

GAS Committee Scrutiny Programme 2017/18
Business Continuity

1. Introduction

The Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee was requested by the Humberside Fire Authority, at the meeting of 18 September 2017, to review Business Continuity Management [BCM] arrangements within the Fire Service.

2. Aims and Objectives

The overall objective was to provide assurance with respect to the design and operation of the Service's BCM arrangements and that they are in place across the organisation.

3. Headline Questions and Findings

- 3.1** How does HFRS comply with its duty under the CCA 2004 in relation to BCM arrangements?
and
- 3.2** How are the arrangements, policies and procedures communicated and are they known, understood by relevant staff across the organisation?

A specialist team reporting into the Director of Emergency Response undertakes education and training events across the Service. Critical Functions are identified and there are Plans ready to be initiated should one of a list of major Generic Disruptors occur, such as Severe Weather or a Pandemic, or Specific Disruptors within Critical Functions such as IT.

- 3.3** Are the arrangements tested and results recorded in relation to risk?

Department Heads and Deputies are responsible for ensuring plans are reviewed, tested and exercised once per annum.

- 3.4** Are associated activities adequately resourced in relation to risk?

Any BC incident which escalates would initiate the forming of the Business Interruption Management Team which is made up of the CMT and All Department Heads.

Findings of the Review

In order to better understand the detail albeit on a 'light touch' basis, and following a number of extremely helpful and informative meetings with Officers Sellers and Hunt, we reviewed a number of reports on incidents that had arisen during recent history. It was reassuring that the reports were thorough and difficulties honestly and transparently addressed.

What is clear is that whilst Plans are in place, experience of enacting Plans when required could be improved – in a sense what is required is a move from 'Conscious Competence' to 'Unconscious Competence'.

The culture around BCM needs both to be further encouraged, and further embedded, into everyday behaviour in the same way as the Service encourages reporting of 'Near Miss' events whilst focussing on Safety.

Unfortunately, our planned attendance to witness a Control Room Relocation, a critical capability should a major incident impact HQ, was cancelled at very short notice, and out of hours [Wednesday 14/3 evening] ahead of a 07.30am start at Control on 15/3. At the time the reason given was that of priority, foremost, work relating to HMI. Other factors were offered as further reasons for cancellation until it was confirmed on Wednesday 21st March that a water leak at ***** was the issue, contrary to initial reports.

It could be argued that had Control required Relocation 'for real', and ***** was indisposed at the time, a separate Plan should have been in place to allow a successful Relocation to restore service. The reasoning behind BCM is surely to 'expect the unexpected'.

Had GAS witnessed that series of events, our assurance may well have been higher.

Due to the agreed submission date of this report, a GAS visit to witness a routine Control Relocation has yet to take place and it is our intention to issue an addendum to this report in due course.

3.5 Can the HFA be assured by the HFRS BCM arrangements?

Subject to the Recommendations below being accepted and enacted, our conclusion is that HFA can be assured that in principle HFRS is meeting its statutory obligations albeit it is working towards a higher level of competence.

4. Recommendations

We recommend:

1. That priority is given to ensuring that 'e-learning' tools are made available to all teams ahead of HMICFRS visits planned for later in 2018;
2. That the BCM Team is empowered to ensure robust BC exercises are built into departmental routines across all Service locations and ensure lessons that are learnt are shared across the Service as seen fit;
3. That the frequency of BCM exercises across the Service is increased from one per annum;
4. That GAS issue a supplementary addendum to this report following attendance at a rescheduled Control Relocation exercise following the difficulties experienced and reported above;
5. That the BCM Team build a Structured Control Relocation Exercise Schedule for the forthcoming year;
6. That one of the above Exercises is run on the basis that the first fall back location is found to be out of action on arrival;
7. That the BCM Team reports annually to GAS on BCM to provide ongoing assurance that the organisation's approach to BCM remains robust;
8. That BC Plans, informed by Business Impact Analyses, become 'living documents' and are immediately accessible for use in all departments.

J A Doyle
26th March 2018

