Business Continuity Update

Appendix 1

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 ("the 2004 Act"), the Health & Social Care Act 2012 ("the 2012 Act") and the Statutory Duties on the Council re Emergency Planning.

- Under the 2004 Act the Council is a Category 1 responder.
- As a Category 1 responder, the Council must assess risks, put in place emergency plans, share information with other agencies, provide advice to the public etc.
- Pursuant to the 2004 Act an Essex Resilience Forum has been established to co-ordinate emergency planning arrangements and the Council's EPO is represented on this Form.
- The 2012 Act imposes additional statutory duties on the Council in terms of Public Health and emergency planning.

There are a number of fora where Southend Borough Council has a key role to play in ensuring that we are able to discharge our duties under this legislation. We are key members of the following groups:

- Essex Resilience Forum which meets on a quarterly basis
- Emergency Planning Officers Essex wide which meets on a quarterly basis
- South East Essex Emergency Planning Group – Keith Holden chairs and meets quarterly
- Multi-agency Flood Plan – chaired by Environment Agency
- COMAH (Containment of Major area hazard) – Foulness
- Severe weather group – updates daily which are cascaded as appropriate
- Unexploded Ordnance – Project with M.O.D. which is on-going
- Airport emergency planning group – chaired by Stobarts which meets quarterly

Our role in the above is supported by an in-house Emergency Planning Group which has representatives from each of the Directorates, including Public Health, Fire Officer, Health & Safety officers, Facilities Management and ICT.

The Council's Major Emergency Plan 2006 was developed in co-operation with colleagues on the Essex Resilience Forum (ERF). The plan is kept under review and will need small adjustments to reflect the Council's new Public Health responsibilities, new management structures at the Council and changes to accommodation.

The Emergency Planning Officer is currently working on several standard Emergency Check Lists to be used in an emergency situation. While they cannot cover everything, the aim is to provide a useful tool in an emergency

situation; in particular to ensure the most important issues are covered and to provide a record of key actions taken.

A serious of ancillary emergency plans are also in place to address specific types of emergency. Some of these have been prepared by the Council and some by other agencies eg COMAH plan for the MOD land at Shoeburyness. It is vital that Emergency Plans are tested on a regular basis and the Council together with the ERF carry out regular exercises. It is intended to carry out a command and control exercise later this year with senior management to test the revised Major Emergency Plan and Emergency Check Lists.

Business Continuity Planning
The Council's Overarching Business Continuity Plan (OBCP) was approved in March 2008 and was supplemented by Departmental Business Continuity Plans (DBCP's), along with an ICT Disaster Recovery Plan. As part of the 2010/11 Annual Governance Statement, Business Continuity was identified (as part of the feedback obtained from Manager's Assurance Statements) as an area requiring management action.

In 2011 a BCP Task group was established and tasked with updating the Corporate Business Continuity Plan, and departmental plans. In addition, the Tickfield Centre was tested as a fall back location for disaster 'categories 1, 2 and 3' (where it is not possible to access the Civic Centre but the ICT infrastructure is still intact). All systems required were tested and found to be accessible.

In May 2012 the Corporate Management Team (CMT) further considered the Council's BCP arrangements and identified a number of areas where these arrangements could be improved. As a result CMT agreed to re-establish the corporate task and finish group of BCP leads to refresh Departmental BCPs and the Corporate BCP and oversee BCP arrangements.

In addition, CMT required all Heads of Service to include an action in their service plans which would: 'Contribute to the Department's Business Continuity Plan by ensuring it is up to date, sufficiently robust and covers the required service areas'.

As a result of the work undertaken by the lead BCP officer and the task and finish group, , significant progress was made, during 2012, in improving the Council's BCP arrangements.

As a result:
- A more comprehensive and up to date Corporate BCP was developed.
- Departmental BCP Plans were updated to reflect current work arrangements and follow a common format and approach.
- Business Impact Analyses have been undertaken across the Council to help prioritise service functions and activities in terms of urgent/critical and non-urgent/non-critical.
- The ICT Disaster Recovery Plan was updated for systems held on the virtual environment. All Council systems hosted on the virtual ICT environment are now backed up to and readily accessible from Basildon in the event of a level 4 (ie total collapse) disaster.
- Further investigations were undertaken on using the fall-back location (Tickfield) for enabling service continuity in the event of interruption -

although following further works to, and location of more staff at Tickfield) arrangements need to be comprehensively reviewed.

- Departmental BCP leads were briefed on Corporate BCP arrangements and agreed a more integrated and common approach across departments.
- A communications plan to brief key staff on BCP arrangements has been developed.

Whilst good progress has been made there remain areas where BCP arrangements need to be strengthened. As a result, an external BCP expert has been engaged to undertake a comprehensive review of current arrangements with a view to ensuring these are sufficiently robust. Areas emerging from the review where further work will be undertaken are likely to include:

- Ensuring BCP arrangements will be fit for purpose in light of the impending Council restructure of departments.
- Ensuring the *content* of the Corporate and Departmental BCPs are further clarified, follow a common format, are better linked and fill gaps in relation to how the plans work in practise.
- BCP arrangements to better reflect the New Ways of Working and growth of home working.
- Undertake further business impact analyses to ensure all posts are covered.
- Implement awareness raising, with the introduction of new communication tools for all staff with a role in an incident.
- Arrangements need to reflect the increasing provision of services by third parties, and arms length providers.
- Develop robust arrangements for the use of the primary fall-back premises, including developing a comprehensive solution for a disaster at level 4 – where the Civic Centre collapses causing the loss of the entire server room and damage to network switches etc. (This cuts across into our Emergency Planning)
- Undertake test exercises to assess robustness of plans in practice.
- Clarify aspects of the content of plans in relation to responsibilities.