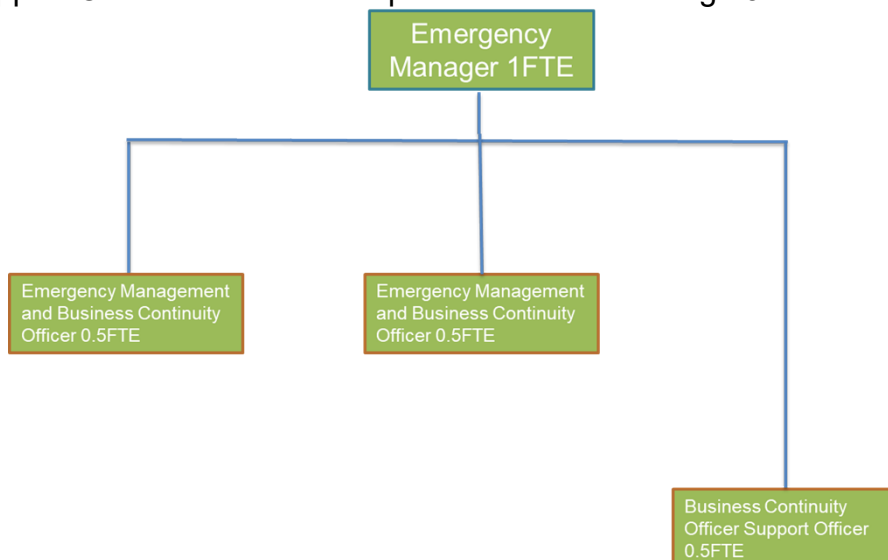
3. Details

Structure

Following the creation of Public Health and Regulatory Services Directorate (PHRS), the EMU moved from Corporate Services Directorate (CSD) to PHRS. The EMU sits with Regulatory Services and Health Protection, reporting to a Consultant in Public Health.



The EMU consists of The Emergency and Business Continuity Manager, 2x PT Emergency and Business Continuity Officer and 1x PT Business Continuity Support Officer. Including The Emergency and Business Continuity Manager the total FTE is 2.5. The Business Continuity Support Officer is a fixed term post which ends in Aug 23.



In response, the EMU uses resources from across the whole of NSC, whilst the EMU coordinates the response and acts as subject matter expert to key decisionmakers at Operational, Tactical and Strategic level.

2x times rotas are maintained, at a tactical level the Duty Emergency Management Officer (DEMO) rota includes all members of the EMU. At a strategic level, the Strategic Duty Officer (SDO) rota includes all Assistant Directors, Directors and the CEO. The rotas ensure key decisionmakers are available 24/7 365.

Identification and Planning for Critical Services

Criteria for a critical service has been agreed and the criteria used to identify all critical services across all directorates. The critical service criteria is:

- Service is required for the council to respond effectively to an emergency
- Failure to provide the service would cause potential loss of life/serious damage to human welfare
- Failure to provide the service would cause serious hardship to individuals
- A long gap in service provision (two weeks or more) would cause medium to long term damage to the environment
- Serious litigation is very likely if the service is not delivered, or delivered inadequately
- Failure to provide the service is very likely to lead to either a significant (more than £50,000) loss in revenue, or a requirement to pay compensation
- Failure to provide the service would have a serious impact on the credibility and public perception of the council such that it would likely be a lead story in the national media.

A new BC Critical Service Plan Template has been developed utilising experience gain from the COVID pandemic response. It's also been developed in line with existing Emergency Management structures to ensure consistency of response. The aim and objectives of the plan are:

- To safeguard the safety and welfare of staff, service users and visitors
- To identify those critical business activities within a service which should attract priority in the allocation of limited resources
- To maintain or resume provision of critical service functions at the earliest opportunity
- To return the service to business as normal as swiftly as possible
- Provide an overview of the corporate response.

The plan provides critical services with the following:

- The principles of the council's approach to Business Continuity
- Procedures to be followed in the event of service disruption
- A Business Impact Analysis (BIA) tool to set out the target recovery times, and minimum resourcing requirements, in order to protect or re-commence minimum acceptable service delivery
- A template for service specific recovery plans for dealing with service disruption.

The plan has been rolled out to 29 of 63 critical services (46%).

Learning and Development

A half day workshop has been developed with the following objectives:

- Improve NSC's Business Continuity planning and preparedness
- Provide Critical Service Managers with an understanding of BC management and why it's important

- Give an overview of the types of risks to BC
- Explain the Service BC plan template and the requirements to complete it
- Review the Corporate and Service BC plan's activation/escalation processes

The workshop has been delivered to 51 of 63 critical services (81%)

Response

At a corporate level in the last 12 months, NSC has responded to the following BC impacting events:

- Storm Eunice (rare red weather warning) – Feb 22
- Fuel price protests on the M5 - Summer 22
- 2x periods of heatwave – Summer 22
- ICT disruption affecting around 60% of the workforce - Oct 22

Other notable responses are:

- Covid pandemic 2020 (ongoing)
- Brexit planning 2019-2021
- Fuel supply disruption Sep 2021

These events were successfully managed and required activation of NSC Corporate Emergency Response Team (CERT) at a tactical level. The Covid pandemic also required activation of the CEO Strategy Group for strategic co-ordination.

Exercising

Exercises are a way of testing plans and arrangements outside of response. They vary in size, scope and complexity, ranging from complex live play involving all layers of command and control, to tabletop or workshop-based exercises. Exercises can be nationally or regionally driven and take place alongside multi-agency partners, these are managed via the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) or they may be local and only involve NSC's response.

Notable exercises taken place are:

- Exercise Elon (Command and Control) Nov 19
- Exercise Joint Work Space (Cyber) Dec 20
- Exercise Governing (Counter Terrorism) Dec 21
- Exercise New Dawn II (Control of Major Accident Hazards) Jan 22
- Exercise Carnage Plus (Health System and Adult Social Care) May 22
- Exercise Lemur (National Power Outage) May 22

Future exercises:

- Artic Willow (Winter Pressures) Nov 2023
- Exercise Mighty Oak (National Power Outage) Mar 2023
- Cyber Exercise Name TBC Mar/Apr 2023

Debrief Process

Following any activation of NSC's Corporate BCM structures or an exercise, A debrief will be conducted. The debrief process involves capturing what went well and what didn't go well shortly after the response is complete, this is known as a hot debrief. These observations are captured and later discussed during a cold debrief. Following the cold debrief, a list of actions is produced to ensure the lessons identified become lessons learnt.

Next steps

Further actions have yet to be undertaken, with a target date of August 23(This is when a fixed term resource is due to leave the team).

The additional actions are:

- Review, update and renew BC Corporate Strategy – Includes applying COVID learning, aligning with EM plans and guides, ensuring compliance with statutory duties and in line with best practise
- Review, update and renew BC Corporate Plan – Includes applying COVID learning, aligning with EM plans and guides, ensuring compliance with statutory duties and in line with best practise. The Plan must define BC response roles and responsibilities at Corporate, Directorate and Service level
- Incorporate Corporate BC Strategy and Plan changes into Emergency Management plans and procedures
- Exercise the Corporate BC Plan

Ongoing workstreams – Throughout and following the above recommended actions, there will be ongoing workstreams which include:

- Training
- Reviewing contractors and suppliers BC arrangements
- Exercise schedule
- Ongoing plan maintenance and cyclical reviews
- Promotion of BC to local business.

4. Consultation

The criteria for defining a critical service is agreed by CLT and contained within the corporate BC strategy and service plans. The criteria was review by each directorate's Directorate Leadership Teams (DLTs) to establish each critical services and a responsible manager.

5. Financial Implications

None arising from this report

Costs

None arising from this report

Funding

None arising from this report

6. Legal Powers and Implications

The Civil Contingency Act 2004 requires all category 1 responders which includes local authorities, to have Business Continuity Management (BCM) in place. Additionally, under the act, local authorities are required to provide BC advice and assistance to the commercial sector and voluntary organisations.

Failure to discharge this duty can have a knock-on effect of NSC not discharging any other statutory duties through the failure of a critical service.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

Climate change impacts will increase the number of BC impacting events due to increased severe weather events.

8. Risk Management

At a national level, central government produce the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA). The NSRA identifies and assesses the most serious risks facing the UK and is used to determine the common consequences of these risks occurring.

At a local level, the Avon and Somerset Local Resilience Forum which includes NSC, localise the NSRA to produce a Community Risk Register (CRR). The CRR determines which risks require detailed and specific emergency and BC planning. For example, the EMU produces plans for fuel shortage and severe weather (heatwave and winter) which are specific BC impacting events. Other teams within NSC also hold specific risks and have plans in place, for example ICT's Cyber plan and Trading Standards animal health plan.

Any specific or emerging risks that require corporate wide planning/mitigation. Are escalated via the risk management process through PHRS's directorate risk register to the strategic risk register.

The risk to NSC if robust BCM is not in place can be scored as HIGH, likelihood "Almost certain", Impact "critical" on the below risk matrix. However, good BCM can reduce the impacts of BC events to MEDIUM, likelihood "Almost certain", Impact "Low".

		← Likelihood →				
		Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Almost certain
Impact	Critical	LOW/MED	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
	High	LOW	MEDIUM	MED/HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
	Medium	LOW	LOW/MED	MEDIUM	MED/HIGH	HIGH
	Low	LOW	LOW/MED	LOW/MED	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
	Neqligible	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW/MED	LOW/MED

9. Equality Implications

Not having robust BCM in place will increase the likelihood of a critical service failing, this could disproportionately affect the most vulnerable service users.

10. Corporate Implications

The Corporate BC Strategy and Plan both need updating. The updates to the Strategy may include mandatory training, directorate roles, etc. these will be new requirements and increase workload across critical services.

The Corporate Plan is already in line with existing Emergency Management processes, and is tested regularly by exercises and actual BC events.

11. Options Considered

Do nothing – this is not an option as BCM is a statutory duty under the CCA 2004 and underpins critical services ability to function during a BC impacting event. No resource requirements.

Light touch – this is the previous approach which led to gaps and short coming in planning and response to BC impacting events. Minimal resource requirements.

Current approach – comprehensive and defensible approach, ensuring statutory duties under the CCA are met and that services do not fail if impacted by a BC event. Requires ongoing resource investment that is similar to the current level. The fixed term post is due to end in Aug 2023 with additional funding yet to be identified.

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Background Papers:

Corporate BC Plan
Corporate BC Strategy
Service BC Plan Template.