1. Summary

Business continuity management is about having in place arrangements to ensure that this Council can continue to provide essential services in the event of major disruption. Examples of disruption could include loss of premises through fire or flood; loss of systems through some widespread computer or communications failure; or unavailability of staff due to epidemic disease or fuel shortage.

The Council has a 'Business Recovery Plan' which is limited in scope and is currently being re-written as a corporate business continuity plan. The purpose of this report is to propose a route towards effective business continuity arrangements, and more specifically to get approval for a list of 'critical services'.

An outline plan for achieving a more resilient organisation, as part of a wider piece of work covering risk management arrangements as well, is attached (**Appendix A**). This will be implemented and managed by Sue Morrell, the Interim Risk and Business Continuity Manager. It is suggested that oversight of the process continues to be through a cross-departmental Business Continuity Group (BCG), reporting directly to Management Board – Terms of reference attached (**Appendix B**).

As an early task, the BCG has prepared a list of critical functions, also attached (**Appendix C**). These are the functions which must be kept going or rapidly reinstated, at least in part, in the event of any disruption. During 2007 self-analysis has been done by departments, moderated by the BCG, based on the potential risk to life and limb, vulnerable people, financial or other resources and reputation of an interruption to service. It does not necessarily reflect the longer term or strategic <u>importance</u> of functions.

If accepted, this list will form the basis for prioritising development of individual services' continuity plans. It will also be used in allocating scarce resources; board members will recall the preparations made for the potential fuel shortages which required this kind of analysis. Subsequent changes to service areas and activities will require each department to reconsider their critical functions before developing Business Continuity Plans

2. Impact

On services
- This approach should result in the Council being confident that it can maintain critical services in the event of major disruption.   - It may require the creation or modification of systems to provide resilience in higher risk areas.   - The effect on customers will be a principal consideration, especially customers who are vulnerable or specially reliant on reliable council services.

On policy

- Part of business continuity planning concerns prioritising services in abnormal conditions. The process outlined here will lead to a clear policy on those potentially contentious decisions.

On improvement

- Having effective business continuity arrangements will demonstrate that this Council is in control of planning for its services and has considered its citizens' needs.

In terms of resources (finance, HR, Legal and risk)

- The key costs involved at this stage relate to the time and commitment required from Managers to develop their Business Continuity Plans. As individual services consider their continuity plans, costs are likely to emerge in setting up back-up systems.
- There are clear opportunities for greater efficiency and effectiveness through working with other authorities on the principle of 'mutual aid' – these arrangements need where possible to be agreed in advance of any incident.
- Prioritising services may create negative feelings among staff in the lower priority areas. This could become acute if, for example, we needed to prioritise who received anti-viral medicines in the event of an epidemic.

Risks:

- Lack of effective planning opens the Council and its citizens to a variety of significant risks, from loss of income or reputational damage to loss of life.
- The risk of discontent among staff in prioritising services has already been mentioned.
- As the Council makes further efficiencies to ensure a balanced budget, so its inherent resilience declines simply because there is less 'slack' to absorb unexpected demands. This makes clear planning all the more vital.

On reputation

- The Council's reputation will suffer if it fails to deliver basic essential services, particularly if it can be argued that this failure stems from inadequate planning or disregard of known risks.

3. Impact of taking no action now

- Our plans are already out of date. The risk of an incident for which we are inadequately prepared will increase over time.
- Some departments (housing, ICT) have already developed their own plans. This is positive, but we need to ensure that they are consistent and recognise corporate as well as service priorities.

date

- Internal audit have in the past looked at continuity arrangements, as has the Government Regional Office through the Northamptonshire Resilience Forum. External inspection is likely to continue showing interest in this area.

4. Recommendations

Management Board is recommended to
- Endorse the approach set out in Appendix A;
- Approve the critical functions list at Appendix C;
- Request a further report on progress before the end of June 2009.

Contact officers: Thomas Hall, Head of Policy and Community Engagement, ext. 7593
                        Sue Morrell, Interim Risk and Business Continuity Manager, ext. 8420

date

Appendix B

Northampton Borough Council - Business Continuity Group (NBC BCG)
Terms of Reference

Introduction
The Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004 established a new framework for emergency planning at the local level. The Act contains requirements for local authorities, as Category 1 Responders, to put in place internal Business Continuity Management (BCM) arrangements by May 2006. The Act further requires Local Authorities to promote business continuity to local businesses in their area.

Aim
To enable the Council to discharge its duties under the CCA relating to business continuity:

- Put in place Business Continuity Management arrangements
- Assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning
- Share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination
- Co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency
- Provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management.

To enable departments to work together on business continuity projects and to share best practice and lessons learned.

Objectives/Responsibilities
- To lead, support and advise Managers and staff to ensure that the Council;
  - Has taken reasonable steps to reduce the likelihood and impact of foreseeable causes of disruption to the Council's critical functions
  - Has formal and robust plans in place to continue and recover critical functions in the event of any incident which threatens their continuity
  - Monitors, tests and improves the readiness of the Council to respond to any incident that threatens continuity of critical functions

- To provide a vehicle through which NBC can give focus to its Business Continuity responsibilities
  - To provide guidance and recommend action to Management Board on Business Continuity matters

- o To provide assurance to Management Board on the state of readiness of the Council
- To support the promotion of awareness of business continuity management to the commercial and voluntary sectors within the Northampton Borough in order to reduce the social and economic impact of emergencies

Structure and Management

The Head of Policy and Engagement will chair NBC BCG meetings.

The Risk and Business Continuity Manager will represent the interests of the NBC BCG at Management Board and the Northamptonshire Resilience Forum Business Continuity Group (NRFBCG) meetings.

The Risk and Business Continuity Manager is responsible for
- Compiling and presenting reports to Management Board and the NRFBCG on business continuity related matters
- Providing feedback to the BCG on Management Board and NRFBCG discussions as they relate to business continuity
- Approval of minutes and agenda prior to circulation (formal sign off of minutes rests with the Chair at the following meeting)

Minutes will be issued within 2 weeks of the meeting to which they relate. Agendas and papers will be distributed at least 1 week before the meeting to which they relate. It is the responsibility of individual group members to request the addition of agenda items and provide supporting papers.

Frequency of Meetings

The frequency of meetings will be determined by the group, but will not be less than four times a year.

Membership

The Northampton Borough Council Business Continuity Group (NBCBCG) is a cross-departmental group.

- Head of Service
- Emergency Planning Officer
- Risk Management and Business Continuity Manager
- IT Services Representative
- Human Resources Representative
- Neighbourhood and Environmental Services Representative
- Housing Services Representative
- Asset Management Representative

date