



LONDON BOROUGH OF HILLINGDON

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

**CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

*Final Report – December 2004*

## **BUSINESS CONTINUITY**

### ***Members of the Committee***

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Cllr Richard Lewis (Chairman)

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## Chairman's foreword



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Events across the UK and the world have shown that all major service organisations need to be prepared for a wide range of incidences, from severe weather to acts of terrorism.

The Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee's review of business continuity sought to inspect and scrutinise the current level of readiness across the Council's services.

Following receipt and discussion of the emergency planning and business continuity arrangements, the Committee is largely satisfied with the planning and implementation of plans to date.

The review produced a number of recommendations, which the Committee hope will add to the greater security, continuity of service and resilience to the premises, personnel and customers of the Council.

The committee commends the work of the personnel involved in the development of business continuity planning and commends this report as well as its recommendations to the Cabinet as a means of furthering the continued development of the planning achieved to date.

*Cllr Richard Lewis*



## **Executive Summary**

### **Background**

- (i) The London Borough of Hillingdon Council is the predominant service provider to the communities and businesses of the borough. The local population relies on the Council for a vast range of services, from refuse collection to housing and benefits. In addition to the services provided directly to members of the public, the internal workings of the Council are essential to supporting the public front of services: collection of Council tax, for example, is necessary to balance the payments made through the benefits system and contracted work, such as road repairs and the maintenance of municipal grounds.

### **What is Business Continuity?**

- (ii) Business continuity planning refers to the strategies created to ensure that the Council's business – both serving the public, and keeping the internal cogs working – can continue as unaffected as possible following unexpected events that would otherwise prevent the Council from carrying out its responsibilities. Events such as extreme weather, major accidents, security breaches or ultimately, even acts of terrorism could result in the loss of resources central to the Council's ability to function – this can range from the loss of computer capabilities to the loss of function of the Council's properties where the work takes place.

### **The review**

- (iii) The Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee (the Committee) undertook a review of business continuity planning within the Council. The review aimed to critically assess the current plans and levels of resilience.
- (iv) The Committee received information on the current planning arrangements, those plans in place, and other issues that have been addressed under the business continuity and emergency planning remits. The Committee made several recommendations for advancing the resilience of the Council's business. These recommendations are set out below and further detailed in the main report.

#### **Recommendation 1:**

That the work undertaken to date on developing and implementing business continuity and emergency planning arrangements be noted and commended.

#### **Recommendations 2:**

That there should be one central post with responsibility for the whole Council coordination of business continuity, linking across the multiple sites owned and operated by the Council. This post should ideally be located in the Chief Executive's Office or another suitably strategic role.

**Recommendation 3:**

That business continuity and emergency planning plans are stored securely (negating theft, infiltration, or flood / fire damage) in relation to those copies stored within the Council's buildings and those stored off-site.

**Recommendation 4:**

That business continuity and emergency planning plans are not available to all staff on the intranet.

**Recommendation 5:**

That a basic level of awareness for all officers is incorporated into the Corporate Induction Programme training

**Recommendation 6:**

That when the business continuity plans are updated (currently every six months) those officers with a corporate responsibility for business continuity are reminded of their roles and responsibilities.

**Recommendation 7:**

That business continuity and emergency planning responsibilities are placed on personnel records and flagged up when officers with such responsibilities decide to leave the employ of the Council.

**Recommendation 8:**

The Committee welcomes the reported review of the visitor pass system and supports the development of greater security in this system, especially regarding visitors to, and contractors working within, the Civic Centre.

**Recommendation 9:**

That the following be considered in the current review of the Civic Centre site security (visitor pass system);

- a. Public access to the Members' Car Park and subsequent entry / exit points between the Members' Car Park and the Civic Centre at all times of day and evening.
- b. The options for placing an expiry date on staff passes
- c. Methods for improving the return of staff passes when staff leave the employ of the Council
- d. Distinguishable passes for temporary members of staff which clearly identify the term of service.







## **Introduction**

### **The Council as a service provider**

1. The Council is a major service provider to the local community and businesses and holds some responsibility for maintaining transport links and services for the millions of people who travel through the borough, a transportation network which includes Heathrow Airport, sections of motorway, A-roads and rail lines.
2. The Council is active in the provision of many services to members of the public, from education to deciding on planning applications, from providing benefits to child protection. In addition to those services provided directly to members of the public, the Council operates a large number of more discreet, internal services that enable the front line services to function – from public relations to cleaning, and from legal services to accountancy.
3. The Council has legal obligations and works within a legislative framework prescribed by central government. It is the responsibility of the Council to manage, plan and deliver the services to the highest standards possible and in doing so to protect and advance the welfare of those living or working within the Council's jurisdiction. It is within this context that the review of business continuity was considered.

### **What is business continuity?**

4. Business continuity refers to the plans and actions that aim to ensure that the Council (and/or the Council's partners) can continue to operate and provide services in the event of civil emergencies, loss of central resources / key buildings, computer failures or similar situations of adversity. Business continuity therefore refers to post-event reactions, as well as the pre-event precautions and preventative measures, which serve to limit the severity or occurrence of debilitating scenarios.
5. Business continuity is related to emergency planning, which serves to prepare the Council and the Council's partners for natural and civil disasters, such as floods, major transportation (road/ rail/ air) disruption, heavy snow, civil unrest and even acts of terrorism. Whereas emergency planning deals with the reduction in, or reaction to, circumstances of a 'Force Majeure' nature beyond the complete control of the authority, business continuity relates to the measures taken to ensure the Council is able to operate its core functions as fully as possible should resources become suddenly unavailable.

### **Why business continuity?**

6. At its priority-setting meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2004 the Committee agreed to undertake a review of business continuity planning, looking both at the Council's systems and wider social cohesion issues in the event of

major disasters and / or system breakdown. The Committee chose the topic of business continuity, as it was considered to be of benefit for those who live in, work in and travel through the Borough of Hillingdon by increasing the resilience of the Council and thereby increasing the resilience of the service provision to that community. It was also considered of benefit for other agencies and local authorities, with which the Council works as partners.

7. The Committee had a view to use the report's outputs to drive improvements in the existing arrangements for the local and west London area, thereby contributing positively in ensuring the existence of robust emergency planning and business continuity arrangements in the Borough of Hillingdon and surrounding area. The review sought to identify any areas for improvement in the existing arrangements and present recommendations to the Council's Cabinet to this end.

### **Terms of Reference**

8. The terms of reference, as agreed by the Overview & Scrutiny Coordinating Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2004 are as follows:

*A review of the resilience of the Hillingdon community, in the context of a major incident occurring that affects significantly those who live in, work in and travel through Hillingdon borough.*

### **Focussing the review**

9. The Committee received a thorough briefing (14<sup>th</sup> October 2004) on
  - The issues of business continuity management within the Council,
  - Emergency planning in Hillingdon and across west London, and
  - Management and capabilities of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) equipment used within the Council.
10. The Committee also received an overview of the establishment of the current business continuity plans, following a report from an external consultant. Due to the breadth of the issues and responses planned, the potential size of the review was too large to be meaningfully reviewed within the time constraint set by the Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2004: That the review is to be completed in 3 months, a decision taken in the light of the Committee's commitments regarding budget-setting and service scrutiny and the time required for the second overview topic (due to commence in January 2005).
11. Following further consideration (on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2004) of the key issues raised at the briefing, the Committee commended the current procedures and planning for business continuity and the connected

emergency planning arrangements and requested further information on the specific areas of:

- Officer awareness and training needs for responding to crises or emergencies.
- Options for a yearly update for members on the levels of business continuity planning and any developments.
- Security at the Civic Centre, regarding visitors and entry/exit systems
- The storage of business continuity plans.

12. The Committee considered this further information (on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2004) and agreed the recommendations detailed in the next section.

### Review chronology

<b>Date</b>	<b>Task</b>
2 <sup>nd</sup> September 04	Corporate Services OSC agrees scope and terms of reference
5 <sup>th</sup> October 04	Overview & Scrutiny Coordinating Committee ratifies terms of reference
14 <sup>th</sup> October 04	Corporate Services OSC receives briefing on business continuity and emergency planning
16 <sup>th</sup> November 04 and 2 <sup>nd</sup> December 04	Corporate Services OSC receives further requested information and identifies recommendations to go into the Final Report
13 <sup>th</sup> January 05	Corporate Services OSC signs off Final Report

## Findings and recommendations

13. The Committee received information on the review at three meetings. This section details the recommendations agreed by the Committee, the information considered that informed, and the rationale behind, those recommendations. There are three main sections to this; strategic considerations, which concern the whole Council approach to business continuity; issues relating to the plans for business continuity and emergency planning; and site security at the Civic Centre, mainly concerning identification badges and the visitor system.

### Strategic considerations

14. The Committee commended the work undertaken so far in developing and implementing strategies for business continuity and emergency planning, which had been developed in accordance with legislative responsibilities and following an external consultant's report. On account of the thoroughness of the work undertaken, the Committee decided not to investigate the strategic level planning any further.

#### Recommendation 1

That the work undertaken to date on developing and implementing business continuity and emergency planning arrangements be noted and commended.

15. Rather than focussing in on the departmental plans under the business continuity strategy, the Committee considered the higher level organisational make up. From evidence received the Committee recommends that there should be one central post with responsibility for drawing together the different departmental and location strands of the plans. This post would not, it is envisaged, be a newly created post, but rather constitute responsibilities added on to an existing post in a strategic role. The Committee identified the Chief Executive's Office as being the most suitable department in which such a post could be located.
16. The Committee is concerned that there is currently no single post with overall responsibility for coordinating the whole Council business continuity plans – the current situation of have site managers and officers within each department being responsible for business continuity within their respective domains is not seen as fully joined up. The Committee believes that the identification of a single, central coordinating role (with a suitable deputy to ensure constant coverage of the post) will enhance the Council's resilience.

### **Recommendation 2**

That there should be one central post (and one deputy post) with responsibility for the whole Council coordination of business continuity, linking across the multiple sites owned and operated by the Council and that this post should ideally be located in the Chief Executive's Office or another suitably strategic role.

### **Plans and awareness thereof**

17. Addressing concerns over the secure storage of plans for business continuity and emergency planning, the Committee recommend that secure, fire retardant and water resistant facilities are made available for both on- and off-site storage of plans. This is to ensure that plans are not compromised by the very events they serve to administer.

### **Recommendation 3**

That business continuity and emergency planning plans are stored securely (negating theft, infiltration, or flood / fire damage) in relation to those copies stored within the Council's buildings and those stored off-site.

18. The Committee were informed of, and considered the pros and cons of storing plans on the Council's intranet. Whilst appreciating the need for officers with responsibilities for business continuity to be able to keep aware of their roles, the Committee expressed concerns over storing information of this nature on the intranet in light of the availability and difficulties limiting the viewing of such plans. Therefore, to avoid the potential infiltration of business continuity and emergency planning strategies, the Committee recommends that these plans are not to be stored on the Council's intranet.

### **Recommendation 4**

That business continuity and emergency planning plans are not available to all staff on the intranet.

19. To positively address the levels of awareness of officers' roles in business continuity operations, the Committee recommends incorporating a generic level of awareness into the Corporate Induction Training programme, which all new staff members have to attend. This training already covers issues such as health and safety, equalities and customer care and it is considered that a basic understanding of

business continuity could be incorporated without too much displacement of current topics.

**Recommendation 5**

That a basic level of awareness for all officers is incorporated into the Corporate Induction Programme training

20. To develop this further, beyond a basic, generic awareness training at the commencement of a Council employee's post, the Committee recommend that those officers with key roles or corporate responsibilities for business continuity across the Council's departments are to be reminded of those responsibilities on a six monthly basis, coinciding with the regular updating of contact lists within the business continuity plans.

**Recommendation 6**

That when the business continuity plans are updated (currently every six months) those officers with a corporate responsibility for business continuity are to be reminded of their roles and responsibilities.

21. The business continuity plans are updated every six months to ensure that contact lists are accurate, both in terms of the responsibilities held by officers within departments and to take into account officers who leave the employ of the Council. To serve as a further measure protecting the accuracy of contact lists and distribution of corporate business continuity responsibilities, the Committee recommends that these responsibilities should be placed on the officers' Personnel records, so that once an officer with such responsibilities tenders their notice, the potential loss to the business continuity staff framework is flagged up. This will enable the relevant service department to identify a (either temporary or permanent) suitable substitute, thus ensuring continuity.

**Recommendation 7**

That business continuity and emergency planning responsibilities are placed on personnel records and flagged up when officers with such responsibilities decide to leave the employ of the Council



## Visitors' and staffs' passes – Civic Centre security

22. The Committee raised concerns about the current visitors' pass system, which should operate as follows.
- (i) Visitor reports to main reception.
  - (ii) Main reception provides the visitor with a laminated card identity badge and ushers the visitor to the Touchdown Zone.
  - (iii) Main reception phones the relevant officer whom the visitor is there to see.
  - (iv) Officer collects the visitor from the Touchdown Zone and escorts the visitor to the meeting room.
  - (v) At the end of the meeting the officer escorts the visitor back to the Touchdown Zone / reception and the visitor returns their identity badge to reception / security.
23. The Committee is aware that many visitors do not return the identity badges and that there is no system for signing out, thus an accurate audit of who is in the building at any one time is impossible. This has implications for fire safety and the full evacuation of all those within the Civic Centre. It also has safety implications in that once a visitor has an identity badge, they can move around the building unimpeded. The Committee recognises that there are a few doors operated on the electronic chip within staff passes, which the visitor pass lacks. However there is the ever-present potential for visitors or non-Council workers to 'tail gate' officers and thus gain entry to all areas.
24. The Committee also raised concerns about the distribution of visitor passes to members of the public attending Council / Committee meetings, or other meetings open to the public that take place in the Civic Centre. It is possible for members of the public with visitor passes to then access the vast majority of working areas within the Civic Centre, posing potential problems for the personal security of officers and the safe storage of confidential information.
25. The ability of visitors and members of the public attending public meetings to exit the Civic Centre from a variety of points often results in a low level of return of the visitor identity badges, again raising implications for fire safety and security. The Committee noted the use of the Members' car park as public parking facility by those attending public meetings. Whilst the Committee noted the need to encourage members of the public to attend meetings and enhance the current levels of local democratic activity, the Committee recommended that the security implications, of members of the public being able to access the building through the car park, instead of via the main reception should be examined.
26. The Committee was informed that there is currently a review of the visitor pass system underway and recommends that the issues outlined above be incorporated into that review as necessary factors in

extending the security of the Civic Centre building for those who work in it.

### **Recommendation 8**

The Committee welcomes the reported review of the visitor pass system and supports the development of greater security in this system, especially regarding visitors to, and contractors working within, the Civic Centre. The Committee requests that this review is reported back to the Committee at the appropriate time.

27. In addition to the aforementioned low level of return of visitor identity badges, the Committee notes with great concern the reported low level of return of staff identification passes from officers leaving the employ of the Council. The consequential security risks apply not only to ex-employees gaining access to areas within the Civic Centre building, but also the misuse of the identity pass in the public arena, especially among outreach services in the community.
28. The Committee recommends that the current review of the Civic Centre site security and pass system gives due detailed consideration to the possibility of updating the staff identity pass so that expiry dates can be added, ensuring regular updating or auditing of passes. To improve the rates of return of staff identification passes the Committee recommends that the review of site security also considers options for reminding managers that staff passes are to be collected at the exit interview.
29. In recognition of the use of temporary staff within the Civic Centre, and the higher turnover associated with temporary staff, the Committee recommends that options for introducing easily distinguishable passes for temporary staff be considered, including a clearly labelled expiry date. This will allow for accuracy when the length of the contract the staff member is on is known. When temporary staff are employed on an ongoing contract, longer expiry dates could be used to ensure some level of reviewing the passes and thus improving security.

### **Recommendation 9**

That the following be considered in the current review of the Civic Centre site security (visitor pass system);

- a. Public access to the Members' Car Park and subsequent entry / exit points between the Members' Car Park and the Civic Centre at all times of day and evening.
- b. The options for placing an expiry date on staff passes
- c. Methods for improving the return of staff passes when staff leave the employ of the Council
- d. Distinguishable passes for temporary members of staff which clearly identify the term of service.

## **Closing word**

30. The Committee hope that this review and final report address the topic of business continuity and the Council's needs in relation to ensuring that a high level of resilience is achieved and maintained by the Council's services. The Committee hereby commend this report to the Cabinet for consideration of the recommendations contained.

## **Acknowledgements**

For their contribution to this review, the Committee thanks;

Steve Smith  
Bryan Joseph  
Helen Cope  
Steve Palmer

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## Business Continuity Review – Recommendation Action Plan

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Action by</b>
1.	That the work undertaken to date on developing and implementing business continuity and emergency planning arrangements be noted and commended.	To give cross party endorsement of the current business continuity planning arrangements	-	-
2.	That there should be one central post with responsibility for the whole Council coordination of business continuity, linking across the multiple sites owned and operated by the Council. This post should ideally be located in the Chief Executive's Office or another suitably strategic role.	To establish a single coordinating role to link up the various responsibilities currently held in different locations and departments	Identify suitable post to take on this responsibility and add into job description.	Chief Executive, Head of Personnel
3.	That business continuity and emergency planning plans are stored securely (negating theft, infiltration, or flood / fire damage) in relation to those copies stored within the Council's buildings and those stored off-site.	To ensure security of hard and soft copies of plans, thereby protecting the information contained from being compromised.	Inspect current storage of plans and take suitable measures to ensure security.	Head of Facilities
4.	That business continuity and emergency planning plans are not available to all staff on the intranet.	To protect the information contained within the plans from misuse.	Review locations of electronic copies of plans. Take action if they are too widely accessible.	Holders of Business Continuity & Emergency Planning plans, Head of ICT
5.	That a basic level of awareness for all officers is incorporated into the Corporate	To raise awareness of generic business continuity issues in all	Integrate into current Corporate Induction	Head of Training & Development

## Business Continuity Review – Recommendation Action Plan

	Induction Programme training	new staff.	Programme an awareness of business continuity duties.	
6.	That when the business continuity plans are updated (currently every six months) those officers with a corporate responsibility for business continuity are reminded of their roles and responsibilities.	To maintain awareness of business continuity responsibilities among key officers.	Email reminder sent out to key personnel following each update of business continuity plans.	Central coordination post (Rec. 2).
7.	That business continuity and emergency planning responsibilities are placed on personnel records and flagged up when officers with such responsibilities decide to leave the employ of the Council.	To ensure that business continuity responsibilities are acknowledged as part of employees' roles and to ensure retention of these responsibilities in spite of staff turnover.	That details of the responsibilities under business continuity plans are placed in the individual files of employees. And identification of responsibilities are built into the Exit Interview process.	All managers, Head of Personnel
8.	The Committee welcomes the reported review of the visitor pass system and supports the development of greater security in this system, especially regarding visitors to, and contractors working within, the Civic Centre.	To give cross-party support to the review	-	-

## Business Continuity Review – Recommendation Action Plan

9.	<p>That the following be considered in the current review of the Civic Centre site security (visitor pass system);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Public access to the Members' Car Park and subsequent entry / exit points between the Members' Car Park and the Civic Centre at all times of day and evening.</li> <li>b. The options for placing an expiry date on staff passes</li> <li>c. Methods for improving the return of staff passes when staff leave the employ of the Council</li> <li>d. Distinguishable passes for temporary members of staff which clearly identify the term of service.</li> </ul>	<p>To assist the review of Civic Centre site security regarding the visitor and staff pass system.</p>	<p>These recommendations to be included in the considerations of the review and the review to be reported back to the Committee.</p>	<p>Facilities Management Team.</p>
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