

Review of our response to the Crowmarsh fire 15 January 2015

**SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE AND VALE OF WHITE HORSE
DISTRICT COUNCILS**

September 2015

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MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report details the findings from a review that has been conducted by the audit manager on the councils' response to the Crowmarsh Gifford fire which occurred on 15 January 2015. The review included benchmarking the business continuity management arrangements the councils had in place at the time of the fire against best practice requirements (ISO22301 and BS25999-2), how those arrangements linked with the councils' emergency plan and disaster recovery plan, and the effectiveness of our actual response to the Crowmarsh Gifford fire.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In the early hours of 15 January 2015, a member of the public drove a car full of gas canisters through the locked glass doors of the councils' Crowmarsh Gifford building and set fire to it. The fire ripped through the offices, gutting the building and caused major disruption to our operations. The councils' business continuity, IT disaster recovery and emergency plans were invoked.
- 2.2 The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 defines the essential aspects of emergency preparedness as risk assessment, emergency planning, business continuity management (BCM) and arrangements to warn and inform the public. To embed BCM within an organisation means to:
1. understand the organisation
 2. determine the BCM strategy
 3. develop and implement the BCM response; and
 4. test, maintain and review.

3. TIMELINE

- 3.1 Through discussion with officers who initially responded to the Crowmarsh fire and heads of service, the following response timeline was established:

Day one – Thursday 15 January

2:30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire alarm triggered. • Security monitoring centre notified Oxford Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) and our facilities management team.
3am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities management arrive on site at the scene of the fire at Crowmarsh. • They identify that the network connections have been destroyed, both websites are down, e-mail systems are down, half the councils' phone lines are down and back office IT systems are down.
3:30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business continuity plans, disaster recovery plan and emergency plan are invoked and a manual call cascade to staff begins.
5am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT collect their 'Battle Box'.
6am – 8am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis management team (CMT) and housing needs emergency team formed in a small corner of Abbey House,

	<p>Abingdon – the Vale’s former HQ, now a satellite office and mainly occupied by Oxfordshire County Council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions held with David Buckle, chief executive who was out of the country on annual leave. An assessment was made that his immediate return was not necessary, Steve Bishop, strategic director acting chief executive. • Emergency out of hours arrangements extended. • OFRS and Thames Valley Police (TVP) providing continual updates. • Vehicle access to Abbey House restricted and TVP provide police presence at the building as a precaution. • What were we saying - <i>There has been a major fire at our offices – most of our services will be affected</i> – via Twitter, Oxfordshire County Council website, over the phone to main local press contacts. • South phone lines diverted to Vale numbers.
8:30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First crisis management team meeting takes place, and happens every two hours from then onwards on day one. • IT collect their backup tapes. • Phones lines up and running in Abbey House.
From 9am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insurers contacted. • Heads of service contacted to confirm that all staff are accounted for; identify which services were unaffected by the incident; confirm their critical activity requirements; and confirm the location of critical documents on site at Crowmarsh. • Structural engineer contractor and insurer’s surveyor visit Crowmarsh for initial damage assessment. • Emergency financial arrangements are established. • Emergency rest centres opened in Rokemarsh and Crowmarsh where other fires meant residents had to be evacuated.
9:50am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TVP notify us that the suspect is in custody.
10am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications launch temporary website using WordPress: includes regular updates and contact details – communicated to the public via press/media, social media and partner websites. • What were we saying - <i>Please only contact us if you have a genuine emergency - services unaffected include waste collections, leisure centres and benefits payments</i> – via temporary website, Twitter and local press.
11am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT disaster recovery contractors deliver replacement IT hardware to Abbey House.
From 1pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet up and running at Abbey House. • Critical activities and resource requirements identified.
3pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CMT meet with OFRS and TVP.
Evening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny committee meeting held as scheduled.

3.2 Day two – Friday 16 January

AM:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were we saying - <i>Some services are now back up and running – please bear with us</i> – via temporary website, Twitter and local press. • All royal mail post re-directed to Abbey House. • Full restore of council IT systems underway. • Legal services make a previously scheduled court appearance, with the assistance of TVP to rebuild the relevant case file. • Insurers and loss adjusters on site at Crowmarsh, followed by their first full meeting with CMT. • Signs put up on site at Crowmarsh to explain what's happened to the public, and to keep people out of the building. • Staff hold ad hoc meetings in homes and cafes. • Democratic Services agree new venues for all future council committee meetings. • Food and safety inspectors start carrying out site inspections again, and building control also able to offer limited site inspections. • Communications start providing councillors with regular and detailed email updates. • Seating plan and rota for critical activities confirmed for week 1.
PM:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website traffic redirected to the temporary website. • Staff set up private Facebook group. • Websites ready to be relaunched pending a review and update of the content. • Our building control team takes over assessment of the Crowmarsh site from the contractor and an in-depth structural damage assessment takes place. • Security put in place on site at Crowmarsh. • Mass text message to staff which included a link to a more detailed update using google docs – link is also posted onto private staff Facebook group. • Housing needs team running a full service. • CMT meeting to confirm arrangements for the weekend response and week 1.

3.3 The weekend

Saturday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand new Office 365 e-mail system launched. All staff have access to email from anywhere. • Our Planning Policy team secures extra office space for 16 officers from a client/customer of theirs. • Building control provide an initial structural report to CMT and insurers.
Sunday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old email system available for staff to access archived emails and documents. • All staff able to begin working remotely on existing projects and responding to customer enquiries.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Websites relaunched with content fully updated to reflect affected service levels and new contact details. • What were we saying - <i>Our websites are now working again, although one or two services, like making online applications aren't fully operational yet</i> - via temporary website, Twitter and local press. • Most applications up and running for staff to use. • Ocella available but not fully functional. • CMT meeting takes place. Handover to David Buckle, Chief Executive.
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3.4 Week one

First half	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First staff briefing takes place in the Guildhall – a public building in Abingdon. • Payments and purchase order system online. • All staff get paid as normal on payday. • IT restore all back-up data. • All systems including Ocella is fully functional. • What were we saying - <i>You can now view and comment on planning applications online – we've extended the deadline to make comments. We have a two week delay on deciding planning applications – please only submit urgent applications</i> - via temporary website, Twitter and local press. • A total of 83 desks equipped with IT equipment up and running in Abbey House – every team has access to office desk space. • All front line services running at least a limited service. • Planning policy team running full service. • Our search for new temporary accommodation gets underway. • Audit and corporate governance committee meetings take place. • Salvage crews arrive on site and begin retrieving critical documents.
Second half	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half of our new IT desktop equipment (expected in March) gets delivered. • What were we saying - <i>As so many of our services are now up and running, it's easier to say what isn't working, rather than what is...</i> - via temporary website, Twitter and local press. • Licensing reach an agreement with TVP that taxi licence holders can be issued with temporary licences that would be valid until they can replace the licence plate equipment. • IT restore remote network access, meaning every member of staff can work to full capacity no matter where they're based.
Weekend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT equip even more desks at Abbey House, which Oxfordshire County Council gave up for us to use.

3.5 Week two and beyond

Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were we saying - <i>It's nearly business as usual here – but it might take us a little longer than normal to deal with your enquiry</i> – via websites, Twitter and local press. • New IT desktop system up and running on the new equipment, meaning more staff can have full access to our IT applications. • 171 desks in Abbey House have now been equipped by IT and every team has good access to desk space. • We agree a shortlist of temporary accommodation options and begin negotiations with prospective future landlords. • The full salvage operation gets underway.
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A further 26 desks equipped with IT equipment up and running in our Old Abbey House building next to Abbey House.
w/c 9 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree a deal with a serviced office provider for 85 desks in a building on Oxford Science Park. IT install network access into the building and set up PCs and around 70 telephones.
24 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange contracts for 135 Milton Park.
w/c 25 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development and Housing move into Milton Park.
w/c 15 June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR, IT and Technical Services; Finance; Corporate Strategy and Economy, Leisure and Property move into Milton Park.
w/c 22 June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal and Democratic and Customer Services move into Milton Park.
29 June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We open for business at 135 Milton Park.
14 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official grand opening of 135 Milton Park.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

4.1 Assessment of risk and identification of key services

Through a review of the business continuity arrangements the councils had in place prior to the fire, it was identified that an assessment of the risk of potential threats had not been undertaken across all service areas, and therefore what impact to business operations those threats, if realised, might cause. Similarly a structured assessment of key services, activities, functions, partnerships, supply chains and relationships with interested parties had not been undertaken to inform contingency planning.

(Recommendations 1 and 2)

4.2 Business continuity strategy

A joint business continuity strategy is in place which covers the period 2013-2016. Since the strategy was written, responsibility for business continuity has transferred to the audit manager. During the next review, accountability and resources to deliver the business continuity management arrangements need to be clearly defined.

(Recommendation 3)

4.3 **Crisis management plan and service business continuity plans**

At the time of the Crowmarsh fire a crisis management plan and service area business continuity plans were in place, but it was quickly acknowledged by Steve Bishop, strategic director, Andrew Down, head of HR, IT and technical services and Adrianna Partridge, audit manager that they were out of date and of limited use. Whilst they included prompts to address key considerations for a business continuity response, they were very limited in detail on how to deliver an actual business continuity response. At the time of the fire, the audit manager was in the process of reviewing the councils' arrangements against a best practice framework and that framework was utilised to respond to the incident.

4.4 To inform the review of the councils' response to and recovery from the Crowmarsh fire a full public consultation was undertaken which began on 30 March 2015 and lasted for a period of five weeks. A summary of the responses is attached as appendix 1. Interviews were also held with all members of the crisis management team, heads of service and key responders as listed in appendix 2.

4.5 The key tasks the councils delivered during the response and recovery phase, and observations of lessons learnt from officers interviewed and feedback from the public consultation are documented below.

Delivered in first 24 hours

- Councils' fire alarm triggered appropriately, notification of the incident was received promptly, and facilities management were on site within 30 minutes.
- Call cascade process commenced, initial instructions cascaded, all staff were accounted for and appropriate security arrangements implemented.
- The crisis management team and essential teams formed at the crisis management incident centre and were fully operational with defined roles and responsibilities.
- Discussions had been held with David Buckle, chief executive who was out of the country on annual leave, an assessment was made that his immediate return was not necessary and it was clear that Steve Bishop, strategic director was acting chief executive until David Buckle returned.
- Assistance was provided to TVP and OFRS as requested/required, and appropriate contractors were on site at Crowmarsh for initial assessments.
- IT disaster recovery process commenced.
- Key communication messages were delivered on a frequent basis and the councils' temporary website was running.
- All emergency housing needs were met.
- Emergency financial arrangements were implemented.
- Services unaffected continued without disruption.
- Strategic priorities and legal obligations identified and plans were put in place to deliver critical activities.
- Committee meeting went ahead as planned.

4.6 Lessons learnt in first 24 hours

- There was an initial delay between notification of the incident at Crowmarsh from the security company to senior management being contactable due to telephones not being answered.
- The councils' text alert system was reliant on the councils' IT systems which were down. The emergency contact list used for the manual cascade did not capture personal e-mail addresses which would have made initial communications more efficient.
- The key to the safe which held the councils' IT back-up tapes was actually kept on site at Crowmarsh, and was therefore not accessible during the fire.
- The councils' tenants were not listed on the initial call cascade emergency contacts report, and therefore there was a delay in contacting one tenant as they were also not on the partners/suppliers contact list.
- There was a communication service disruption plan in place, but it did not include methods of delivery should a disruption occur to all council systems through which normal communication channels rely upon.
- Some managers did not hold a copy of their business continuity plan at home and were not aware of their roles and responsibilities during an incident.
- Initially, there was not a clear delineation of responsibilities between the two strategic directors.
- It was felt that some time could have been saved by having critical activity requirements and a critical documents list already documented in up to date service area business plans.
- There was a lack of clarity on who was the emergency planning lead between Oxfordshire County Council and SODC/VWHDC, and this may have resulted in resources and knowledge-sharing not being utilised effectively.
- Some heads of service were slow to present communications with a clear picture of what services were and were not available.

4.7 Delivered within 24-48 hours

- Critical activity and seating plan arrangements checked, challenged and confirmed and communicated via heads of service.
- Full restore of council IT systems underway.
- First full meeting was held between the crisis management team, insurers and their appointed loss adjusters.
- Website traffic redirected to temporary website.
- All royal mail post being sent to Crowmarsh was redirected and relevant site signage was erected.
- Structural damage assessments being undertaken at Crowmarsh and site security arrangements implemented.

4.8 Additional lessons learnt within the 24-48 hour period

- Responsibility of the Crowmarsh site needed to be clearer between facilities management and building control.
- There was a slight delay in implementing adequate site access controls and giving guidance to site security officers on building control aspects of the site.

4.9 Delivered over the weekend

- Office 365 e-mail system launched and IT systems start to become available to officers.
- Websites relaunched.
- Initial structural safety report produced.
- Effective handover of response leadership from Steve Bishop, strategic director (acting chief executive) to David Buckle, chief executive.

There were no additional lessons learnt identified from response activity over the weekend.

4.10 Week one

- 83 desk spaces operational and being utilised by critical activities. Staff desk rotas implemented.
- First all staff briefing held.
- All back up data is restored, all IT systems fully functional and remote network access restored.
- Salvage operation at Crowmarsh commences with critical documents retrieved and sent for restoration.
- Search for new temporary accommodation commences.
- Committee meetings held as scheduled.

4.11 Additional lessons learnt from week one

- The council was not sufficiently equipped for home working, and productivity during the response was heavily reliant on officers using their personal IT equipment and mobile phones. However, it was also identified that the majority of the officers that did have work laptops and mobile phones actually left them overnight in the office.
- Health and safety considerations for the initial temporary office accommodation were not considered sufficiently.
- Expectations were not managed appropriately with regards to the salvage operation, and there was a lack of understanding of the process and the cost to restore/clean salvaged items.

4.12 Delivered in week two

- 171 desk spaces operational and being utilised by officers.

There were no additional lessons learnt in week 2.

4.13 Week 3 and beyond

- Elections delivered successfully from Old Abbey House.
- Additional office space for 85 desks procured and networked.
- Back to business programme completed to ensure all service areas return to normal operations efficiently.
- Relocation of all staff to 135 Milton Park.

4.14 Additional general lessons learnt from our response to the incident

- There was a significant feeling amongst officers at all levels that not all service areas focused corporately in responding to the incident, and this resulted in the perception that there was an unfair allocation of accommodation/equipment across service areas which reduced morale in some teams.
- There was a lot of displacement following the fire which was expected,

but it was identified that the level of anxiety and isolation that officers felt was not fully anticipated and therefore managed effectively.

- Expectations were not managed appropriately in terms of how quickly the councils would be able to move to Milton Park.
- There was a lack of consultation on fitting out 135 Milton Park, and the appearance that some service areas had more options than others.
- There was a lack of forecasting of business continuity expenditure.
- There is a need for a corporate clear desk policy, and a move to electronic working practices.

(Recommendations 4, 5 and 8 and lessons learnt 1 – 12 and 15)

4.15 **Incident arrangements**

The accommodation arrangements in place at the time of the fire assumed that the councils' two main sites, Abbey House and Crowmarsh Gifford, were the recovery sites in the event of an incident at either one and would accommodate the crisis management incident centre. From 6am on the first morning, the crisis management team convened at Abbey House. Immediately desks, meeting rooms, IT equipment and stationery and welfare facilities were available, and by 8:30am telephone lines were operational and direct dials were allocated to members of the team and printing and photocopying facilities were available. By 1pm Wi-Fi connection was available within Abbey House. It was identified by officers interviewed, that not all members of the crisis management team had 24 hour access to Abbey House which was needed whilst responding to the incident.

- 4.16 In addition to Abbey House and Old Abbey House, the councils' also utilised accommodation during the recovery phase from Regus at the Oxford Science Park and IBI in Harwell. These facilities had all the necessary welfare requirements for staff and were equipped with the relevant IT equipment for staff. Accommodation arrangements to be utilised in any future incident are now being considered.

(Recommendation 6 and lesson learnt 13)

4.17 **Financial arrangements**

The business continuity arrangements in place at the time of the fire did not include any emergency financial procedures. However, within 48 hours of responding to the incident the councils had taken the necessary action to determine and circulate emergency financial procedures to all relevant officers (which included determining revised authorisation limits linked to officers' business continuity role), and increase the petty cash floats to ensure there were sufficient funds available to respond to the incident. As soon as access was granted to the Crowmarsh site, measures were taken to remove all cash boxes/valuable items that were identified to them to be on site. These were transported to Abbey House and counted, recorded and secured by members of the finance team.

- 4.18 It was identified that initially the councils' corporate credit cards did not have the ability to draw funds, but this was rectified at the commencement of week one in addition to increasing the expenditure limits for the duration

of the response. Within week one, specific business continuity codes were established on the councils' financial system, and all expenditure was and continues to be controlled and monitored by Bob Watson, accountancy manager (technical). It was identified that initially there was a lack of forecasting of business continuity expenditure.

(Recommendation 7 and lesson learnt 14)

4.19 **Co-ordination, information and communication with local responders**

During the incident, immediate and ongoing contact was made with the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Thames Valley Police who were the main blue light responders. John Backley, technical and facilities manager was also in contact with the emergency planning unit at Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and arrangements were made in liaison with the councils' housing needs team to open up rest centres for displaced members of the public. Through discussion with officers interviewed, it was also identified that assistance from OCC was provided to our facilities management, communications and IT operations team.

4.20 However, following the incident it was identified that OCC's emergency planning unit had additional resources available to assist in the overall response to the incident, but at the time this was not known or communicated to the council. There was also a lack of clarity on whether OCC or the councils were leading on the emergency planning response.

(Recommendation 9)

4.21 **Incident co-ordination with the councils' emergency plan**

As stated above, all emergency planning objectives were met during the incident but it was identified that future arrangements need to be clarified and co-ordinated with local responders to ensure that all available and appropriate resources are being committed to the response. Specific feedback received from the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) was that they would have benefited from having an officer on site that could direct them to critical documents and/or equipment that they may have reached and extracted whilst the fire was ongoing. It was confirmed with (OFRS) that this request was not actually made to the council during their response to the fire.

(Recommendations 10 - 12 and lesson learnt 16)

4.22 **Incident co-ordination with the councils' disaster recovery plan**

Through an assessment of the IT recovery timeframe documented within the councils' disaster recovery plan, it was confirmed that the disaster recovery objectives were met. It was acknowledged by Simon Turner, IT operations manager that some unforeseen technical difficulties were experienced through the response process, but whilst the solution was being derived the next recovery action was progressed.

4.23 From the consultation process and interviews with the relevant officers, it was identified that there was a lack of awareness of how long an IT

disaster recovery process would take and officer expectations were not managed appropriately. It has been noted following the response to the incident, that there is a natural order to a disaster recovery process and this sometimes does not align with council and officer priorities. In addition, any organisation's business continuity and disaster recovery response is in some areas reliant on external supply chains and delivery periods cannot be determined prior to an incident.

(Recommendations 13)

4.24 Testing arrangements and training

Prior to the incident, there was a testing schedule in place for the business continuity and emergency planning arrangements but it was not being adhered to. The IT disaster recovery plan was tested on an annual basis, however it was identified that a review process is not always undertaken and one has not yet been undertaken for the response to the Crowmarsh fire. Following discussion with relevant officers, it was clear that there had been a lack of training in this area.

(Recommendation 14 and 19)

4.25 Co-ordination, information and communication with tenants, partners and suppliers

As stated above, lessons learnt have been identified for co-ordinating and communicating with tenants, partners and suppliers during a response to an incident. Notwithstanding those, all officers interviewed commented that the councils' tenants, partners and suppliers all contributed significantly to the business continuity response, from providing additional supplies and resources at short notice to temporary accommodation during the recovery phase.

(Recommendation 17)

4.26 Advice, assistance and promotion of business continuity management

The councils have a duty in accordance with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to make information available to the public about civil protection matters, provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations and to adequately promote business continuity management. Prior to the incident this was not undertaken effectively, but steps have already been taken by the councils to share widely the lessons learnt from the response to the Crowmarsh fire.

(Recommendations 15,16 and18)

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The threat of a member of the public driving a car full of gas canisters through the locked glass doors of the councils' building, and starting a fire which would gut the whole building could never have been fully anticipated and prepared for by the councils. It was acknowledged by senior management on the first morning of the incident, that the business continuity arrangements in place were weak and would be of limited use in responding to the fire. Nevertheless, feedback from the consultation report, officers, local responders, tenants, partners and suppliers all indicate that the councils' response to the incident was structured, co-ordinated and efficient, and all efforts were made to minimise disruption to the delivery of services to members of the public. However, a number of recommendations and lessons learnt have been identified to assist in improving the councils' business continuity arrangements and resilience to future incidents. These have been agreed and will be implemented by management and the councils' lessons learnt will be shared with other organisations to assist them in assessing their business continuity arrangements.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1 The audit manager would like to take this opportunity to thank all staff involved for their assistance with the review.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The audit manager has made a number of recommendations and has documented specific lessons learnt from the councils' response to the Crowmarsh Gifford fire to assist in improving the business continuity, disaster recovery and emergency planning arrangements within the councils.

Recommendation 1 – Assessment of risk

Each service area should undertake an exercise to assess the risk of potential threats occurring and the impact to business operations those threats, if realised, might cause. This information should be used by service areas to inform their contingency planning, and published on the councils' websites in accordance with the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Recommendation 2 – Identification of key services

a) Each service area should list their key services, activities, functions, partnerships, supply chains and relationships with interested parties, and then for each one assess the likelihood and impact of disruption on service delivery and customers.

b) From the key services assessment, each service area should identify their critical activities, the risk to these critical activities and the resources that are required to deliver the activities in the event of an incident.

c) Each service area should identify the critical information/documents that need to be maintained and accessible in the event of an incident.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Recommendation 3 – Business continuity strategy

The business continuity strategy should be reviewed and updated to ensure that it clearly defines the scope, aims and objectives of business continuity management arrangements across both councils. Accountability and resources to deliver the strategy should be clearly defined and approved by the audit and governance committee.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 31 March 2016

Recommendation 4 – Crisis management plan

The crisis management plan should be reviewed and updated to ensure that it clearly defines the scope, aims and objectives of managing a response to an incident. Service requirements should be assessed, prioritised and agreed by senior management within the plan, and accountability, resources and relevant contacts to deliver the response should be clearly defined and record maintenance requirements documented.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Recommendation 5 – Communications plan

A comprehensive communications plan should be implemented which covers alternative methods of communications delivery should normal channels be disrupted, target audiences and contact information, key messages objectives and templates to collate/disseminate required information.

Responsible officer: Shona Ware, Communications Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Recommendation 6 – Temporary accommodation arrangements

Suitable temporary accommodation arrangements need to be identified should any of the council offices not be available due to an incident. The arrangements should include the provision of an incident room and sufficient accommodation for agreed critical activities and staff. Necessary supplies, equipment and welfare requirements should be identified and sourced. The relevant officers should be notified of the arrangements.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 31 March 2016

Recommendation 7 – Emergency finance procedures

Corporate emergency finance procedures that can be implemented immediately during a BC incident should be documented and agreed. They should include the authorisation of emergency purchases, security of cash and assets, the drawing of funds and use of credit cards and the monitoring of expenditure.

Responsible officer: William Jacobs, Head of Finance

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Recommendation 8 – Business continuity template

The business continuity plan template should be reviewed and updated to ensure that it clearly defines the scope, aims and objectives of managing a service area response to a business continuity incident over certain timeframes. Each service area should assess and prioritise their service requirements, critical activities and documents and resource requirements, and these should be documented, agreed by senior management and updated as changes occur. Accountability, welfare requirements and relevant contacts to deliver the service area response should be clearly defined and record maintenance requirements documented.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Recommendation 9 – Local resilience forums

The councils' should have adequate representation a local resilience forums for business continuity, and share business continuity management information with local responders to ensure a co-ordinated and agreed response in the event of an incident.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: Immediate

Recommendation 10 – Co-ordination of plans

The council's crisis management plan, business continuity plans, emergency plan and disaster recovery plan should be linked to ensure a co-ordinated council response to an incident and to facilitate appropriate resources being committed to the response.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Recommendation 11 – Emergency plan

The emergency plan should be reviewed and updated to ensure that it clearly defines the scope, aims and objectives of managing an emergency planning response both within the county when supporting Oxfordshire County Council and other local responders within the district and when the council would be the lead response authority. Accountability, resources, welfare requirements and

relevant contacts to deliver the response should be clearly defined and record maintenance requirements documented.

Responsible officer: John Backley, Technical and Facilities Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Recommendation 12 – Testing arrangements

The nature and frequency of testing the arrangements for business continuity, disaster recovery and emergency planning should be agreed by senior management and adhered to. An adequate review process of the tests should be held, with documented lessons learnt being shared with all relevant officers/external parties.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Recommendation 13 – Disaster recovery plan

The disaster recovery plan should be reviewed and updated to ensure that it clearly defines current DR arrangements, accountability, resources, welfare requirements, record maintenance requirements and relevant contacts to deliver the response.

Responsible officer: Simon Turner, IT Operations Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Recommendation 14 – Training

All officers that would be involved in responding strategically to an incident should be trained adequately in their response role, and updated regularly on any changes to the business continuity, disaster recovery and emergency planning arrangements.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Recommendation 15 – Promotion

There should be adequate promotion of business continuity, disaster recovery and emergency planning arrangements across both councils, supported by guidance on officer expectations and whom they can contact if they have concerns during an incident.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Recommendation 16 – Awareness

A range of methods should be utilised to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and the council's arrangements to respond to civil protection incidents.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Recommendation 17 – Tenants, partners and key suppliers

Arrangements should be in place to ensure that tenants, partners and key suppliers are notified and kept up to date at the commencement and throughout a council response to an incident, and that their own business continuity arrangements are up to date and adequate where there are council dependencies on their services.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Recommendation 18 – Business and voluntary organisations

In accordance with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the council should offer advice and assistance to business and voluntary organisations about business continuity management either directly or through Oxfordshire County Council.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Recommendation 19 – Disaster recovery review

A response review needs to be undertaken between the councils and Adam Continuity (DR contractor) to ensure that lessons learnt are fed into the disaster recovery plan review.

Responsible officer: Simon Turner, IT Operations Manager

Implementation date: 31 March 2016

Lessons learnt 1 – CMT availability

All members of the crisis management team should ensure that they are contactable at all times to prevent any delays in responding to an incident.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: Immediate

Lessons learnt 2 – Contact details report

a) Ensure that the contact details report from HR Pro captures all home telephone numbers and personal mobile numbers for officers, and contact details for agency staff and tenants.

b) Review the circulation list to ensure that all core members of the crisis management team and heads of service receive the emergency contacts report on a monthly basis.

c) Implement a stand-alone text alert system that can be utilised during a response to an incident when all council systems are down.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 31 December 2015

Lessons learnt 3 – DR equipment

Ensure that all essential DR equipment is held off-site from the main council servers at all times.

Responsible officer: Simon Turner, IT Operations Manager

Implementation date: Implemented

Lessons learnt 4 – Strategic roles and responsibilities

Strategic roles and responsibilities for the senior management board need to be clearly defined and adhered to during an incident response.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Lessons learnt 5 – Site security and site safety

Ensure that site security and site safety considerations are undertaken immediately by the crisis management team to incident sites, and the necessary actions implemented.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Lessons learnt 6 – Home-working arrangements

An assessment of resourcing and implementing home-working arrangements during an incident response to be considered and included in the councils' disaster recovery plan and business continuity plans.

Responsible officer: Simon Turner, IT Operations Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Lessons learnt 7 – Health and safety

Ensure that all health and safety requirements are adequately considered during a response to an incident.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Lessons learnt 8 – Salvage

A client briefing from the salvage contractors and insurers on 'what to expect during a salvage process' would be useful to assist in managing staff expectations on what can be salvaged from incident sites.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager to feedback to contractors

Implementation date: Immediate

Lessons learnt 9 – Officer expectations

Officer expectations need to be appropriately and consistently managed during the initial response to an incident and throughout the recovery process.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Lessons learnt 10 – Financial arrangements

Templates should be established within the crisis management plan to assist with forecasting of any expenditure relating to an incident.

Responsible officer: William Jacobs, Head of Finance

Implementation date: 31 March 2016

Lessons learnt 11 – Critical documents

All critical documents should be electronically scanned and hard copies held in a secure environment.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 31 December 2015

Lessons learnt 12 – Decisions/actions log

A decisions/actions log should be maintained and reviewed by the crisis management team throughout the incident response to ensure that response efforts are co-ordinated and aligned to agreed response priorities.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Lessons learnt 13 – Access

All core members of the crisis management team should have 24 hour access to identified business continuity response locations to ensure that they can respond to an incident appropriately.

Responsible officer: John Backley, Technical and Facilities Manager

Implementation date: Immediate

Lesson learnt 14 – Corporate credit cards

Corporate credit cards should be set up to allow the withdrawal of funds.

Responsible officer: William Jacobs, Head of Finance

Implementation date: Implemented

Lessons learnt 15 – Officer utilisation

Officer utilisation should be monitored and assessed throughout a response to an incident to ensure that resources can be deployed effectively.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

Lessons learnt 16 – Incident presence

On-site presence at an incident site should be sufficient to direct local responders to relevant structural and content information.

Responsible officer: Adrianna Partridge, Audit Manager

Implementation date: 30 September 2016

APPENDIX 1 – CROWMARSH FIRE CONSULTATION SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of consultation undertaken by South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils on how well we responded to a devastating fire in January 2015 which gutted our offices and caused major disruption to our operations.

The consultation began on 30 March 2015 and lasted for a period of five weeks. We asked members of the public and interested stakeholder groups to comment on what they thought we did well in the hours, days and weeks following the fire, and what they thought we should have done differently. We promoted the consultation on the councils' website and intranet, through the councils' newsletters and with direct invitations to respond.

A total of 123 responses were received.

We found that:

- The overwhelming majority of responses were submitted from staff members who were severely impacted by the fire.
- The most frequent comment about how the fire affected people personally was one of displacement or emotional impact.
- Overall, 78 per cent of respondents were satisfied with our overall response to the fire, of which 43 per cent of respondents were very satisfied. Only two per cent said they were very dissatisfied.
- A large proportion of the respondents commented that our communications throughout our response to the fire was good, that the IT recovery was quick and the councils did well to maintain service delivery despite the circumstances.
- Overall, 34 per cent of respondents either felt that we could not improve on our response or did not comment. But the largest area of improvement identified by the respondents was in regards to our IT resilience and our temporary accommodation arrangements.

CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY

The consultation sought to provide members of the public and interested stakeholder groups with the opportunity to comment on how well we responded to a devastating fire in January 2015 which gutted the offices occupied by South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils and caused major disruption to our operations.

The consultation was undertaken in fulfilment of the councils' own policies on customer service and public engagement (where applicable).

The consultation comprised a short online survey which asked:

1. How did you first become aware of the fire?
2. How did the fire at the councils' offices affect you, personally?
3. How satisfied were you that we kept you informed about the situation, minimised disruption to service users and returned operations to normal?
4. Is there anything we did particularly well in terms of responding to the fire at the council offices?
5. How could the council improve its ability to cope with a similar disaster, should this ever happen again in the future?

The survey was made available through the councils' websites and was open for responses from 30 March to 4 May 2015.

To provide notice of the consultation, South and Vale District Councils promoted it through their websites and intranet and council newsletters. We also directly contacted key stakeholder groups including local responders and tenants.

Upon close of the consultation, responses were analysed and key themes considered by the audit manager who has responsibility for business continuity.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

We received a total of 123 responses to the consultation distributed as shown in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: Total responses by respondent type

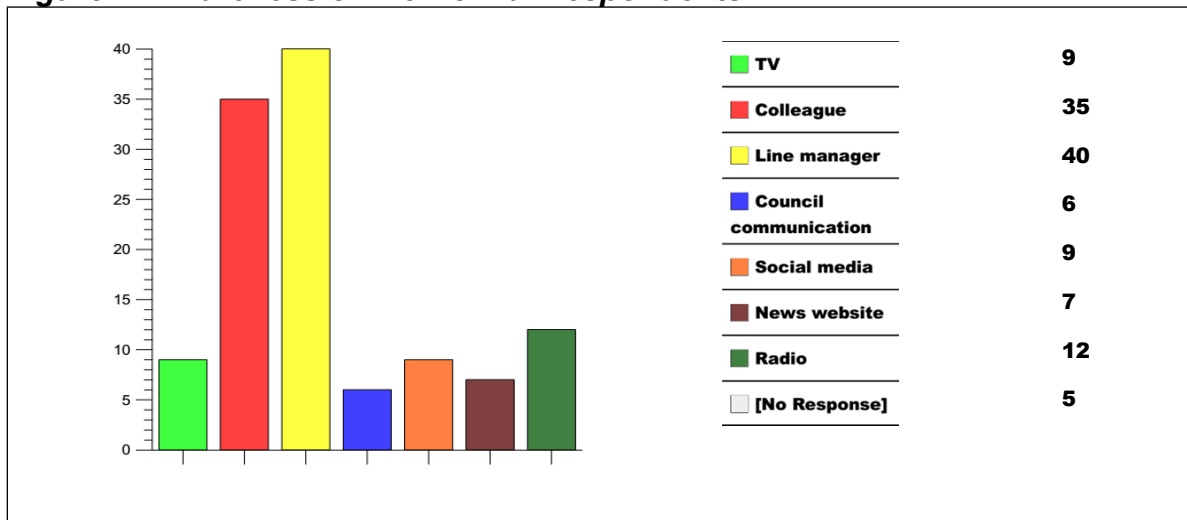
Member of the public	23
Member of staff	89
South councillor	1
Vale councillor	3
Council tenant (i.e someone who worked in offices rented from the council)	1
Other	6 (2 contractor/partners, 2 advisers working with the council and 2 parish councillors)

The overwhelming majority of responses were submitted from staff members who were severely impacted by the fire.

How did people first become aware of the fire

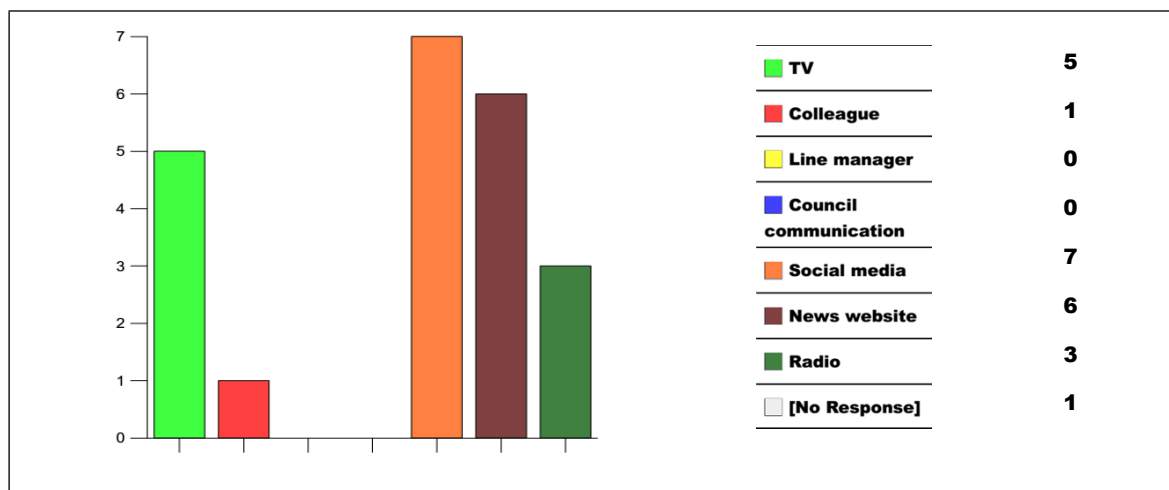
Of the total responses received, the majority of people became aware of the fire from a colleague or a line manager (61 percent) as shown in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2: Awareness of fire from all respondents



Reviewing just the public responses, the majority of people became aware of the fire from social media (30 per cent), closely followed by news websites (26 per cent) and TV (22 per cent) as shown in **Figure 3**.

Figure 3: Awareness of fire from public respondents



How did the fire affect people personally

The consultation provided an opportunity for people to comment on how the fire affected them personally. The majority of respondents (94 per cent) took this opportunity up, providing responses ranging from a single sentence to several paragraphs in length.

To make sense of these ‘free text’ comments we classified them according to key themes. **Figure 4** provides a count of the comments identified by theme overall.

Figure 4: Count of ‘free text’ comments received from all respondents

Personal impact - by type	% of total	Count
Lack of access to systems	0.81%	1
Lack of community resources	0.81%	1
Displacement	34.15%	42
Emotional impact	26.83%	33
Lack of communication	2.44%	3
Live locally	3.25%	4
No impact	10.57%	13
No response	5.69%	7
Planning matter	4.88%	6
Reduced service delivery	10.57%	13
Grand Total	100.00%	123

Typical of consultations allowing open ended questions, there was a large spread of feedback. However, some comments were more common than others.

The most frequently made comment was a feeling of displacement, followed closely by the fire having an emotional impact.

I felt quite depressed at the loss of my working environment, which I enjoyed very much – i.e. the colleagues around me, the location of Crowmarsh and facilities in Wallingford. Also, anxious about how I would deal with my workload going forward. (14)

It was a big shock at first. I lost some personal belongings, which was a pain. Obvious disruption to work initially. Over the first days felt myself going very quickly through various emotional stages of shock, anger and acceptance. (31)

Reviewing just the public responses, the most frequently made comment was that it had no impact as shown in **Figure 5**. But for members of the public that expressed an impact, this mainly related to their residential home being in close proximity to the council or they had a planning matter with the council.

Figure 5: Count of 'free text' comments received from members of the public

Member of the public		
Personal impact - by type	% of total	Count
Access to systems	0.00%	0
Community resources	4.35%	1
Displacement	0.00%	0
Emotional	4.35%	1
Lack of communication	0.00%	0
Live locally	17.39%	4
No impact	34.78%	8
No response	8.70%	2
Planning	17.39%	4
Service delivery	13.04%	3
Grand Total		23

I was shocked and saddened! It made meetings more difficult to organise and clearly put officers under pressure. (63)

The fire itself didn't, but the large amount of sirens heard hurtling down the A4074 past my house was startling, given the time. (12)

Not at all directly, but obviously there was concern for those who work there and for planning applications, where documentation might have been lost. (119)

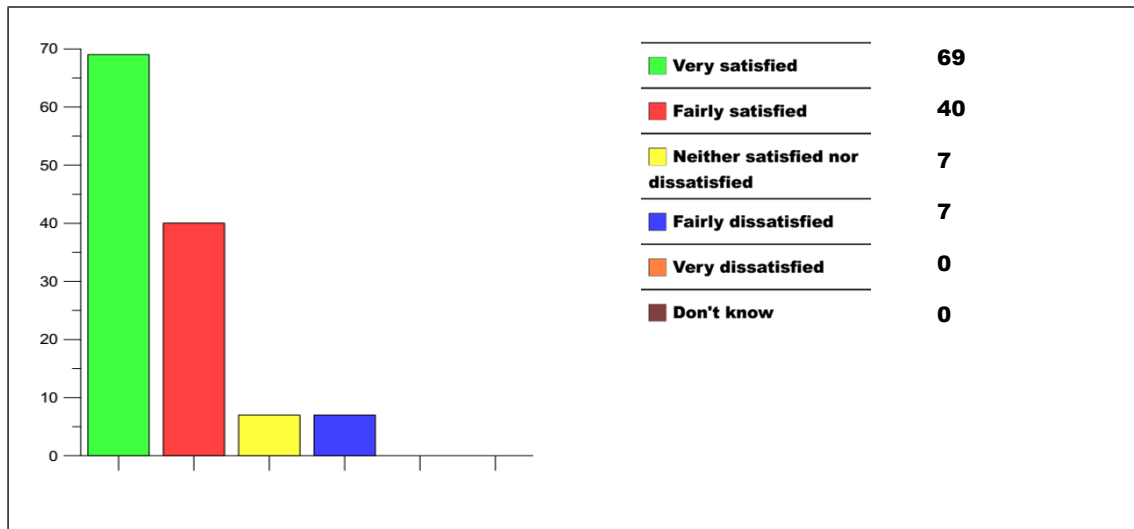
Unable to access planning services, continuing difficulty in contacting individual officers. (81)

How satisfied were people with our response to the fire

Did we keep people informed about the situation?

89 per cent of respondents said that they were either very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the way we kept people informed of the situation, with 6 per cent of respondents stating that they were fairly dissatisfied as shown in **Figure 6**.

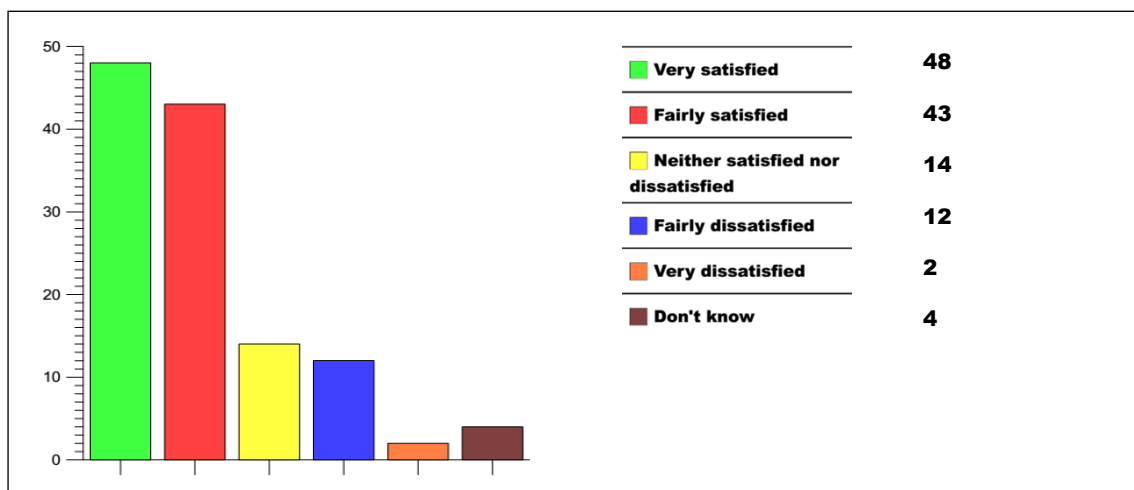
Figure 6: Keeping people informed



Did we minimise disruption to service users?

74 per cent of respondents said they were either very satisfied or fairly satisfied that we minimised disruption to service users. However 12 per cent of respondents said they were either fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the level of disruption as shown in **Figure 7**.

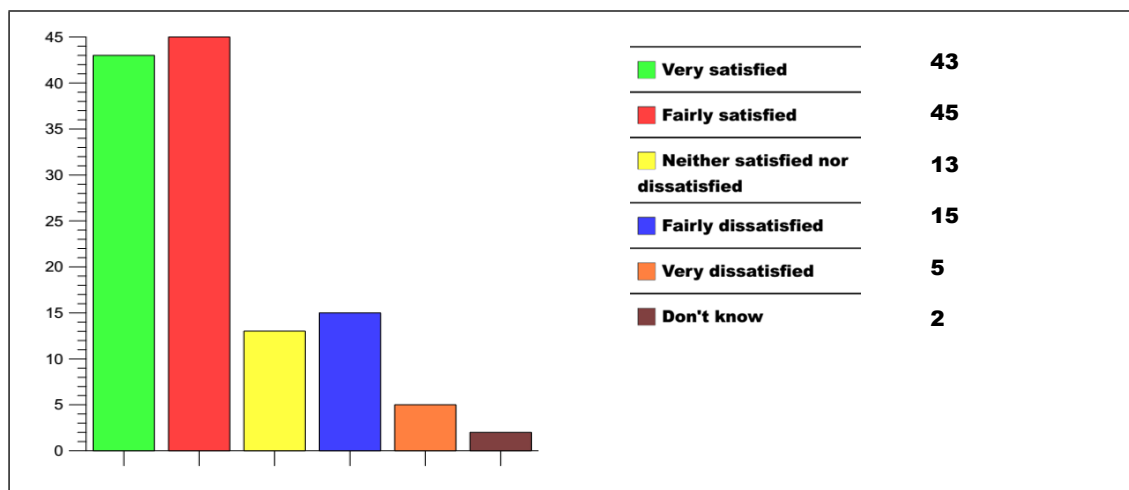
Figure 7: Minimising disruption



Did we return our operations to normal?

72 per cent of respondents said they were either very satisfied or fairly satisfied that we returned our operations to normal as quickly as possible. But 16 per cent of respondents said they were either fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with our return to normal operations as shown in **Figure 8**.

Figure 8: Returning operations to normal



Overall, 78 per cent of respondents were satisfied with our overall response to the fire, of which 43 per cent of respondents were very satisfied. Only two per cent said they were very dissatisfied.

What did we do particularly well?

The majority of respondents (85 per cent) took the opportunity to comment on what we did well. Again, responses ranged from a single sentence to several paragraphs in length. **Figure 9** provides a count of the comments identified by theme overall.

Figure 9: Count of 'free text' comments received

Did particularly well - by type	% of total	Count
Business continuity response	0.81%	1
Communications	37.40%	46
Housing team resilience	1.63%	2
IT recovery	18.70%	23
No response	17.89%	22
Planning team resilience	1.63%	2
Maintaining the public face	1.63%	2
Salvage operation	0.81%	1
Maintaining service delivery	8.94%	11
Staff briefings	1.63%	2
Staff commitment	4.88%	6
Temporary accommodation	4.07%	5
Grand Total	100.00%	123

A large proportion of the respondents commented that our communications were good throughout our response to the fire. But many respondents also thought that the IT recovery was quick and the councils did well to maintain service delivery despite the circumstances.

Well done with getting the news out on social media, I found out from you guys before finding out from the news. Well done on prioritising the information that needed to be up immediately on a blogsite. (5)

Tweets were excellent and kept us up to date, contingency plans appeared to be effective. (7)

The communication through managers (using text messages and personal email) was excellent in the first few days. The speed at which we got access to email and systems was particularly good. This was important to minimise feelings of isolation at home and to feel like you could do something, even if it was to inform our main contacts of the situation. The first all staff meeting was critical. This was needed to reassure people that there would not be large scale redundancies, which was a real fear initially. The team spirit that developed was incredible.....(99)

Getting the email system up and running as fast as possible, as well as the other systems, was fantastic and a real tribute to the dedication of the IT staff. Getting as many staff into Abbey House has been a big achievement.....(42)

.....I was very impressed at the continuity of service in all departments. (102)

All staff should be praised for the way in which they continued to provide first class services in extreme circumstances. Their commitment to both councils was and still is quite remarkable. (33)

How could we improve our ability to cope with a similar disaster?

Corresponding with the previous survey question, 85 per cent of respondents took the opportunity to comment on how we could improve our ability to cope with a similar disaster. **Figure 10** provides a count of the comments identified by theme overall.

Figure 10: Count of ‘free text’ comments received

How could the council improve response - by type	% of total	Count
BC testing	0.81%	1
Communication	4.88%	6
Council mobile phones	0.81%	1
Decision-making	0.81%	1
Fire safes	0.81%	1
IT	24.39%	30
Mobile working	0.81%	1
No response	16.26%	20
Nothing	17.89%	22
Paperless system	3.25%	4
Prioritise work	0.81%	1
Quicker response	0.81%	1
Robust BCP	4.07%	5
Share BCPs	0.81%	1
Sprinklers	1.63%	2
Staff security	2.44%	3
Team communication	2.44%	3
Temporary accommodation	8.13%	10

Text alert system	5.69%	7
Up to date contact details	0.81%	1
Working arrangements	1.63%	2
Grand Total	100.00%	123

Whilst 34 per cent of respondents either did not respond or felt that we could not improve upon our response, the largest area for improvement that respondents identified was in IT resilience. Linked to this, seven respondents also commented on having a more effective text alert system in place.

Ensure website can be run externally at all times. Test disaster recovery procedures on a more regular basis. (119)

Less reliance on fixed / office-based IT hardware (but easy to say after the event)! Mobile / flexible working could reduce the impact of losing a major hub such as Crowmarsh. (14)

Your systems should be backed up in a separate place, the website should not have been affected by the fire. All other data should also have been instantly accessible to minimise disruption to services. (22)

Having better, more reliable web-based IT storage. Outlook 365 is great but so much time is wasted trying to log in to slow systems. (58)

.....Phones lines, and actual phones for staff, especially those working from home has been a bit of an issue, especially for staff who would usually get calls from the public that are working from home and don't want to give their personal contact information out. (91)

Improve the system for notifying people in the first few hours about staying at home (if that is what is required) Some form of cascade system to telephone staff and advise on what / who is required where. (30)

Better notification. Have a clearer system for notifying staff when a disaster happens. (65)

The second largest area for improvement that respondents identified was in temporary accommodation arrangements.

.....Whilst I understand it needs to return to business as quickly as possible and minimise disruption, it could maybe have taken 3 more working days' time out to get all systems, desks, chairs, locations resolved before moving people back in. I think everyone would be understanding in the circumstances and would give the leaders a few more days to resolve things. This would've eased any frustrations that some people seemed to have (not myself I might add)..... (66)

A better desk rota system, so that if you were on rota you could actually get a desk and also so if someone was not using their desk space then it would be available to other people..... (103)

Contingency for replacing pc' s, laptops, desks, office furniture, office accommodation faster. Better co-ordination of work for staff. Still three months later three levels - some staff with less work, some with same workload and some with more work as a result of fire. (71)

APPENDIX 2 – STAFF INTERVIEWED AND REPORT DISTRIBUTION

1. STAFF INTERVIEWED

1.1 Steve Bishop – Strategic Director

Interview held on 9 April 2015, 8:30am

Simon Turner – IT Operations Manager

Interview held on 9 April 2015, 10:30am

Shona Ware, Communications Manager

Interview held on 9 April 2015, 1pm

William Jacobs, Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer)

Interview held on 13 April 2015, 1:30pm

John Backley, Technical and Facilities Manager

Interview held on 14 April 2015, 8:30am

Anna Robinson, Strategic Director

Interview held on 14 April 2015, 11:30am

Debbie McLatch, previous Head of Development and Housing

Interview held on 21 April 2015, 11am

Sandra Wildern, Building Control Team Leader

Interview held on 22 April 2015, 9am

Phil Ealey, Housing Needs Manager and Melissa Cripps, Team Leader (Housing Advice)

Interview held on 22 April 2015, 10am

Chris Tyson, Head of Economy, Leisure and Property

Interview held on 22 April 2015, 11:30am

Liz Hayden, Legal, Licensing and Community Safety Manager and Susan Baker, Business Support Team Leader

Interview held on 23 April 2015, 9am

David Buckle, Chief Executive

Interview held on 23 April 2015, 11am

Adrian Duffield, Head of Planning

Interview held on 23 April 2015, 1pm

Andrew Down, Head of HR, IT and Technical Services

Interview held on 27 April 2015, 8:30am

Bob Watson, Accountancy Manager (Technical)

Interview held on 27 April 2015, 10:30am

Clare Kingston, Head of Corporate Strategy

Interview held on 27 April 2015, 11:30am

Lewi Reed, Building Supervisor

E-mail exchange on 27 April 2015

Simon Hewings, Accountancy Manager (Revenue)

Interview held on 30 April 2015, 12noon

Sarah Minns, Health and Safety Adviser

Interview held on 6 May 2015, 8:30am

Grahame Mitchell, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Carol MacKay, Principal Emergency Planning Officer (OCC) and Greg Stacey, Business Continuity and Resilience Officer, (OCC)

Telephone conference held on 8 May 2015, 10am

2. REPORT DISTRIBUTION

2.1 A copy of this report has been distributed to the following officers:

- Members of the crisis management team
- Heads of Service
- Strategic Management Board