BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Executive Summary

1.   The SPCB is invited to review the strategy and policy used to support Business Continuity at the Scottish Parliament and to note the arrangements in place to ensure that parliamentary business could take place if Holyrood was temporarily unavailable. Views are also sought on how MSPs and others involved in parliamentary business might be contacted in the event of a significant business continuity incident.

Issues and options

2.   The Scottish Parliament is committed to ensuring that plans are in place to maintain parliamentary business and support to MSPs even in the face of significant disruption. This part of corporate governance is known as Business Continuity Management (BCM).

3.   A BCM framework has been in place for a number of years. It is appropriate for the strategy and policy used to focus BCM to be reviewed by the SPCB at this stage in the parliamentary session. The Strategy and Policy document is attached as **Annex A**.

4.   A key element of the BCM response at the Parliament is to ensure that alternative arrangements can be put into effect promptly in the event of the premises at Holyrood becoming wholly or partially unavailable. A number of options have been put in place and these can be reviewed in **Annex B**.

5.   Communications are vital in keeping Members and all those involved in parliamentary business informed about any incident and in ensuring that disruption to parliamentary business is minimised. To this end the Parliament has recently invested in an email and text-messaging service – separate from our own IT network – that can be used to issue messages about any developing situations involving the Parliament.

6.   This system can only be effective if there is up-to-date contact information for Members, staff and contractors. Significant progress has been made in getting staff and contractor information as current as possible and focus will turn, early in 2012, to ensuring that the information from Members is equally up to date.

7.   If approved by the SPCB, MSPs will be contacted to supply alternative email and mobile phone information to be used along with established blackberry and Parliament email addresses. MSPs will also be encouraged to update this information as and when it changes.

8.   This information will then be stored on the Parliament's Human Resources database and exported regularly to the external Alert system to ensure amendments are captured timeously. The Alert system fully complies with Data Protection legislation. All data is held in the UK.

9.   It is then proposed that a few test messages – via email and text – will be used to confirm that the contact information is correct. Such testing will be repeated annually.

10.   The system will only be used by authorised senior staff to issue information about significant events affecting the Parliament. The system will not be used for any other purpose.

Governance issues

11.   Health and safety and equalities issues have been considered within the actions detailed within this Paper. General governance of business continuity will be provided by the Business Continuity Advisory Panel (BCAP).

Publication Scheme

12.   This Paper will be published but the annexes will be withheld due to the nature of the information contained.

Next steps

13.   Once approved this strategy and policy information will be published on the Scottish Parliament intranet and in early 2012 Members will be contacted to supply their alternative contact information.

Decision

14.   The SPCB is asked to consider this Paper and agree:

14.1   it is content with the current strategy and policy for business continuity at the Scottish Parliament;

14.2   it is content with the approach taken to sourcing alternative accommodation; and

14.3   it is content that Parliament staff can contact MSPs in the New Year to obtain alternative contact information for use in our Alert system.

OFFICE OF THE CLERK/CHIEF EXECUTIVE
TOMMY LYNCH
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