Business Continuity Strategy 2019

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

Contents

Page

Colchester Borough Council

BUSINESS CONTINUITY STRATEGY 2019

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 continue to be provided at all times. 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 Strategy provides the framework for developing plans that will prevent or mitigate the severity of potential disruptions and enable the Council to effectively respond to incidents.

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

- The Corporate Incident Management Plan will form the basis of the Council's response. This is an operational document 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 Corporate Incident Management 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 is able to 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 strategy 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, in order 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 overall Plan and develop service area, functional or specific plans where necessary, in order 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 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

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

5.0 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 are capable of responding 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.

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In the event that 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 if and when the plan needs to be put into practice.

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

6.0 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 effected 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'.

7.0 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 also how they can assist, politically, in the continuity and recovery process.

8.0 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 each service will be subject to review every six months to ensure that information on service functions and contact details are kept up to date. The high risks and priority services will also be re-assessed annually.

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Appendix 1

ROLES & RESPONSIBILTIES FOR BUSINESS CONTINUITY

	Strategy And Plan	Defence	Continuity	Recovery
Members	Agreeing the strategy 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 strategy and plan.	Ensuring that the defence actions are appropriately implemented, are regularly reviewed and that 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 strategy 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 strategy 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 stage. 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 strategy and plan.	Development of defence plans and implementation of control actions. Ensure that checklists of key info are 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 strategy 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.