**Agenda Item No:** -

**Report to:**        Audit Committee

**Date of Meeting:**  26 September 2011

**Report Title:**     **IT Disaster Recovery Feedback Report**

**Report By:**        Tom Davies

                      Chief Auditor

## Purpose of Report

To discharge the resolution that is detailed below.

## Recommendation(s)

1.  **To accept the report.**

## Reasons for Recommendations

The Audit Committee meeting held on 30 June 2011 resolved (unanimously) that it accepts the Chief Auditor's follow-up report on the audit of IT Disaster Recovery, subject to clarification on:

•       Cloud Computing

•       The movement of services from Aquila House to the Town Hall in the event of an emergency

•       Compliance with risk assessments for people working from home

## Introduction

1. A meeting was convened on 2 August 2011 for Councillor John Hodges, the Corporate Director for Environmental Services, Head of Information Technology and Chief Auditor to clarify the position that the Council is at on:

• Cloud Computing

• The movement of services from Aquila House to the Town Hall in the event of an emergency, and

• Compliance with risk assessments for people working from home

2. It is worth being aware that before the rationalisation of accommodation project, there was the advantage of more alternative sites that staff could be relocated to in the event of an incident. By centralising to just 2 principal buildings, we have had to think smarter about our disaster contingency arrangements and this has been achieved primarily through server virtualisation (see paragraphs 10-11 below).

## Cloud Computing

3. Cloud computing is location independent computing, whereby shared servers provide resources, software, and data to computers and other devices on demand. It is a relatively new concept having been around a couple of years.

4. Whilst there would be advantages of moving towards Cloud Computing, the major issue for the Council is that we wouldn't know where Personal Data is stored which is a vitally important legal requirement.

5. Existing clouds are international, for example, Microsoft etc. which creates problems with storage of Personal Data outside the EU and unresolved questions about sharing.

6. To overcome these issues, the Government has been considering setting up "G-Cloud" that will have the requisite level of controls built-in taking into account their own Local Government Data Handling Guidelines and "GovConnect".

7. We have carefully aligned ourselves with Central Government on data security and access issues and recommend following their lead on clouds by waiting for "G-Cloud".

## The movement of services from Aquila House to the Town Hall in the event of an emergency

8.  The Corporate Director for Environmental Services confirmed that a lot of work had been carried out in this area between the Emergency Planning team and Heads of Service to identify the Council's critical systems and the time they would need to be up and running again by, in other words, Prioritisation of all Council systems into a Priority List.  This exercise also identified the services that the Council could "live without" for a period of time.   It is important to realise that not all services would be relocated from Aquila House to the Town Hall.  For example, from what has been written before, the critical elements of the Revenues and Benefits Service would be relocated promptly alongside the highest priority elements of Housing Services etc. to the Town Hall.

9.  This staged approach of relocating services is governed by the Priority List which is maintained by the Emergency Planning team.

10.  There is additional resilience for 2 of the Council's most critical systems.  In the case of AGRESSO, the Main Financial Accounting System for processing payments to suppliers, debtors income and financial accounting, we have a reciprocal understanding with Rother District Council and Lewes District Council to overcome business disruption.  In the case of the Revenues and Benefits Service, there is a contract with 'Sun Guard Public Sector Availability Services' which is tested annually and certificated.

### Server Virtualisation

11.  The main aim of the server virtualisation programme over the past year has been to increase the resilience of the Council in case of an IT disaster recovery situation. The principle involved is to put all the current servers on just a few servers, for example, 50 servers in Aquila House are being condensed onto just 3 servers in Aquila House and these 3 servers are to be replicated in the Town Hall.

12.  The new technology doesn't suffer from overheating that was a common problem experienced by IT departments in the past (there is a lot less hardware/servers now involved) and for further resilience, Aquila House and the Town Hall are on different power feeds.

### Electricity Supply

13.  The risk of disruption to power supply has been assessed.  Although there is an obligation for electricity supply utility companies to restore power within 24 hours of an event and Aquila House is in a town as opposed to rural location so lowering the threat of storm damage to supplies, the impact of a loss of electricity could be high. The Council is exploring the possibility of installing a power point for the Aquila House building that could instantly be connected to a 'hired in' generator.  We know from experience that there is good availability of such generators that can be delivered within hours and that there are no issues about delivery of the fuel.  The frozen foods shop next door (Iceland) successfully used this arrangement for 4 weeks.

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## Compliance with risk assessments for people working from home

14. The level at which people work from home is a matter of degree. We have people who are primarily office based but do log in from home (perhaps weekly or even less often). These types of user are defined as 'Working from Home'. At the other end of the spectrum, we have staff whose work place is their home and are defined in our policy as 'Home Working'.

15. It is worth noting that during the severe weather last winter, at its peak, 138 people were logged in and working from home.

16. There is Council Policy which covers in-depth the need for risk assessment for all staff categorised as 'Home Working'. The policy puts the onus on the person 'Home Working' to ensure that the risk assessment is carried out. The Council is satisfied that people 'Home Working' have had risk assessments carried out.

## Summary of meeting

17. We have been tested by examples experienced of business interruption in the past 12 months but these have been managed seamlessly from the public's perspective. Once the replication project has been completed, in the event of a worst case scenario now, the Council's IT systems would be up and running within a few days whereas 18 months ago, it might have run into weeks.

18. Business Continuity and IT Disaster Recovery are continually being improved, primarily through the Corporate Risk Management Group but by also disseminating information through the Operational Board. We recognise that we have not completely reached our target yet but we are near to getting there.

**Wards Affected**

None

**Area(s) Affected**

None

**Policy Implications**

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

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|---|---|
| Equalities and Community Cohesiveness | No |
| Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17) | No |
| Risk Management | Yes |
| Environmental Issues | No |
| Economic/Financial Implications | No |
| Human Rights Act | No |
| Organisational Consequences | Yes |

**Background Information**

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