

**Report of Councillor Paul Harrison to
Audit and Corporate Governance Committee, 25 March 2009
ICT Business Continuity Plan**

At the Audit and Corporate Government Committee meeting on 22nd January 2009 it was decided that one of the members would review one of the “Continuity of Business Plans” for one of the business units to see how well this integrated with the Crisis Management Plan. It was not the objective to produce a list of recommendations but to determine if the business unit’s continuity plan fitted in with the corporate level Crisis Management Plan. However, I have added a few observations which may be worth consideration.

Because of my background in IT I decided to review the ICT Business Continuity Plan. The documents I reviewed were:-

- The ICT Disaster Recovery Plan
- The ICT Business Continuity Plan
- The Internal Audit follow-up report
- The Crisis Management Plan

I also had informal interviews with Penny O’Callaghan, Geoff Bushell and Simon Turner.

Although there was a query about the ICT Business Continuity Plan’s date as the cover said updated on 21st October 2008 the date within the rest of the document said 7th July 2006 the document was consistent with the Strategic Crisis Management plan and all the business objectives relating to ICT were covered. The query relating to the dates of the documents is to be addressed during the review of business continuity plan in April.

The Internal Audit’s follow-up report on the ICT Business Continuity plan published on the 5th December 2008 highlighted a need for an improved backup procedure which is now in place with a Wallingford based company. The ICT team are also backing up data onto the servers at the Vale’s council offices in Abingdon. Electronic copies of all business continuity plans are held on a Google mail account, allowing access from any pc without relying on the council’s network.

Because of the changes in senior personal in recent months a number of the contacts within the document will need to be updated. The business continuity plan is to be updated in April to reflect the new management structure.

I did note that the plan specified that for days 1 & 2 of the recovery only the server and desktop ICT staff were required and no application staff would be needed. This is probably as all the applications to be recovered on days 1 & 2 are packages however I felt that this may be a false economy as many unexpected events can occur.

There is a comprehensive ICT Disaster Recovery Plan dated 11th November 2008 which was compiled with the help of their Newbury based disaster recovery

company. This is a working document which has been developed to be followed at the time of invocation of the disaster recovery plan. As well as providing a server environment, the Disaster recovery site also has work stations for 40 members of staff.

Only three members of staff can invoke the disaster recovery procedure:-

- Andrew Down (Head of Service)
- Simon Turner (ICT support Manager)
- Jon Dillon (Senior IT support Officer)

I felt that this should be extended to include the Chief Executive and possibly one of the other members of the Strategic Crisis team.

One of the applications to be restored was the "site contact application" which supplied the contact details. I could not determine if this application contained relevant emergency contact details which would still be relevant during an emergency.

The ICT are expected to go through a large amount of change since the linking of the SODC with the Vale district council. One opportunity is the use of the other district council site as the backup site. However, to do this within the ICT function will need a large amount of common infrastructure which will take time to setup and political agreement between the two councils to potentially remove services from one council to provide the critical services of the other council.

The current Disaster Recovery contract ends in March 2009. Although it would be possible to use the other district council's office and Oxfordshire County Council facilities as a disaster site there is no defined and documented plan to use these services. Although I believe this would be possible in the future I feel there are too many changes to be made prior to starting in the new contract.

One option worth considering is to use the current disaster recovery company for both SODC and the Vale and split the cost between the two councils. Currently only SODC have a disaster recovery site. The current contract includes 40 workstations. As it is very unlikely event to loss both district council offices at the same time we would not require any extra capacity from the backup company. The one risk which could impact both councils would be flooding of the Thames but to be severe enough to impact both councils would take sometime and other contingency options could be made if such a risk appeared to be imminent. A review of both councils' business continuity plans and arrangements is to be undertaken in April and this is an area that is to be included within the review.

With all IT based systems it is very difficult to determine whether the disaster recovery procedure will actually work on the day. They are definitely comprehensive and appear to cover all the bases but as they are critical to the majority of the other services the council offer I feel that this is one area of business which does need to be tested fully and not just as a paper based exercise. The April review will include testing arrangements with costs and benefits considered.