

# AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE



Report subject	<b>Emergency planning and business continuity update report</b>
Meeting date	27 October 2022
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>Emergency planning and business continuity activity in BCP Council over the reporting period has been focused on getting back on track following the significant response to COVID and the disruption this caused to the planning side of resilience. Significant progress has been made in business continuity and the council's response arrangements have been put to the test with numerous large scale emergency responses. These have been dominated by extreme weather and fires and evacuations.</p> <p>At a national level the resilience agenda continues to evolve and the impacts of this are being looked at and incorporated into planning and response activities locally.</p>
Recommendations	<p><b>It is RECOMMENDED that:</b></p> <p><b>Audit and Governance Committee is asked to note:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>a) The emergency planning and business continuity activity that has taken place during the monitoring period</b></li><li><b>b) The significant progress in delivering the business continuity management programme</b></li><li><b>c) The ongoing development of resilience governance arrangements including the process for debriefing, capturing learning and monitoring the implementation of recommendations</b></li><li><b>d) The national level update on resilience and the implications of this</b></li></ul>
Reason for recommendations	<p>It is a statutory requirement for BCP Council to have effective emergency planning and business continuity arrangements in place in accordance with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and to therefore ensure it can provide assistance to the communities of the BCP Council area in the event of disruption.</p>

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Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For update and information

## Background

1. This report provides an update on the emergency planning and business continuity arrangements in place across BCP Council and related activity during the period of this annual monitoring report from November 2021 to October 2022.
2. It is a statutory requirement for BCP Council to have effective emergency planning and business continuity arrangements in place in accordance with the duties placed on BCP Council as a category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA).
3. As part of the council's statutory duties it has to come together under the multi-agency partnership of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to plan, prepare and train for emergencies. The LRF is not a legal entity; it is a partnership comprising the category 1 and category 2 responder organisations that operate within the footprint of Dorset LRF which is coterminous with the Dorset Police boundary. LRF members have to plan together to be able to use their collective resources in the most effective way in the event of an emergency. BCP Council is a constituent, accountable member of the partnership. LRF planning and activity should therefore not be seen as something separate and discrete to BCP Council. The council has a duty to ensure that it is fully engaged in both the development of multi-agency emergency plans and planning and, in the event of an emergency, responding alongside partner agencies, drawing on the full range of council resources to deliver both aspects.
4. Dorset LRF has a dedicated team funded by LRF partner agencies to facilitate multi-agency planning in line with the requirements of the CCA. This is called the Dorset Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU). The team has no legal responsibilities under the CCA. The accountability remains with the category 1 and 2 responder organisations who essentially pay the CCU to assist with delivering these CCA multi-agency planning responsibilities.
5. Within BCP Council emergency planning and business continuity are council wide responsibilities with all services having a role to play in planning and preparation and responding when an incident occurs.
6. In summary, there are two modes of activity: planning and preparation and response and recovery and these are carried out at two different levels, BCP Council (single agency) and Dorset LRF (multi-agency). The BCP Council Emergency Planning and

Resilience Team supports the council in driving resilience work forward in both modes and at both levels and acts as the everyday interface with the LRF partnership.

## **Resilience Overview**

7. A key focus over the past year has been the introduction and embedding of the new resilience governance framework for emergency planning and business continuity. The framework has been in place for about 18 months now with the two key groups, the BCP Resilience Governance Board – strategic level, and the BCP Resilience Forum – operational/tactical level, continuing to meet periodically, gradually finding their feet and settling into their respective roles. The Board was originally scheduled to meet twice a year, but this has been revised and is now meeting quarterly as there is a lot of material to cover. The Forum meeting schedule has remained at quarterly, wrapping around the Board meetings. These two groups constitute the backbone of the monitoring and co-ordination of emergency planning and business continuity activity supported by the Emergency Planning Team that leads on driving work forward and helping the organisation to deliver its statutory duties.
8. Topics that have been discussed over the past year include:
  - Business impact analysis and business continuity planning
  - Loss of drinking water and the emergency planning and business continuity planning consequences of this
  - Loss of ICT
  - Cyber attacks
  - Extreme weather: flooding, wildfire, storms, extreme heat and drought
  - Debrief reports, learning and recommendations from incidents
  - Insurance in relation to business continuity planning and preparedness
9. In line with the requirements of the council's statutory duties under the CCA there is a need to ensure that all those with a role in responding are trained and familiar with their roles. The turnover in staff across the council has been impacting all three duty levels (Gold, Silver and Bronze) and work has been underway to recruit internally and train new or incoming staff to ensure that the duty and command structure arrangements remain robust. Funding has also been included within the draft 2023/24 budget to introduce a Local Authority Liaison Officer and Loggist duty scheme to ensure that there are robust arrangements for these. Learning from several recent incidents has demonstrated that current arrangements for these are not as robust as they need to be. There could, however, still be an issue in recruiting volunteers to these roles if there is a lack of willingness by staff to take on these additional responsibilities.
10. There is a further requirement to ensure that staff keep their response skills and training current and as a result of this, BCP Council has introduced a new mandatory training course for all three duty levels on decision making in emergencies. The training is being delivered by a barrister who has significant experience in emergency response and public inquiries.
11. Both BCP Council and Dorset LRF work to a prioritised work programme. However, these have been significantly disrupted over the past couple of years due mainly to COVID but also in response to other incidents and national priorities. At both a BCP Council and Dorset LRF level work is starting to get back on track, but like many

agencies there is a significant backlog that is having to be dealt with as well as new and emerging priorities and so work is constantly having to be reprioritised.

12. Emergency response is also an integral part of the work and when incidents occur, they are very time consuming, not only in the immediate response but in the recovery and follow up and they likewise delay the undertaking and completion of planning activity. As outlined in the Emergency Response section below, it has been a busy year in this respect for the council and this has impacted on the work programme. There is, however, an upside to this as the number of incidents, including a global pandemic, means that the council's generic emergency planning arrangements have been well and truly put through their paces and presented opportunities for review and learning.
13. The BCP Council work programme is inextricably linked with the LRF work programme which is set by collective agreement and as LRF priorities change, the BCP Council work programme has to be adjusted accordingly to ensure it can meet both the main BCP Council planning priorities as well as the LRF ones.
14. As resource becomes more stretched across the council, the engagement from services in the planning side of emergency planning and business continuity is becoming more and more pressured. This means that it is harder to progress work and that the timeframes for completing work are becoming longer.
15. The above notwithstanding, significant progress has been made in emergency preparedness and business continuity throughout the past year with a lot of developmental work taking place.

## **Emergency Response**

16. The past year has been quite a busy period with a significant number of larger scale emergency responses required by the council as outlined below.
  - a. COVID – command structures were in place for COVID until April 2022 when the Tactical Co-ordinating Group and Strategic Co-ordinating Group finally stood down followed by the Health Protection Board and the COVID Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RCG). Arrangements are in place should the need arise to re-establish a multi-agency response as part of normal emergency planning procedures. Learning from COVID at both a BCP Council and LRF level is being incorporated into work going forward.
  - b. Storms Eunice and Franklin - February 2022 – southern England experienced a few days of intense storms between 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> February 2022 which resulted in parts of BCP Council being covered by a red Met Office weather warning, the first time that this has happened. The council proactively stood up its Incident Management Team to co-ordinate preparedness and the response to the storm alongside multi-agency structures. It was a significant, whole council response. The storm resulted in a number of residents in the Hurn area being without power for 5 days. The council mobilised staff and the voluntary sector to the area to check on and support those affected. This was the first time that such a significant storm has taken place for a considerable time and it has thrown up quite a few issues and learning that both BCP Council and the LRF are taking forward, particularly around working with the electricity companies, accessing accurate data on areas affected and those who are on the electricity company priority service register due to some form or vulnerability.

- c. Wellington Court fire – December 2021 – a significant fire broke out in a block of private residential retirement flats which resulted in the need to evacuate about 60 residents to the nearby Premier Inn hotel. Emergency Planning, Social Care and Housing staff were deployed to the hotel to manage the response which posed quite a few challenges, particularly as this was during a heightened level of COVID infection. The fire caused considerable damage to the property to the extent that residents were not able to return to their houses for around 9 months. Staff from Adult Social Care have continued to support the residents for the entirety of this period.
- d. Alexandra House fire – May 2022 – the council became involved in the response to a fire and potential evacuation of a residential and dementia care home in Poole. The nature of the circumstances caused significant challenges for Adult Social Care and partners and again has given rise to a significant amount of learning. It has also highlighted the existing requirement for private care homes to have robust business continuity plans in place.
- e. Extreme heat - July and August 2022 with associated drought - for the first time since extreme heat warnings were introduced by the Met Office in 2021 there were two extreme heat warnings issued for the BCP Council area, one in July and then a further one in August. There were also red alerts issued under the UK Health Security Agency heatwave plan. This meant that a level 4 national heat emergency had been triggered covering all parts of England with the risk to life for those more vulnerable to heat and a general risk to everyone. Some areas of the country had a red warning with the BCP Council area being at the amber warning level, but it still experienced some very high temperatures. The council again proactively stood up its Incident Management Team to co-ordinate preparedness and the response. This is a relatively new area as this level of extreme heat has not been experienced before and some further planning work is going to be undertaken on drought preparedness and what this means for the council and its operations. Until now drought planning has not really been undertaken at a BCP Council level. The Environment Agency declared an environmental drought covering the BCP Council area but there were no temporary use bans (TUBs) put in place by the water companies and the public were asked to use water sensibly, but use was not restricted in any way. There is the need for careful consideration of what might technically be allowed under temporary usage restrictions for business compared to what is the right thing to do and how the public might perceive this.
- f. Wildfire risk – the wildfire risk has been elevated for much of the summer and has led to a number of wildfires occurring. Two significant ones for BCP Council have been the Canford Heath fire and evacuation in April 2022 and the Studland Peninsula heath fire and evacuation on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2022.
- g. Operation London Bridge September 2022 – the council's plan for the death of the monarch, along with the LRF plan, had to be invoked on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022 and was used to co-ordinate the response during the mourning period. The debriefing process has commenced internally with feedback from those involved being sought which will feed into a debrief meeting scheduled for November. A multi-agency debrief is also being scheduled. Learning from these debriefs will inform any planning for the coronation which is to take place on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

17. In line with good practice in emergency management a debrief process is worked through following all incidents to ensure that any learning is captured and any issues can be investigated. Written debrief reports are collated for larger incidents which include a series of recommendations to address the issues identified and these are taken to the BCP Resilience Governance Board for review and sign off. For smaller incidents feedback from those responding is sought and recommendations made if there is an issue that needs to be addressed. All recommendations are then added to a recommendations tracker spreadsheet maintained by the Emergency Planning and Resilience Team to monitor implementation of the recommendations across the council. The tracker is reviewed at both the BCP Resilience Forum and Resilience Governance Board with strategic intervention from the Board if there are any significant issues that are not being addressed. This is a fairly new process as part of the evolving governance arrangements and the tracker and two debrief reports (Wellington Court fire and Alexandra House fire) were taken to the September Board meeting.
18. The tracker is not exclusively for BCP Council initiated learning. It will also be used for recommendations arising from national learning such as public inquiries or other significant emergencies elsewhere across the country as well as Dorset LRF generated recommendations that are applicable and require action from BCP Council.
19. A theme that has emerged from planning work and response over the past year is a low level of general awareness across the council of the council's duties in relation to emergency planning and business continuity and how this practically translates into the organisation. As a result, an awareness session is being delivered to the Senior Leadership Network in January 2023 to help to redress this.

### **Emergency Planning Update**

20. Key emergency planning development and activity has been progressing in the following areas:
  - BCP Council cyber response plan – a draft plan is out for consultation with BCP Forum members with an exercise scheduled for 22<sup>nd</sup> November.
  - Wildfire response plan – BCP Council Emergency Planning has been working with council services and with Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service to develop the council's wildfire response plan including GIS mapping of at-risk areas. Following multi-agency debriefing in light of numerous wildfires across the Dorset RLF area this summer, the LRF wildfire plan is also being reviewed and updated. A multi-agency proposal is being taken to the LRF Business Management Group for a piece of work to look at evacuation plans for Studland and Hengistbury Head following recent incidents and risk assessments. Whilst Studland lies within the Dorset Council area, evacuation is likely to be to Poole and BCP Council would experience the impacts and be an integral part of a response in the event of an evacuation as was demonstrated in August this year.
  - Severe weather response plan - The BCP Council severe weather response plan has been updated with learning from Storm Eunice and the two episodes of extreme heat this summer and will go for Board approval in November. An appendix on drought planning and response will be added in due course.
  - The council's Operation Bridges plan outlining arrangements for the death of the monarch or other senior member of the royal household was reviewed, approved by CMB and tested through an exercise in the first half of 2022. The planning and testing meant that the plan was able to be activated swiftly when the need did arise this

September. The Emergency Planning Team led the planning work on behalf of the council as it has the experience and expertise in pulling together complex multi-disciplinary plans. The Operation Bridges plan is, however, different to other emergency plans as the event itself was not an emergency and it was the one plan that everyone knew would have to be invoked at some point.

- An awareness raising session was delivered to the Council's Director's Strategy Group on the national power outage risk. This is an existing risk on the national security risk assessment with a government led resilience planning programme having been in place since early 2021 and is separate to the energy security issues that have arisen globally as a result of the war in the Ukraine. All LRFs have been required to hold an LRF level exercise to explore the risk and initiate multi-agency planning. Issues being explored are resilient communications and resilient buildings with sufficient back-up power to enable staff to co-ordinate a response from for a prolonged period of no power.
- Bournemouth Airport is reviewing its emergency plan for supporting survivors of an air crash within the confines of the airport and will be testing the plan in February 2023. Holding an exercise is a requirement of the Civil Aviation Authority and the airport's licence to operate. The exercise will involve BCP Council staff who would be called to support a Survivors' Reception Centre run by Dorset Police and also a Friends and Family Reception Centre. The Emergency Planning and Resilience Team is working with the airport, council services and partners to update the current plan and staff will be participating in the exercise. This is a new responsibility for BCP Council having previously been a Dorset County Council responsibility prior to local government reorganisation.
- BCP Council has been a key player in the development of the LRF Poole Harbour Islands Evacuation Plan. This risk was identified a few years ago following an exercise and a number of incidents. Whilst the harbour islands sit chiefly within the Dorset Council area, evacuees would be brought to Poole and therefore BCP Council would be responding and supporting the evacuees with the assistance of Dorset Council. The plan has just been out for consultation and will soon be going through the LRF approval process.

## **Business Continuity Update**

21. As part of planning for the new BCP Council it was agreed that a business continuity management programme would be developed and implemented within 18 months to two years of the new authority. This was severely affected by the onset of the global COVID pandemic, but work has been underway to get this back on track. There has been significant progress in this area of work over the past year.
22. A key element of the programme was the development and introduction of a business continuity strategy level document for the organisation setting out the strategic importance of business continuity and the council's overall approach to delivering it. The Resilience Governance Board approved the BCP Council Business Continuity Framework and Guidance document at its September meeting following an internal consultation period. This is a significant piece of work and lays the foundation for business continuity activity across the council. The framework will be launched across the organisation with appropriate staff comms to support it.

23. A parallel piece of work also part of the programme and forming the basis of service level and corporate level planning is the completion of BIAs or a business impact analysis. All services have been required to complete the BIA process by 31st October. A business impact analysis is a process of analysing business functions and the effect that a business disruption might have upon them, the timeframe for recovery and determining what minimum resources would be needed to deliver the agreed level of service.
24. As the world and council services continue to evolve we are all becoming more and more reliant on technology. Systems are largely no longer locally based and data is no longer generally held in on-premises servers but by external providers and in the cloud. This means that the council has less control over accessing systems and data and how they might be recovered in the event of disruption. This places ever greater importance on services planning and preparing for how they will deliver critical services in the event of a loss of ICT. The council requirement is that services prepare for a minimum of 4 days without ICT. This is an area of planning work still very much under review and development and where some practical testing may be required by services. The Emergency Planning and Resilience Team has delivered a scenario-based discussion exercise to a couple of services so far to help them to explore a loss of ICT incident and what layers of mitigation and planning they may need to put in place to respond to this risk.

### **Internal Audit Review**

25. An internal audit of BCP Council's emergency planning and business continuity and its compliance with its statutory duties under the CCA has recently been undertaken. The audit has provided reasonable assurance of arrangements. Within the risks identified, it has been recognised that most of the issues were already known to the Emergency Planning and Resilience Team and are incorporated into the work programme going forward.

### **LRF and Dorset Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) Update**

26. Over the past six months Dorset LRF partners, facilitated by the Dorset CCU, have been taking an amended approach to its risk assessment process which is being keenly watched by other areas. Instead of concentrating directly on each individual risk, the focus has moved to looking more at the generic consequences of incidents and the capabilities required to respond so that the LRF is better prepared all round. There are about 16 capabilities identified and each month a capability is reviewed to look at where the LRF is in terms of its plans and actual capability to deliver in line with those plans alongside how well plans have been tested and staff trained. In line with this, LRF partners are considering work prioritisation and looking to address significant gaps arising from this review process along with emerging priorities rather than necessarily undertaking a review of a plan just because its three-year review is due. One key area identified through this process is the human aspects response. Local authorities are the lead co-ordinators and planners for this workstream and BCP Council is looking to secure some of the recent LRF funding for a post dedicated to taking this piece of multi-agency work forward.
27. In 2021/22 all LRFs were given some pilot funding by government to look at enhancing the work of LRFs. In February 2022 Lord Greenhalgh, Minister for State for Building Safety and Fire, wrote to all LRF Chairs to confirm that the government would continue to fund LRFs beyond this funding pilot for a further three years. This money is designed to support enhancing LRF strategic capacity and capabilities in support of the wider



HMG objectives set out in the Integrated Review (March 2021) and the forthcoming national resilience strategy. There are conditions placed on the use of the money and the LRF has to submit periodic reports on how the money is being spent and progress made. The LRF Executive has approved this year's expenditure and principles for its use. Examples of how the money is being used are an allocation to support training and the delivery of a live multi-agency exercise, a Community Resilience Co-ordinator, and an LRF project manager.

28. LRFs exist in each police force area and there are 5 in the South West region. These LRFs are now working collectively under a new South West collaboration. The aim is to identify where multi-agency working can be made more efficient and effective rather than everything necessarily being done 5 times, but only where this is appropriate and enhances arrangements. A pooled budget has been created with each LRF having put an equal sum of money in. Specific sub groups have been set up, an example of which is the South West Training Group. This is chaired by the Training and Exercising Co-ordinator from the Dorset LRF. Through this group standardised structured debrief training across the region has been organised as well as a series of MAGIC (Multi Agency Gold Incident Command) lite training days for strategic commanders. These were harder to deliver at an individual LRF level and have been made possible through collaborative working across the region.

### **National Update**

29. The two-yearly review of the national security risk assessment (NSRA) that combines hazards (non-malicious) and threats (malicious) has just been released to emergency planners. The last full risk assessment was in fact issued in 2019. It sets out the risks, consequences and planning assumptions that LRFs are required to consider and plan for at a local level. An in-depth review will be required to ascertain changes and any new and emerging risks, but the risk landscape overview shows that the assessed likelihood of the risks covered by the NSRA has generally increased since the last iteration. The updated NSRA will feed into the ongoing LRF risk and capability reviews to ensure that LRF partner agencies and multi-agency planning are in a good place to respond to the consequences of a wide range of incidents.
30. Back in July 2021 the Government announced the vision that the UK would become 'the most resilient nation in the world' and this would be underpinned by a new national resilience strategy. The strategy has been long awaited and is now expected after Christmas. This will have a significant impact on emergency planning and preparedness and may well introduce new requirements as well as a need for greater engagement with our communities and businesses.
31. The five-yearly post implementation review of the Civil Contingencies Act required by law was undertaken early this year with all agencies having the opportunity to provide feedback. The overall outcome of the review is that the act is still generally fit for purpose with four key themes arising, three of which will be addressed by changes to the CCA (to be proposed) and one that will be picked up by the national resilience strategy (NRS) (see paragraph above). The four themes and linked recommendations are:
  - the need for enhanced accountability for the multi-agency preparedness activities conducted by local resilience arrangements (will be developed through non CCA routes - national resilience strategy)
  - assurance - an obligation should be placed on categorised responders (category 1 and 2 responders) to set out publicly how they comply with their responsibilities under the CCA; there is a demonstrable gap in the assurance of multi-agency preparedness

beyond voluntary assessment; and the National Resilience Standards that have been developed over the past few years should be put on a statutory footing. (through CCA changes and other avenues)

- categorisation and duties on responder organisations - no changes to the set of duties for responders, but the Met Office and The Coal Authority are to become category 2 responders. Also, under this theme the requirement to produce a community risk register (CCR) should be strengthened and will require responders to consider community demographics, particularly vulnerable groups, when undertaking local risk assessments. (through CCA changes and possibly other avenues such as the national resilience strategy)
  - Part 2 of the CCA - Emergency Powers and Regional National Co-ordinators - the ability to use emergency powers should be retained with the triple lock protections, but the Regional Nominated Co-ordinator role and requirement for this should be removed (through CCA changes). It is interesting to note that Part 2 of the CCA was not used in response to the COVID pandemic.
32. The key development for BCP Council is the assurance piece and the likelihood of more formal assurance requirements to publicly demonstrate the council's compliance in future.
33. Two high-profile public inquiries, the Manchester Arena attacks and the Grenfell fire, have been running over the period of this report. These have now been joined by the COVID inquiry which started in October. It is very likely that there will be some significant recommendations for emergency planning and preparedness arising when further reports are published, some due later this autumn, and this may well include the training of staff.
34. Also awaited is the full detail of the PROTECT duty which will require publicly accessible venues of a certain size to have contingency plans in place. Depending on the detail, this may place a significant undertaking on council-owned venues and local authorities may well also be given enforcement duties.

### **Forward Look**

35. The next few months over winter could once again be very challenging due to a number of cumulative effects. The base level of individual LRF responder capabilities is already highly pressured. This could result in them becoming overwhelmed more quickly and by lesser circumstances than usual in the event of an emergency. This in turn may place more of a strain on partner agencies trying to manage the collective response. The ongoing energy security issue and cost of living crisis, if combined with severe weather such as a recurrence of the Beast from the East or Storm Arwen or Eunice, could be very difficult for LRF partners supporting our communities. There is also a risk posed by the dual impacts of COVID and flu this season.
36. The cyber threat is also very real and could again be an additional source of disruption and would challenge any individual and multi-agency response.

### **Summary of financial implications**

37. There are no direct financial implications of this report. The council's Emergency Planning and Resilience Team has an operating budget of £237,600 for 2022/23. This budget provides the funding for 5 staff as well as standby and call out payments for the pool of Emergency Planning Duty Officers (Bronze). Gold and Silver duty holders are not paid to be on call or if called out, this having been evaluated within the pay and grading

of their core roles. There is also a £70,000 budget for the council's contribution to the Dorset CCU as described in paragraph 4.

### **Summary of legal implications**

38. Failure to have in place effective emergency planning or business continuity arrangements may result in the council not meeting its statutory requirements under the Civil Contingencies Act.

### **Summary of human resources implications**

39. As the organisation faces resourcing challenges with a reducing workforce the engagement from services in planning for emergencies and business continuity becomes more and more limited as it is not seen as an immediate risk or challenge compared to everyday activity. It also means that the timescales required to complete planning activity are very much increased.

### **Summary of sustainability impact**

40. There is no direct sustainability impact from this report. However, it should be noted that the frequency of emergencies related to severe weather, be it extreme heat, drought, wildfires, storms or flooding, is likely to increase over coming years as a result of climate change.

### **Summary of public health implications**

41. There are no direct public health implications from this report. Having emergency and business continuity plans in place in line with the council's statutory duties means that it will be better placed to respond to public health emergencies or public health consequences of incidents as and when they occur.

### **Summary of equality implications**

42. There are no direct equality implications from this report.

### **Summary of risk assessment**

43. Failure to have in place effective emergency planning and business continuity arrangements could result in the Council not being able to effectively respond to an emergency affecting Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole or not being able to deliver critical services in the event of disruption. The forward look in the main body of this report looks at the potential risk landscape over the coming months.

### **Background papers**

None

### **Appendices**

None