Business Continuity Strategy 2022

A programme for developing plans to minimise disruption when unplanned events significantly interrupt normal business.

Dec 2021

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BUSINESS CONTINUITY STRATEGY – 2021

1.0   Introduction

Colchester Borough Council provides a wide range of services to the local community, many of which are statutory functions. Any failure, actual or perceived, to deliver the full range of services will have a negative impact on both the community and the authority. As such, all reasonable measures should be adopted to minimise the likelihood of business or service interruption.

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a specific duty on local authorities to ensure that they have prepared, as far as reasonably practical, to continue to provide critical functions during any disruptive incident.

However, the Civil Contingencies Act is just one of the key drivers for business continuity. External assessments, such as the benefits inspection and the Lexcel accreditation, require robust business continuity arrangements to provide assurance that quality services will always continue to be provided. But above all, business continuity is critical to the Council in its ability to survive an incident with as little disruption to services and reputation as possible.

This Business Continuity Policy provides the programme for developing plans that will prevent or mitigate the severity of potential disruptions and enable the Council to effectively respond to incidents.

The policy will identify the mitigation measures, specific recovery objectives, the structure for implementation and the communication process to keep staff, partners and the public informed of necessary changes to service delivery.

2.0 Overview

The policy adopted for development of the business continuity plans can be summarised as follows:

- **The Corporate Incident Management Plan and the Emergency Response Plan** will form the basis of the Council's response. These are operational documents designed to assist the authority in the event of a disruption occurring. The plan sets priorities and communications to ensure an appropriate response to any disruption.

- **The Emergency Response Plan** is the overall tool for the Council and event controllers. However, this is supported by service specific business continuity plans which ensure that each service can respond appropriately to an incident whether it is a corporate or service specific interruption.

- Incident specific plans are also developed for corporate issues where the risk indicates sufficient likelihood of occurrence and the impact is seen to be severe, such as pandemics, power failures and technology failure.

- Business Impact Analyses (B.I.A.s) are undertaken to be able to develop the plans. B.I.A.s assess the key risks and key services at both corporate and service level, and their maximum tolerable period of disruption (MTPD), which will help to identify preventative measures that can be undertaken.

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3.0 Aim and Objectives

The aim of the policy is:

- To support the Council in anticipating risks for the purpose of mitigating them and having flexible plans in place, which are already tested, to minimise disruption when unplanned events significantly interrupt normal business.

The objectives are:

- To identify preventative measures that can be carried out to minimise the likelihood of an incident occurring.

- To ensure the Council can continue to exercise its functions in the event of an emergency, ensuring that statutory requirements are maintained.

- To integrate the Business Continuity requirements with the Emergency Planning responsibilities of the Authority to ensure that in the event of a major disruption the Authority can respond appropriately both internally and externally.

- To identify the essential services, to determine overall priorities for recovery of functions if disruption takes place.

- To ensure all Council service areas are involved in the preparation of the Plan, so that there is an effective and consistent response to service continuity.

- To provide a basis for cost benefit analysis to determine which contingency plans will be developed.

- To develop a process to review and update the plan and develop service area, functional or specific plans where necessary, to protect the services and reputation of the Council.

- To undertake training and awareness programmes for staff, elected members, suppliers, and partners.

- To carry out regular tests of the Plan to validate the arrangements.

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4.0 Governance

Establishing Governance for business continuity provides a central point of accountability for implementation and continuous monitoring of the Councils activities in accordance with the business continuity policy.

CBC is committed to ensuring we have an effective business continuity programme by providing oversight and support, including provision of adequate resources and approval of budget. The Business continuity Programme will be monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure the requirements are being met.

Dan Gascoyne, Chief Operating Officer at Colchester Borough Council.

"Colchester Borough Council recognises that whatever disruption or emergency might affect the Council, the continuity of our services to our community is essential, and that effective Business Continuity Management is fundamental to ensuring that resources are directed to where they are most needed.

This Business Continuity Strategy underpins the Councils commitment to the delivery of services, along with a framework for delivering a robust and effective Business Continuity process. Whilst all Councillors and officers have a responsibility in ensuring effective delivery of services, the strategy sets out the specific roles of the Governance and Audit Committee, who oversee and endorse the strategy, the Chief Operating Officer, who is responsible for ensuring the overall effective delivery of business continuity management and the Senior Management team, who are responsible for ensuring that the business continuity risks to their services are appropriately managed"

5.0 The Business Continuity Process

Irrespective of an unusual or disruptive event, occurring internally or externally, the capabilities of the Council to provide its statutory and legal duties, services to the community and income generation must be maintained. This process aims to address the issues likely to arise, and to identify measures to mitigate them.

The Business Continuity process aims to address the issues likely to arise, and potential solutions, grouped in the following three areas:

➢ MITIGATION - Identify and select proactive measures to reduce likelihood of disruption

➢ CONTINUITY AND RECOVERY - Maintenance of essential services and set timescales for recovery, returning to normality

➢ INCIDENT RESPONSE STRUCTURE - Provide a mechanism for responding to an incident

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Business Continuity is an on-going cyclical process of risk assessment, management, and review with the purpose of ensuring that the business can continue if risks materialise.

The effective implementation of business continuity has 6 stages:

➢ Policy and Programme Management

➢ Embedding business continuity

➢ Analysis

➢ Design

➢ Implementation

➢ Validation

6.0 Responsibility for Business Continuity

To be effective Business Continuity should be fully endorsed and actively promoted by senior management and there should be a clearly defined responsibility for co-ordination of Business Continuity. However, it does not belong to one person, or role, and every service has a responsibility for ensuring that they can respond to an interruption.

There are three levels of responsibility for managing the business continuity process:

1. Co-ordinator

2. Corporate Response Team

3. Service Teams

There is a core role of co-ordinating the process and ensuring that services have access to information and assistance when building their own plans. The co-ordinator also has responsibility for ensuring that key partners are involved in the process.
If there is a disruption, there should be a defined corporate response team who will have overall control of the situation. The co-ordinator is responsible for maintaining details of this team ensuring that they are fully briefed on executing the plan and are informed of any potential issues that may arise.

There are also individual service action teams who are responsible for ensuring that their service has its own response plan and can manage the continuity and recovery for the functions within that service. The team is likely to consist of one person for the process of defining the response plans and day to day co-ordination of Business Continuity but will call upon other senior managers when the plan needs to be put into practice.

Appendix 1 sets out the roles and responsibilities for Business Continuity at all levels.

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7.0 Links

To be an effective management tool and to truly embed the process throughout the organisation the plan should recognise and be influenced by the Council's operational and strategic risk registers, this will lead automatically to the plan linking into the Internal Audit plan, the strategic plan, and the budget process. The plan should also recognise the Community Risk Register, maintained by the Essex Resilience Forum, to ensure that external impacts are recognised and allowed for.

The Business Continuity process must also be closely linked to the Emergency Planning process. In any major scenario it is likely that other organisations in the Borough will be impacted as well, and it is essential for the Council to be able to respond to their requirements as well as its own. Due to the nature of the response required from Emergency Planning it is likely that they will be the first service to receive external information regarding potential issues and it is imperative that there is a system for incorporating these issues in the Business Continuity process.

The Plan should also be aligned to the international standard for Business Continuity ISO 22301 – 2012 and the BCI 'Good Practice Guidelines 2018'.

8.0 Training

All members of the Corporate Response Team and the Service Teams need to be trained, and exercised, on an annual basis to ensure that they are fully aware of how to implement the plan. All staff should be informed of the process and further training should be available if required. Members should be trained to ensure that they know of the existence of the plan and how they can assist, politically, in the continuity and recovery process.

All training given and undertaken externally will be recorded and kept up to date by the Resilience Officer.

9.0 Review Process

The Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that it is still relevant to the Council's needs. However, the individual plans for the services will be subject to review every six months to ensure that information on service functions and contact details are kept up to date. All plans require sign off from a member of SMT (Senior management Team)

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10.0 Scope

CBC has ensured there is a clear definition of which areas of the organisation should be included in the scope and which are excluded. The enables us to focus the business continuity programme and associated activities on the Council's priorities and ensures the programme makes the best use of availability resources.

The scope has been agreed by our Business Continuity Steering Group which is made up of our Senior Management Team who all have a great understanding of the Council's Strategy, Objectives, Culture, operating environment, and our approach to risk which is essential when considering the scope of the programme.

Taking this organisational view and collaborating with others at this stage will be key to CBC implementing the business continuity policy and programme and the overall resilience of the Council.

Appendix 2 lists our critical and supporting services which will be included in our scope. These services make a significant contribution to the Council's reputation, income, and success.

Appendix 3 lists our services which will not be included in our scope, but each service will have their own departmental plans and will be covered by other specific plans such as our ICT Failure, Power failure and CBC Pandemic Flu Plan,

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Appendix 1

ROLES & RESPONSIBILTIES FOR BUSINESS CONTINUITY

	Strategy And Plan	Defence	Continuity	Recovery
Members	Agreeing the policy and plan determined by Officers.	Endorsing the defence plans and ensuring that political decisions are taken with due Regard for Business Continuity.	Political will to ensure that there is a united approach to Continuity.	Political will to ensure that there is a united approach to Recovery.
Corporate Governance Manager & Resilience Officer	Devising and co-ordinating the policy and plan.	Ensuring that the defence actions are appropriately implemented, are regularly reviewed and those services have developed Own plans.	Co-ordination of the Corporate Response Team and the Service Action Teams. Guidance on the plan And mitigating actions during the incident.	Co-ordination of the Service Action Teams. Guidance on the plan and reporting progress of Recovery to senior management.
Senior Management Team	Approval and support of the policy and Plan. Completion of Service plans.	Critical review and approval of the Defence actions.	Support of the actions of the Corporate Response Team During the incident.	Support the actions of the Service Action Teams, endorse recovery Priority for services.
Corporate Response Team (Senior Management Team acting in First Call Officer Capacity)	Overview of policy and Plan. Review Of 'new issues.	Critical review of The defence plans. Ensuring that the information contained within The plan is accurate Annual testing of The plan.	Control the response to the incident until such time as the organisation enters The recovery stages. Ensuring that priority services are afforded The proper support. Ensuring information is available to Members and staff. Keeping SMT Informed.	Review the actions of the Service Action Teams. Facilitate full recovery and ensure that recovery follows The correct priority. Liaison with external agencies. Ensuring information is available. Keeping SMT informed.
Service Action Teams	Input into the formulation of the policy And plan.	Development of Defence plans and implementation of control actions. Ensure that checklists of key Info is compiled. Identification of Service priorities.	Co-ordinate their Service's response. Act as a liaison Between Corporate Response Team and Service. Respond to Corporate Response teams' requests during An incident.	Implement their own team recovery plan whilst maintaining the link With the Corporate Response Team. Briefing staff. Overseeing alternative accommodation.
Employees, contractors and partners	Knowledge of the policy and plan, and awareness of impact on own Job / service.	Knowledge of the defence plans and awareness of impact on own job / service	Assist with the incident where Required. Know how to / who to contact in Emergency.	Assist with recovery Where required. Understand how they fit into the recovery of their Service.

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Appendix 2

Critical and Support Services included in the scope of the strategy

Colchester Bough Council Critical Front-Line Services

- Waste Collection and Recycling
- Customer services – call handling
- Bereavement
- Community response
- Environmental health
- CBC Website
- Building Control
- Helpline/CCTV

Colchester Borough Council Critical Supporting Services

- ICT
- Finance Including payments process (AP, AR, Benefits)
- Communications
- Payroll
- Human Resources
- Emergency Planning and Business Continuity
- Democratic (member support)

Colchester Borough Homes Critical Services

- Emergency Response
- Homelessness services and support for sheltered housing residents
- Contact with vulnerable tenants
- Operations Customer contact centre

Note: These specific risks to CBH are covered in their own Business Continuity Plan so they will not be detailed within the Colchester Borough Council business continuity programme

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Appendix 3

Colchester Borough Council Departmental Plans

- NEPP
- Street Care and Town Centre
- Client Services
- Sustainability and Climate change
- Economic Growth
- Planning
- Housing
- Parks, open spaces and waterways
- Museums and Arts
- Community Enabling
- Benefits – new claim processing
- Elections
- Estates
- Systems Development
- Debt Recovery
- Land Charges
- Cleaning
- Animal services
- Health and Safety
- Legal
- Civic
- Internal Audit
- Insurance
- Fleet

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