

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Planning Committee

Meeting to be held on Friday 27 January 2023

Business Continuity Planning and Testing

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Executive Summary

In line with the Business Continuity Policy, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) is required to test Business Continuity Plans (BCP) annually. As such, the Service exercised and tested multiple Tactical and Strategic level BCPs in a Service-wide BCP exercise in November 2022. Consequently, 14 recommendations were identified through a structured debrief and are in the process of being implemented. Namely, Business Continuity (BC) embedding within LFRS was highlighted as a priority.

Numerous other BCP exercises are being planned to take place in 2023 to validate BCPs created for recent increased or new risks, as well as maintaining the annual November BCP exercise for 2023.

With the aim of developing and implementing a Business Continuity Management System (BCMS) which aligns both to the Business Continuity Institute's (BCI) Good Practice Guidelines (GPG), as well as to the Business Continuity (BC) ISO 22301 standard, the BC Standard Operating Procedure will require redrafting. Consequently, to reflect these changes, the BCP policy will need reviewing and updating.

Recommendation

Members are asked:

- (i) to accept the arrangements for BCP exercising 2023; and
- (ii) to support strengthening LFRS's resilience through the development, embedding and implementation of a BCMS.

Background Information

As a named Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, LFRS is required to maintain robust Business Continuity Plans (BCP). In order to achieve this, LFRS has taken steps to align with both the BCI's Good Practice Guidelines (GPG) and ISO 22301 by updating their Business Continuity Management System (BCMS), supporting documents and suite of plans accordingly. The overarching principles of both frameworks require LFRS to review, update, and test plans at predetermined intervals, based on a Business Impact Analysis (BIA) for each identified critical activity or process.

In 2022, an annual review and update of Station BCP's and departmental BIAs were conducted by the responsible Station Managers and Departmental Heads respectively, with the support and coordination of the Response and Emergency Planning (REP) Department. This review has highlighted gaps in the current BCMS, which will need to be addressed in order to comply with the BC's GPG and ISO 22301. Therefore, in the first two quarters of 2023, the Business Continuity (BC) Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) will be updated to reflect the changes in the BCMS, such as the introduction of BIAs for Stations, drafting of Department specific BCPs, the increasing of regular exercising of BCPs at all levels, and the introduction of structured debriefs for BCP exercises. This in turn will require the review and updating of the BC Policy planned for the latter half of 2023.

REP conducted a Service-wide BCP exercise on the 8 November, with the aim of assessing the effectiveness of the activation and implementation of LFRS's BCPs during a multi-agency large-scale incident (Exercise Owl) which was linked to the county-wide, multi-agency, terrorist attack exercise (Exercise Goshawk). The scenario for Exercise Goshawk entailed one LFRS station to be cordoned off due to Police activity and therefore Exercise Owl planned to test a Station BCP; however, the station exercise did not occur due to delays in play with Exercise Goshawk. Nevertheless, Exercise Owl successfully tested multiple LFRS's Tactical and Strategic level BCPs.

A structured debrief was conducted for Exercise Owl for which the learnings are in the process of being recorded and implemented. The debrief resulted in 14 recommendations. Overall, the recommendations from the debrief highlighted that further training and awareness of BC is required at all levels in LFRS, due to the participants unfamiliarity of the plan's content, storage locations, and specific roles within BC. This can be done through a more thorough approach to embedding of a BC culture within LFRS. A strategy is planned to be devised in 2023 as BC embedding is a core principle of BC's GPG and ISO 22301. Moreover, the recommendations included the importance of correct note taking and retention during a BC event, especially in the event of a future public enquiry. Likewise, the importance of adequately trained and readily available loggists was highlighted. All participants agreed that more BC exercises should be conducted in the future and on the whole, it was an educational and enjoyable experience.

Due to increased risk of Industrial Action (IA) and power outages, REP has been working across all departments to develop, update and implement BC plans for these threats. As such, in addition to maintaining annual November BCP exercising, REP is currently developing BC exercises in quarter 1 and quarter 2, which will serve to validate the new BCPs, including a BC exercise for power outage at a station level (Operational) and SHQ (Tactical). Likewise, a tabletop exercise for IA is being developed to test the staff and station modelling, as well as the coordination of the Service Incident Management (SIM) team.

In 2022, meetings were conducted with all departmental heads to identify any gaps within their BC systems, the level of REP support required in order to address these gaps and develop robust BC procedures. Discussion also included the identification of critical services within departments which may require a 24/7 rota system in the future to increase LFRS resilience. This is in progress and further consultations are required prior to a concrete proposal being put forward.

Business Risk Implications

Failing to have a robust BCMS in place can potentially result in LFRS breaching the Civil Contingency Act 2004 by being unable to maintain its critical functions, as well as having potential financial, human resources, reputational and data implications.

Sustainability or Environmental Impact

None identified at this stage.

Equality and Diversity Implications

None identified at this stage.

HR Implications

Implementing a BCMS will require human resource input from across numerous departments. Testing of BCPs through exercising could have a negative disruption on human resources.

Financial Implications

A budget could be required for the embedding of BC within LFRS. This could include providing additional training, developing an e-learning module, BC promotion during international BC week (15-19 May 2023), or a modest budget for BCP exercising dealt with on an ad hoc basis.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of background papers

Paper:

Date:

Contact:

Reason for inclusion in Part 2 if appropriate: N/A