Committee:	Scrutiny Committee	**Date:** 11 November 2025
Title:	Operational Resilience	

Task and Finish group members:	Cllr Criscione and Cllr Donald (Co-chairs)
	Cllr Sell and Cllr Driscoll

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Summary

1. This report provides an update to the Scrutiny Committee following the final meeting of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Working Group held on 20 October 2025, reviewing operational resilience in relation to business-critical functions and activities.

2. The report outlines the further work undertaken to strengthen resilience and in line with the agreement made at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 6 March 2025 this final report would be presented upon conclusion of the group's work.

3. The Task and Finish Group is content that Operational Resilience is being effectively managed.

Recommendations

4. The Scrutiny Committee notes the further updates presented following the recent meeting of its Task and Finish Group on operational resilience.

Financial Implications

5. Whilst there are no specific financial implications associated with this final update report, it should be noted that errors and service interruptions resulting from a lack of resilience could have financial consequences and cause inconvenience to service users.

Background Papers

6. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

   - Scrutiny Task and Finish Working Group from 11 November 2024.
     - Presentation - Business Critical Operational Functions Resilience and Risk - final.pdf
     - Minutes - Printed minutes 11th-Nov-2024 19.00 Scrutiny Working Group - Operational Resilience Task.pdf
   - Scrutiny 6 March - Operational Resilience Update Report
   - Printed minutes 20th-Oct-2025 19.00 Operational Resilience Task and Finish Group.pdf

Impact

Communication/Consultation	Effective communication is a common characteristic both of preventative measures aimed at avoiding service interruption as well as in mitigation measures adopted to deal with any unavoidable service disruptions.
Community Safety	Only a minority of potential service interruptions carry community safety implications, and these are factored into both the prioritisation of preventative measures and the scale of mitigation measures accordingly.
Equalities	Some potential service interruptions are associated with negative equalities implications, and these are factored into both the prioritisation of preventative measures and the scale of mitigation measures accordingly.
Health and Safety	Only a minority of potential service interruptions carry health and safety implications, and these are factored into both the prioritisation of preventative measures and the scale of mitigation measures accordingly.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Some potential service interruptions are associated with negative legal implications, and these are factored into both the prioritisation of preventative measures and the scale of mitigation measures accordingly
Sustainability	Only a minority of potential service interruptions carry sustainability implications, and these are factored into both the prioritisation of preventative measures and the scale of mitigation measures accordingly.
Ward-specific impacts	N/A
Workforce/Workplace	Some potential service interruptions are associated with negative workforce implications, and these are factored into both the prioritisation of preventative measures and the scale of mitigation measures accordingly

Background

7. The Scrutiny Task and Finish Group has met five times, with the latest and final meeting on the 20 October 2025 to discuss the ongoing development work by officers

to identify business critical activities and design a register to capture them, along with the associated actions to mitigate the impact of any genuinely unpredictable or unavoidable future resilience issues.

8. At the group's meeting in November 2024, members of the group were taken through a presentation by the Chief Executive of the process at the time and next steps. The presentation and the minutes of that meeting are available in the links provided in paragraph 5 'Background Papers'.

9. The outcome of the November Task and Finish Group meeting was presented to the Scrutiny Committee on 6 March, a link to the report presented at that meeting can be found in section 5 of this report, 'Background Papers'.

10. The Operational Resilience Register integrates with existing tools such as Risk Registers and Business Continuity Plans at both corporate and service levels. These three tools together provide a comprehensive and well-integrated framework for resilience, with the Risk Management Policy serving as the overarching structure that connects and supports them.

Risk Registers (corporate and service level)

Risk Management Policy

Business Continuity Plan (corporate and service level)

Operational Resilience Register

11. At the March Scrutiny meeting it was agreed that a final meeting of the Task and Finish Group would be held and a final report presented to Scrutiny Committee later in the year. In addition to the overall updates on progress a committee member requested that the Task and Finish Group consider the impact of home working in the next update, and this is discussed later in the report.

12. As this final meeting has been held, the Operational Resilience Task and Finish Group is now disbanded.

Corporate Risk and Operational Resilience Governance Updates

13. The Operational Resilience Register, which captures business-critical activities, is updated regularly in line with the quarterly reporting cycle to the Corporate Management Team (CMT). This ensures that resilience planning remains current and aligned with evolving service and corporate risks.

14. The Operational Resilience Register has been categorised into two sections 'Critical Activities' and 'Important functions'. This approach ensures that the true business critical activities are not diluted in a long list of activities and functions but still ensures that we are capturing functions that are high priority in the performance and delivery of council services.

15. When the original Operational Resilience Register was presented to members in November 2024 and March 2025, the list included 135 potential resilience issues. Following this further review the register has been rationalised and the total number of critical and important activities totals 99, of which 36 are critical and 63 are important.

16. The reduced number of activities listed does not reflect the removal of any previously identified critical activities, unless a review determined they were not genuinely critical. For example, statutory returns to external bodies had been included in earlier versions but have now been removed following reassessment.

17. Additionally, some functions that were previously listed separately have been consolidated where they were found to be components of a broader critical activity. A notable example is within Revenues and Benefits, where an earlier register listed 36 individual tasks, such as Council Tax base calculations, billing, uploading direct debits, and other administrative processes. These tasks have now been merged into two key activities:

    - Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates Annual Billing
    - Generating Bills and Direct Debits

    This consolidation ensures a more streamlined and accurate representation of the critical activity.

18. In general, it would not be expected to see large scale changes or movements in the register entries unless there was a change in personnel and/or service activity or functions.

19. Scrutiny Committee is reminded that it established the Task and Finish Group to look at the register in detail and the purpose of this report is for the committee to receive assurance from those members who formed the task and finish group. By its nature the register sets out possible points of critical failure and so its circulation has to be kept very tight. The Task and Finish Group was content that officers have developed a robust process to identify operational resilience matters across the council's areas of business and mitigate accordingly.

20. The Corporate Risk Register is reviewed quarterly by the Corporate Management Team (CMT), alongside the Service Risk Register and the Operational Resilience Register. This integrated approach ensures that risks and resilience issues are appropriately escalated and recorded at the correct level and on the most suitable register. The Operational Resilience Register is intended to remain an internal working document for CMT, supporting the monitoring and management of all critical activities. Should any critical activity pose a significant threat, it will be escalated to the Corporate Risk Register.

21. A half-yearly report on Corporate Risks will be presented to the Audit and Standards Committee, providing oversight and assurance on the management of corporate risks and resilience.

22. The last Corporate Risk Register was presented to Cabinet on 8 May and Audit and Standards on the 29 May 2025, this is available to view at: [Audit and Standards 29 May_Corporate Risk Register](). The next scheduled Corporate Risk Register report will be presented to Audit and Standards on 29 November 2025.

Business Continuity Planning Workshops – Steering Group Formation

23. As part of our ongoing commitment to strengthening resilience and aligning our risk management framework, we are establishing a steering group of key officers to lead a series of Business Continuity Planning workshops. These workshops will serve as the final component in a comprehensive programme designed to:

- Update and align our Business Continuity Plans across departments.
- Integrate risk, issue, and resilience management into a unified approach
- Ensure organisational readiness for future challenges and disruptions

24. This workstream will not only reinforce our operational resilience but also ensure the processes are fully embedded into our management programme of risk and resilience.

Election enhanced resilience activity

25. An enhanced piece of operational resilience work was carried out in the Elections team. To support us in this an independent external review was commissioned by the Association of Electoral Administers (AEA). The review focused on the delay in sending out the postal votes, how well the Council responded and the public communication.

26. Following this review a comprehensive timetable was established to guide the delivery of the election processes in the future. This timetable outlines:

- Critical Pathways: Clearly defined sequences of tasks that are essential to timely delivery.
- Key Milestones and Dates: Highlighting deadlines for each major activity.
- Officer Responsibilities: Assigning lead officers and identifying backup officers to ensure continuity.
- Quality Assurance Processes: Embedding checks and reviews to maintain consistency and rigour.
- Resource Requirements: Identifying the tools, personnel, and support needed to deliver each activity effectively.

27. This structured approach ensures transparency, accountability, and resilience in the delivery of all the functions in our elections process for the future.

Home Working

28. The Scrutiny Committee at its March meeting requested the impact of home working to be included and reviewed as part of the organisational resilience work.

29. Hybrid working is available to staff whose roles allow remote work, subject to service needs, this equates to approx. 68% of the workforce (228 staff). Of these:

- 25% work remotely full-time, attending in-person only for mandatory meetings, training, and events.

- The remainder either split their time or work in-office full-time by choice.

30. Staff Feedback from the December 2024 Survey:

    - 19% said hybrid working influenced their decision to stay rather than seeking employment elsewhere.
    - 69% reported improved work/life balance.
    - 48% noted improved wellbeing.
    - 61% felt more productive working from home.
    - 90% said they could perform at least 80% of their duties remotely.

31. In addition, this reduced commuting contributes to lower carbon emissions and financial savings for staff.

32. Additional feedback showed that

    - Only 10% felt more productive in the office.
    - 21% said office attendance improved their wellbeing.

33. Sickness Absence & Productivity

    - 51% of sickness absence is from the 32% of staff not eligible for hybrid working (mainly Environmental Services).
    - 48% of hybrid workers said they could continue working while mildly unwell due to remote flexibility.

34. In the National Context – [Flexible and hybrid working practices in 2025 | CIPD](#) Findings shows that 74% of organisations offer hybrid working.

    - The Reported benefits include attraction & retention, employee financial wellbeing, and positive environmental impact.
    - Reported challenges: managerial effectiveness, employee connection, and organisational culture.

35. UDC operates in a wealthy rural area with limited public transport and a small employment pool whilst competing with London Councils, South Cambridgeshire District Council who offer a four-day week, and other organisations who also offer hybrid models.

36. No reduction in service delivery has been observed and hybrid working enhances recruitment and retention without additional financial cost which in effect reduces our risk of further exposure to resilience issues due to key staff leaving or failure to recruit.

37. There is a need to mitigate the cultural risks and to address these potential downsides such as reduced team cohesion. In response, UDC has implemented:

    - Optional office attendance
    - Regular face-to-face team meetings
    - Mandatory in-person appraisals and quarterly briefings
    - TUGS social events
    - In-person induction and training for new starters

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That the council fails to apply learning from previous resilience challenges, and thus risk avoidable future disruption	1 - low	2 - Moderate	The integration of the new Operational Resilience Register into business-as-usual, and its operation as part of broader business continuity processes in line with the newly adopted Risk Management Policy are all designed to avoid this.

1 = Little or no risk or impact
2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.
3 = Significant risk or impact – action required
4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.