

Title: Update on Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Audit

Wards Affected: ALL

To: Audit Committee On: 21st March 2018

Contact Officer: Steve Cox

☎ Telephone: 208029

✉ E.mail: Steve.cox@torbay.gov.uk

1. Key points and Summary

- 1.1 At the time of the Audit, there were inadequate resources to address the 'fundamental weakness' identified in the audit.
- 1.2 A new full time and permanent post has been agreed, and interviews have taken place with the anticipation of appointing an additional officer shortly. Their role will be to complete the work already started, to ensure Business Continuity Plans are reviewed, brought up to date, validated and tested and therefore meet the requirements of the Corporate Business Continuity Strategy 2018.
- 1.3 Senior Leadership Team in February 2018, as well as agreeing to the new Corporate Business Continuity Strategy also supported a series of recommendations both in the short and medium term. This will ensure the full implementation of the Strategy and therefore meeting the requirements of the Audit Report and embedding the concept across the organisation. This is likely to take 12-18 months to complete.
- 1.4 The additional post will also allow the current Senior Emergency Planning Officer to return their focus to Emergency Planning which will also pick up the remaining outstanding recommendations from the audit report. This will probably take another 6 months to complete.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 In early 2017 an internal audit was undertaken of Emergency Planning and Business Continuity, which reported in June 2017. It identified a number of issues in Emergency Planning and Business Continuity that needed addressing, however importantly it identified a 'Fundamental Weakness' in business continuity planning.

- 2.2 The Emergency Planning work that was required was primarily with regard to both the Response and Recovery Plans. This work is in hand and progressing steadily, but due to current and a previous lack of resources this hasn't progressed as quickly as the department would have liked. The majority of the emergency planning recommendations are being addressed as they form part of the work being undertaken in conjunction with Devon County Council and 6 of the Devon district authorities. Torbay Council is a member of Devon Emergency Planning Scheme (DEPS), where the aim is to standardise the plans across Devon. Although this in principle is the right approach, for the response plan in particular this has added to the workloads in the short term.
- 2.3 Business Continuity however was identified as a fundamental weakness. Work on this has been the priority so the limited resources have been partially diverted away from emergency planning. The challenge is that most BCP's were out of date or in some cases absent. The Senior Emergency Planning Officer, with some support has been working with SLT representatives, Risk Management and IT to agree an overarching approach to risk. In February 2018 SLT agreed a new Corporate Business Continuity Strategy and a series of recommended actions to review the Critical Functions, which are the basis of business continuity; to complete the review of the plans; to validate them through exercises and lastly to embed business continuity into the organisation.
- 2.4 SLT had previously agreed to an additional permanent post, which is currently being interviewed for. This has taken a little time as the first round of interviews the Council didn't appoint as there wasn't considered to be a candidate that has sufficient experience of the role required.
- 2.5 The new post holder will be responsible for driving this work, with oversight from the Senior Emergency Planning Officer (SEPO) and Environmental Health Manager, which will allow the SEPO to pick up the other outstanding issues in the Audit amongst other key work. A proportion of the initial audit work has already been done with most business continuity plans having already been reviewed, however there is significant work to risk assess the critical functions, agree them, finish the plans, validate and test them and alongside to embed the concept across the organisation. This work is still likely to take at least 12-18 months to complete but possibly longer.

Tara Harris
Executive Head of Community Safety

Appendices

Appendix 1	Corporate Business Continuity Strategy 2018
Appendix 2	Corporate Business Continuity Strategy Appendix A Flowchart

Documents available in members' rooms

None

Background Papers:

The following documents/files were used to compile this report:

Audit Committee Report Emergency Planning and Business Continuity February 2017