

INTRODUCTION

- 1 This paper asks the Council to note the development of a business continuity plan for HEFCW. It provides information about the plan; alerts members to the procedures in the event of a crisis; and provides information ahead of the training session for Council members.

BACKGROUND

- 2 The development of a fully-fledged business continuity plan is an action for 2006-07 in the Corporate Strategy. HEFCW established a business continuity team in August 2005. This team has taken responsibility for the development of a business continuity plan (BCP) in order to ensure that staff and the Council are ready to respond in a way that would allow business to be restored as quickly and effectively as possible if a critical disruptive event were to occur. Specimen pages from the plan are included at Annex A. The pages provided are the introduction to the plan and a selection of plans relating to the operation of Council activities in the event of a crisis.
- 3 The plan was developed in the context of the Welsh Assembly Government's requirement that all ASPBs establish sound procedures to ensure business continuity and drew on work already undertaken by the WAG.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

- 4 A planning questionnaire developed by the WAG was used as a starting point. This required the identification of 'what if' scenarios, business critical activities and vital functions. The group identified a number high level "what if" scenarios requiring business continuity planning (eg office buildings completely destroyed). These were discussed and agreed by the Management Board.
- 5 The Management Board also discussed and agreed the business critical activities (eg paying staff) and vital functions (eg ICT). It was felt that many of HEFCW's activities could be postponed without serious effects until vital functions were restored (probably within a month). The plan, therefore, concentrates on those activities which cannot be delayed (see paragraph 11(i) below for a list of business critical activities, vital functions and 'what if' scenarios covered by the plan).
- 6 All the 'what if' scenarios chosen could lead to incapacity in relation to at least one vital function for more than one day. Less severe disruptions were deemed to be outside the scope of the exercise as were full scale regional disasters.
- 7 The risks were assessed for each 'what if' scenario for each business critical activity or vital function, and existing and improved controls were identified. An action plan to improve controls was drawn up and implemented.
- 8 Following this work, the business continuity plan was brought together and tested mainly by walking through a number of scenarios as paper exercises with some physical testing of ICT disaster recovery procedures. As a result of this testing, several improvements to the plan were introduced.

The Council is invited to note the methods used to develop the business continuity plan

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE PLAN

- 9 In order to ensure that the plan remains available whatever disasters or crises occur, the plan and associated documents have been migrated to a system known as Office-Shadow. This system is held externally and will be available to all staff and Council members via the internet even if the Llanishen office is non-functional. An important feature of the system is the ability to include messages on the home page. These can be updated regularly in an emergency to keep people informed of progress and to tell staff what they need to do.
- 10 The Office Shadow system sends emails to the owners of plans and other information to remind them to check the currency of the information and to confirm it remains appropriate or that it has been updated. This allows the Council to have confidence that it is not trying to recover from a disaster with outdated information.
- 11 The following are now available on Office-Shadow but some adjustments are still being made.
- i) **Plans** including detailed actions and, where necessary, procedures together with the person or team responsible in the event of a crisis or a need to maintain or restore business continuity for the following **business critical activities**:
- Crisis Management
 - Paying HEIs
 - Accounting for funds from the WAG and Europe
 - Managing payment of suppliers
 - Paying staff
 - Functioning of the Council

And these **vital functions**:

- Communications
- ICT
- Records/paper files and documents
- Data
- HR and HR systems
- Buildings and Facilities
- Finance systems

Each plan is set against the following **'what if' scenarios** (referred to as **triggers** in Office-Shadow)

- Office buildings completely destroyed (eg due to fire, flood, terrorism)
 - Office building severely damaged (eg due to fire, flood, terrorism)
 - Catastrophic ICT failure (eg due to hackers, viruses, physical destruction of server room)
 - Loss of staff input (eg due to industrial action, widespread sickness, death of key staff)
 - Major building services failure including those with H&S implications (eg loss of air-conditioning, power failure)
 - Destruction or damage to off-site storage (eg destruction of records)
- ii) **Additional documents**, such as server configurations and draft messages to staff, which may be needed urgently to recover from a crisis or similar event
- iii) Full **contact details** for staff (to be completed when consent is given)

- iv) A **system for reviewing and updating plans and procedures** at regular intervals (generally twice a year)
 - v) **Access to the Office-Shadow website** at appropriate levels for all staff with security levels set.
- 12 The plan will be kept up to date and periodically tested (at least once a year) against various scenarios. These tests will both check that the plans are current and also ensure that the staff involved maintain an awareness of the plan and the associated procedures.

The Council is invited to note the use of Office-Shadow for holding and maintaining HEFCW's business continuity plan

HOW WILL HEFCW RESPOND IF A CRISIS OCCURS?

- 13 The crisis management team (CMT) plan sets out the initial actions; these are different under the various scenarios. The common elements are that the CMT:
- meets at an agreed location
 - assesses the situation
 - ensures arrangements are in place for staff and Council members to be informed through a telephone cascade process
 - agrees an initial message to staff and Council members on the Office-Shadow website
 - agrees which elements of the BCP should be implemented and ensures that someone is responsible for each element
 - agrees timescales and monitoring arrangements.
- 14 Those responsible for the elements of the BCP that are to be implemented carry out the actions set out in the plans as agreed by the CMT and report back regularly to the CMT.

ROLL OUT TO STAFF AND COUNCIL MEMBERS

- 15 The system is now ready to roll out to all staff and Council members. This will involve:
- All staff and Council members being provided with a log-on to the Office Shadow system. This will be issued via email by Office Shadow. It is important that all staff and Council members are aware that they must not delete this email – they must follow the instructions provided, seeking help from IT if necessary;
 - Labels being issued to stick to the access security cards to provide details of the URL and format of the user name and cards being produced for Council members. Staff and Council members will need to remember their password;
 - An awareness session for all staff ;
 - Training for Council members following this Council meeting. This will include a short presentation of the Office-Shadow system; information about registering with Office-Shadow; and an opportunity to ask questions about the plan and emergency procedures.
- 16 The Office-Shadow system provides access to information at varying levels so that only those who need to see each set of information are able to do so. This includes contact details being available to relevant staff to enable all those concerned to be informed of the crisis by phone and to be instructed to log on to the website for further information. Any person who does not wish their contact information to be made available in this way will have the opportunity to opt out. However, it will not then be possible to contact those opting out through the emergency telephone cascade process.

The Council is invited to note the arrangements for rolling out the Office-Shadow based business continuity plan and the training to be provided to Council members

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 17 The current Office Shadow licence is for three years from March 2006. There will be additional costs if HEFCW wishes to continue to use the system after the current licence expires.

PUBLICITY IMPLICATIONS

- 18 There are no external publicity implications

RISK ASSESSMENT

- 19 The business continuity plan and, in particular, holding it in a secure site separate from HEFCW does much to mitigate the risks to HEFCW of a major crisis. However, unless the plans and associated documents are kept up to date (prompted by Office Shadow) and all staff continue to be aware of the need to log-in to Office Shadow in an emergency, there is a danger that it will not be possible to act effectively to ensure business continuity. There is also a risk that the plan will no longer meet requirements unless regular testing is undertaken.

DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 20 This paper has no implications for race, gender, disability or the Welsh language. The plan is intended for internal HEFCW use only.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 21 The Council is invited to:
- i) note the methods used to develop the business continuity plan
 - ii) note the use of Office-Shadow for holding and maintaining HEFCW's business continuity plan
 - iii) note the arrangements for rolling out the Office-Shadow based business continuity plan and the training to be provided to Council members

For further information, contact Frances Good (Tel 02920 682244; E-mail frances.good@hefcw.ac.uk)

