

Report of:	Councillor Barrie Cooper - Executive Member for Environment and Finance & Governance Ian Wright - Director of Finance
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Submitted to:	Executive - 11 January 2022
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Subject:	Corporate Crisis Policy
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Summary

Proposed decision(s)
That Executive approve the following : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Corporate Crisis Policy b) That delegated authority be provided to the Section 151 Officer to approve any future modifications to the policy.

Report for:	Key decision:	Confidential:	Is the report urgent?¹
Approval	Yes	No	No

Contribution to delivery of the 2021-24 Strategic Plan		
People	Place	Business
<i>The purpose of this new policy is to provide a corporate approach to the definition of crisis, what is considered to be a suitable crisis following which access to the supporting mechanisms can be made, and also covers what is not a crisis. The policy also defines how any support payments will be made.</i>	NA	<i>To standardise the payment of crisis awards which will in turn improve the financial performance of the Council.</i>

Ward(s) affected
<i>All wards are affected by the decision to introduce a corporate crisis policy.</i>

What is the purpose of this report?

1. The purpose of this new policy is to provide a corporate approach to the definition of crisis, what is considered to be a suitable crisis following which access to the supporting mechanisms can be made, and also covers what is not a crisis. Whilst predominantly focussing on the term crisis, the policy also defines and provides for situations where a 'disaster' occurs. The policy also defines how any support payments will be made.
2. All service areas must follow this policy to allow the Council to operate a standardised and coordinated approach to crisis, which would include data sharing (where appropriate and legal to do so), and a 'price list' of support payments.
3. Every effort will be made to support residents who are in crisis. Service Areas will work together, where appropriate to do so, and also share data to make informed decisions about what support can be offered. The overall decision and distribution of funds falls within the remit of Resident and Business Support, in collaboration with other service areas.
4. This policy is designed to provide consistency, clarity and a payment framework when responding to residents who present themselves to the service when in need of emergency support, and will be applied across all directorates.

Why does this report require a Member decision?

5. The introduction of a Corporate Crisis policy is part of the Council's strategic direction, and as such requires executive approval.

Report Background

6. The Council has a statutory duty to make payments to Middlesbrough residents who are in crisis or hardship, or have experienced a disaster. The council also provides additional support to residents who fall within pre-defined situations.
7. The introduction of this policy is to ensure that support provided by the council is appropriate and reasonable, within a defined criteria, and will be subject to review on a regular basis.

Crisis Policy

8. The general principles of the policy are as follows:
 - To ensure a professional, consistent and timely approach to dealing with crisis and its associated support across all of the Council's functions,
 - Where Data Protection legislation allows, promote a coordinated approach towards sharing information internally and managing multiple awards connected to crisis across the whole of the Council,
 - To ensure that crisis is managed in accordance with legislative provisions and best practice,
 - Ensure that any steps taken to deal with crisis in line with the Council's corporate policies on surveillance and data protection, and to ensure compliance with RIPA and GDPR legislation.
9. Delivering the policy involves a number of processes which are explained within the document itself. They include:

- Ensuring a consistent approach
 - What circumstances are not considered to be a crisis?
 - Type of support that can be considered through crisis or a disaster
 - How payments will be made?
 - What needs are not covered?
10. The policy provides a definition of crisis and what is considered a disaster, and has certain criteria which must be met in order to receive support. The policies also outlines circumstances which are not considered to be a crisis.
11. Should a resident trigger support under crisis or disaster, the policy provides levels of support based on differing circumstances.
12. When a payment is triggered, awards will be made through electronic means rather than cash awards, with payment methods outlined in the policy.
13. Resident and Business Support's Community Support team will work collaboratively with all services to ensure residents who meet the requirements of the policy are signposted appropriately. .

What decision(s) are being asked for?

14. That Executive approve the Corporate Crisis Policy.
15. That delegated authority be provided to the Section 151 Officer to approve any future modifications to the policy.

Why is this being recommended?

16. This policy will allow Middlesbrough Council to provide a coordinated and fair approach to the definition of crisis and disaster, make support payments where they fit the Council's definition, and ensure any such payments are in line with expected expenditure to the situation which warranted the need for support.

Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended

Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)

17. An impact assessment has been completed and is attached at Appendix B. It found that there were no concerns that the policy could have a disproportionate impact on individuals or groups because they hold one or more protected characteristics.

Legal

18. The service will ensure that all data sharing between services when administering payments relating to the Crisis Policy, will fully comply with GDPR legislation, and in doing so, if there are any changes to the processing of awards, an update to the existing Data Protection Impact Assessment will be made and approved by the Data Protection officer.

Financial

19. The proposal is in line with current budget expectations, and is intended over time to reduce the amount of spend through a standardised framework and the removal for potential duplication of payment through different funding streams.

Policy Framework

20. The proposed policy will not vary the current policy framework.

Equality and Diversity

21. The corporate crisis policy should be read in conjunction with any equality and diversity policies.

Risk

22. This policy will impact positively on the following risks.

- 08-075 Reduction in Council Tax Collection;
- 08-102 Court Costs Income

Actions to be taken to implement the decision(s)

23. That Executive approve the policy and associated recommendations.

- The Council will publish the policy on its website by 01 February 2022, subject to any call in process.

Appendices

- Corporate Crisis Policy - Appendix A
- Impact Assessment - Appendix B

Background papers

24. The background paper associated with this report is the corporate Debt Management policy.

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