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|  | <h2>Business Continuity Policy</h2> |
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| Creator | Author(s) | Gary Welch - Strategic Risk and Health and Safety Manager | | |
| | Approved by | Executive | | |
| | Department | Legal and Governance Services | | |
| | Service area | Governance Policy & Information | | |
| | Head of Service | Ann-Marie Johnstone - Head of Governance, Policy & Information | | |
| | Director | Charlotte Benjamin - Legal and Governance Services | | |
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| Contributor(s) | Strategic Risk and Health and Safety Manager, Head of Governance, Policy and Information, Risk and Business Continuity Business Partner | | | |
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| Contact: | Gary_welch@middlesbrough.gov.uk |
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SUMMARY

1. This policy is part of the corporate governance policy framework underpinning the Council plan which:
 - affirms the council's commitment to effective information governance in order to meet all legal obligations, deliver its strategic objectives and to maintain public trust
 - ensures that all information assets are systematically well-managed through the life cycle; and
 - ensures all staff understand their information governance responsibilities.
2. The Business Continuity sets out how the Council will ensure that it can continue to deliver its critical functions when there is an event which could disrupt its usual service delivery.

CONTEXT

3. This should be read alongside the Council's Information Governance Framework and the Risk and Opportunities Management Policy.

PURPOSE

4. The aim of the policy is:
 - Set out how the Council will to anticipate risks, mitigate where possible to reduce the likelihood of its services being interrupted;
 - The plans it will put in place to manage service interruptions; and
 - the maintenance and testing of those plans to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

SCOPE

5. Middlesbrough Council is committed to ensuring robust and effective business continuity management as a key mechanism to restore and deliver continuity of key services in the event of a disruption or emergency.
6. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 placed a statutory duty on the council as a designated Category 1 responder to ensure that it can:
 - respond to an emergency.
 - continue to support emergency response partners.
 - continue to provide critical services to the public.
7. This policy applies to all directly delivered Council services and ensures a plan is in place for all functions that are deemed to be critical, using the following definition:
 - The Critical Functions Plan are business activities and processes that must be restored in the event of a disruption to ensure the ability to protect the Council's assets, meet Council needs, and satisfy regulations.

8. Commissioned or outsourced services delivering critical functions are required to ensure appropriate business continuity arrangements are in place.

DEFINITIONS

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| Civil Contingencies Act | The Act which requires that the Council has in place plans for its critical functions to ensure they can continue to be delivered during an emergency. |
| Business Continuity | Business continuity is an organisation's ability to maintain or quickly resume acceptance levels of product or service delivery following a short-term event that disrupts normal operations. e.g of disruptions range from natural disasters to power outages. |
| Critical function | Critical Functions are business activities and processes that must be restored in the event of a disruption to ensure the ability to protect the Council's assets, meet Council needs, and satisfy regulations. |
| Business continuity disruption | An event that interrupts normal business functions, operations, or processes whether anticipated or unanticipated |
| Business Continuity Policy | A business continuity policy is the set of standards and guidelines for Middlesbrough Council to enforces to ensure resilience and good risk management. |
| Business Continuity Management | A process that helps to identify and plan against risks which could affect the delivery and operation of the council's priorities and objectives, infrastructure, targets, and areas of public safety for which it is responsible. In the short term the objective of BCM is to ensure that during any disruption critical functions may continue uninterrupted at an acceptable level of performance. In the longer term the objective of BCM is to ensure a full resumption of all normal services as quickly as possible following the disruption. |

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| <p>ISO 22301</p> | <p>The recognised international Business Continuity Standard and within this BC is defined as “the capability of the organisation to continue delivery of products or services at acceptable predefined levels following an incident”. The Good Practice Guidelines 2024 cover all elements of the Standard considering the WHAT, WHY, HOW and WHEN.</p> <p>The BC Standard ISO 22301 highlights 6 key components which form the structure of the Business Continuity Management Programme, and these are referred to as the BCM Lifecycle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policy & Programme Management. ▪ Embedding BC. ▪ Analysis. ▪ Design. ▪ Implementation. ▪ Validation |
| <p>Incident management</p> | <p>How the Council will manage any significant disruption to its services, using the Business Continuity Policy and supporting plans.</p> |

POLICY DETAIL

9. The Business Continuity Policy is underpinned by a confidential suite of Business Continuity plans that provide the operational structure for responding to serious disruption, and can be summarised as follows:

- Corporate Business Continuity Plan
- Relocation Plan
- Fuel BC Plan
- Pandemic BC Plan
- ICT Disaster Recovery Plan
- Directorate BC Plans

Roles and Responsibilities

10. In order to meet the objectives of this policy it is essential that officers and members are fully conversant with their own roles and responsibilities:

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| <p>The Mayor and Executive and Elected Members</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall responsibility for effective management, including agreeing and adherence to the Council’s Business Continuity Policy. |
| <p>Chief Executive</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility for embedding both the BC Policy and BCM throughout the Council. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead the management of an incident if a Business Continuity event is declared, or delegate responsibility to a member of the Leadership Team. |
| Leadership Management Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive updates about the BCM Programme • Receive reports on key strategic issues, including as part of the annual statement of assurance, to ensure that Corporate BC risks are being managed • Give robust consideration to the BCM risks contained within reports to committee as part of the decision-making process • Play a part in the management of an incident if appropriate |
| Executive Directors and Directors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall responsibility for embedding the BC Programme across their directorate • Adopt and implement the BC Policy and BCM Framework • Contribute towards the management and review of strategic and cross cutting critical functions of the Council • Receive and consider reports on key strategic BC issues • Promote the integration of BCM principles into the culture of the Council through heads of service • Identify business continuity co-ordinators in their respective directorates and inform the strategic risk and health and safety manager of them • Play a role in the management of an incident if appropriate. |
| Heads of Service and Service Managers | <p>Heads of Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that appropriate contingency plans are maintained and reviewed for all council business activities within their area • Provide assurance on the effectiveness of controls in place to mitigate / disruptions within their service via participation in audits and the implementation of audit recommendations • Maintain awareness of and promote the approved BCM Policy and strategy to all relevant staff • Undertake the role of Business Continuity lead during an incident affecting their service area • Play a role in the management of an incident if appropriate <p>Service Managers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review, analyse and profile service critical functions • Prepare, maintain, and review BC Plans for their area of responsibility in liaison with the Corporate BC Group • Third party suppliers should be requested for ongoing assurance that their business continuity arrangements can continue to be relied upon. • Ensure BC is a regular item on team meetings • Maintain awareness of and promote the approved BC Policy and Strategy to all relevant staff • Ensure that BCM considerations which are relevant to their service are incorporated into service plans • Play a role in the management of an incident if appropriate |
| Corporate BCM Group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively promote BC throughout the council • Attend necessary training / exercising in BCM to remain fully competent and aware of current developments |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be the directorate point of contact for BC issues and co-ordinate activity and communications in the event of an incident (Directorate BC Co-ordinators) • Play a role in the management of an incident if appropriate |
| <p>Head of Service Governance, Policy and Information</p> | <p>Ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BC documentation is maintained and reviewed • Advice is provided to Leadership team and Executive on BC • Promote a culture of BC awareness within the organisation • BC plans are tested • Report on BC preparedness to Audit Committee on an annual basis • Play a role in the management of an incident if appropriate |
| <p>Risk and Health and Safety Manager</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as a deputy to the Head of Service Governance, Policy and Information • Review with plan owners bi-annually all critical function plans. • Review bi-annually all Corporate BC documentation and submit to Head of Service Governance, Policy and Information for authorisation. • Ensure advice is provided to Leadership team and Executive on BC • Promote a culture of BC awareness within the organisation • Ensure that BC plans are tested • Report on BC preparedness to Audit Committee on an annual basis • Play a role in the management of an incident if appropriate • Providing advice and assistance throughout the Business Continuity Programme • Developing appropriate templates for Middlesbrough Council to detail its arrangements, ensuring consistency in the Programme with flexibility to recognise the differences across departments • Supporting departments in completing the documentation from a Business Impact Analysis (BIA) to developing a Critical Function Plan (CFP) • Assisting in the development of wider plans/arrangements to support team DR plans • Raising the profile of Business Continuity across the Council as an ongoing responsibility and ensuring that information is available to staff. • Providing training to appropriate staff and leading on the development of exercises to review arrangements that have been put in place • Reviewing the Programme to ensure it remains fit for purpose and to continuously improve the arrangements in place |
| <p>Plan Owners</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage assigned critical function plan from director. • Review critical function plan if any of the following are applicable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If there are changes to the organisation's structure or services. - If there are changes to the environment in which the authority operates. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Following lessons learned from an incident or exercise. - Following a review or audit. - Following good practice. |
| All employees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarise themselves with the BCM process • Play a role in the management of an incident if appropriate |

Legislative and regulatory framework

11. Key elements of the legislative and regulatory framework relevant to risk management are set out below:

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| Civil Contingencies Act 2004 | Requires the Council to have risk arrangements in place to manage the risk of emergencies occurring and impacting on the public. |
| Local Government Act 1999 | General requirement to achieve value for money. The effective management of risk and opportunity reduces unnecessary expenditure and increases the likelihood of delivering organisational priorities. |

Testing and storage of underpinning Business Continuity Plans

12. A business continuity plan cannot be considered reliable until it is exercised and has proved to be workable. There is a continual need to prove plans and strategies by testing them.

13. The authority will exercise its BCM arrangements to ensure that they meet business requirements and are consistent with the business continuity objectives. The authority shall:

- Develop exercises that are consistent with the scope of the objectives.
- Rehearse key staff and those involved in prioritised services.
- Have an exercise programme to ensure exercises are carried out at planned intervals and when significant changes occur.
- Carry out a range of different exercises including tabletop discussions, scenario, simulation, and live exercises that taken together validate the whole of its business continuity arrangements.
- Plan exercises so that the risk of an incident occurring as a direct result of the exercise is minimised.
- Define the aims and objectives of every exercise.
- Carry out a post-exercise review of each exercise that will assess the achievement of the aims and objectives of the exercise.
- Produce a written report of the exercise, including lessons learnt, to determine any amendments required when the plan(s) are updated.

14. The Leadership Management Team will test business continuity arrangements at least annually to ensure credible recovery preparedness.

15. Copies of the BC Plans will be internally saved electronically under secure conditions.

16. Copies will also be held on the Middlesbrough Council's Resilience Direct page which can be accessed by the plan owners.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

17. The Council's expectations around business continuity management are clearly set out within its corporate values and associated competency frameworks. All managers and employees are required to comply with this Business Continuity policy to ensure that the Council effectively manages critical functions to enable its strategic objectives. Managers and employees will be provided with a range of resources, and where appropriate, training, to support the effective implementation of this policy.

18. A maintenance programme will ensure that plans are updated by the plan owner biannually or if there is a significant change in business operations which stems from any of the following:

- As employees or responsibilities change.
- If there are changes to the organisation's structure or services.
- If there are changes to the environment in which the authority operates.
- Following lessons learned from an incident or exercise.
- Following a review or audit.
- Following good practice.

19. An annual assurance report on the Council's business continuity management arrangements will be submitted to Audit Committee.

20. The SIRO or Strategic Risk and Health and Safety Manager will provide quarterly updates to the Council's Risk Management Group around business continuity management.

21. The implementation and effectiveness of this policy and its supporting procedures will be reviewed on a quarterly basis, using the following metrics:

- Accuracy of corporate business continuity plans.
- Management of directorate business continuity plans
- Availability of critical function plans.
- Availability of battle box information.
- Completion rate of training tracking for plan owners.

22. This policy will be reviewed every three years, unless there is significant development that would require a more urgent review e.g., new legislation.

EVALUATION

23. Validation, training, awareness and exercising BCM arrangements and BC plans should be reviewed, exercised, and validated at regular intervals to determine whether any changes are required to procedures and responsibilities.

24. The review should be documented and ensure that the BCM arrangements:

- Accurately reflect the Council's objectives.
- Include a programme for training, exercising and awareness.
- Identify all prioritised service areas and supporting resources.
- Incorporate improvements identified during incidents and exercises.

25. The Council will conduct annual reviews of its Business Continuity Plans and will learn lessons from testing of plans to ensure the effectiveness of this policy and underpinning plans can be evaluated.