

Agenda Item No: 11
Report To **CABINET**
Date of Meeting: 12th October 2017
Report Title: Business Continuity Policy
Report Author & Job Title: Laurel Niven
Resilience Team Leader
Portfolio Holder Cllr. G.J. Bradford
Portfolio Holder for: Health, Parking and Community Safety



Summary: The purpose of this report is to present to Cabinet the Ashford Borough Council's Business Continuity Policy for adoption.

The Policy highlights the roles and responsibilities for Business Continuity as part of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

Key Decision: No

Significantly Affected Wards: None

Recommendations: **The Cabinet is recommended to review and adopt the Ashford Borough Council Business Continuity Policy.**

Policy Overview: The Council has a statutory duty under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to have in place Business Continuity plans to ensure all public services within the Council continue to deliver a service following an incident or disruption. Such as ICT failure, staff storage or loss of the building.

The Policy as presented will guide Elected Members and Officers in their Business Continuity roles and responsibilities. The Policy sets out the Council's commitment to Business Continuity.

Financial Implications: While there are no direct financial implications relevant to the policy, there are clearly costs associated with preparing for a Business Continuity incident. The requirement for any additional expenditure will be addressed within future budget monitoring reports and included where necessary within service budgets.

Legal Implications The Policy confirms and identifies individual roles and responsibilities for Business Continuity throughout the organisation and during Business Continuity incidents.

Equalities Impact Assessment See attached

Other Material Implications: None

Exempt from Publication: No

Background Papers: None

Contact: laurel.niven@ashford.gov.uk Tel: (01233) 330271

Report Title: Business Continuity Policy

Introduction and Background

1. The Business Continuity Policy as presented by this report sits alongside the Council's Overarching Business Continuity Plan and individual Service Business Continuity Plans. Its primary aim is to demonstrate the Council's commitment 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.
2. The purpose of this report is to present to Cabinet the draft Ashford Borough Council's Business Continuity Policy for adoption.
3. The Policy, as presented at Appendix 1, highlights the individual roles and responsibilities within the organisation to ensure that those with responsibilities act in accordance with Business Continuity Plans and assists in ensuring an appropriate response during Business Continuity incidents.
4. The Council has a statutory duty under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to have in place Business Continuity Plans to ensure all services within the Council continue to deliver a service following an incident or disruption.
5. The Policy will guide Elected Members and Officers of the Council on their Business Continuity roles and responsibilities.

Proposal/Current Position

6. The Council currently has individual Service Business Continuity Plans and an Overarching Business Continuity Plan that would be actioned in the event of an incident or event.
7. The adoption of a Policy is recognised as best practice and provides the assurance and links between the various operational documents in place. It clearly set out the Council's commitment to Business Continuity as well as making clear individual responsibilities.
8. The Policy includes the following elements:
 - Identifies objectives, scope and policy management;
 - Identifies key roles;
 - Identifies responsibilities;
 - Addresses policy awareness; and
 - Review arrangements.
9. The Chief Executive is appointed as having overall responsibility for the Policy with oversight being provided by members. The Policy is linked to the Council's overall strategic objectives and Strategic Risk Management arrangements.

Other key roles are those of the Directors, Heads of Service and Resilience Team Leader. A Strategic Business Continuity Group is to be established to ensure the Policy is followed and necessary arrangements implemented. This group will have a role in sign off arrangements to deal with the most significant risks to the Council. They will have an important role to play in the event of an incident when they become the Business Continuity Incident Management Team.

10. The Policy sets out a commitment for each service delivery process within the Council to be owned by a respective manager who will ensure that their part of the overall BCP meets a minimum acceptable standard of service delivery for critical processes.
11. Critically, the Policy provides a commitment to training and exercises in order to ensure that staff retain Business Continuity competence and have an opportunity to test the arrangements they have in place.

Implications and Risk Assessment

12. Under the Civil Contingences Act 2004, the Council has a duty to ensure that there are robust Business Continuity Plans in place. By having an agreed policy it reduce's the risk on the organisation by ensuring Members and Officers understand their role and the expectations placed upon them in respects of Business Continuity planning for the Council.
13. By planning now rather than waiting for it to happen, we can get back to normal business in the quickest possible time. This is essential to those who rely on the Council's services and it helps our community retain its confidence in us. Planning ahead provides a clear direction with more support for staff handling the situation with a reduced potential for financial loss.
14. An important element of the Policy is to embed Business Continuity Management within the Council's culture. Training and education is an ongoing task but awareness and capability is a product of the structures put in place and the way we manage our Business Continuity processes. Key aspects for Business Continuity are understanding our organisation, determining appropriate Business Continuity arrangements, developing and implementing a response, and exercising, maintaining and reviewing our processes.
15. There are no immediate financial implications associated with adoption of the Policy as presented. Activation of the Business Continuity Plan may result in the need for expenditure (currently unquantified). Adoption of the Policy is the start of compliance with the Business Continuity requirements. Work is ongoing to develop the necessary service plans and identification of contingency arrangements.
16. The Business Continuity process may highlight and identify areas of vulnerability and these may have a financial implication as to rectify or reduce the risks/vulnerability may result in some financial purchase/investment.

Equalities Impact Assessment

17. There are no identified impacts on protected characteristics or groups.
18. Please see attached the Equalities Impact Assessment.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

19. This is an internal policy document and therefore no public consultation is required. There is however a need to work closely with our tenants in order to ensure that the Council's Business Continuity arrangements are complementary to their own situation. This will be undertaken as part of the review of Service Business Continuity Plans.
20. To ensure that best practice and learning outcomes are shared across the County feedback from all Business Continuity incidents faced by Ashford Borough Council and all Local Authorities across Kent are fed into the Kent Resilience Forum.

Other Options Considered

21. Ensuring that we have robust Business Continuity arrangements is fundamental to the Council's operation. The development of a Business Continuity Policy is, however, only recommended as good practice. It is not therefore a requirement to have such a policy although clearly this would not be a sensible option.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

22. It is proposed to have a clear policy in order to support the role and aims of Business Continuity. This addresses and reduces the risk for the Council should there be a major incident that requires the Business Continuity Plans to be activated to maintain/resume the delivery of all services.

Next Steps in Process

23. Once agreed the Policy will be uploaded to and made available to all members and Officers to view on the intranet and members of the public via the Council's website.
24. The Policy will support Officers in the delivery of individual Service Business Continuity Plans and the Overarching Business Continuity Plan for Ashford Borough Council. Officers from the Resilience Team will be able to utilise the content of the Policy to direct Officers within the council with reference to their roles, and in ensuring that adequate plans are in place for Business Continuity incidents.

Conclusion

25. Adoption of the Policy provides a clear direction and shows the commitment by the Council in ensuring public services continue to be provided following a major incident.
26. The policy provides reassurance for all stakeholders by clearly stating the roles and responsibilities of Members and individual Officers for Business Continuity
27. Importantly, the adoption of the policy will ensure that Ashford Borough Council meets its statutory and non-statutory requirements under the criteria of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004,

Portfolio Holder's Views

28. I believe an adopted Policy for Business Continuity is necessary to provide clear guidance to those Officers when continuing to provide services following a major incident. In addition, this provides reassurance to the public that Ashford Borough Council has plans in place in such circumstances.

Councillor G.J. Bradford

Contact and Email

29. Laurel Niven, Resilience Team Leader
Laurel.niven@ashford.gov.uk 01233 330271

Ashford Borough Council

Business Continuity Management Policy

Document Owner	Laurel Niven Resilience Team Leader
Version	
Approved	

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Policy Objectives
- 3.0 Policy Scope
- 4.0 Policy Statement
- 5.0 Policy Management
- 6.0 Roles & Responsibilities
- 7.0 Policy Awareness
- 8.0 Review of Policy
- 9.0 Supporting Documentation

Signed _____

Tracey Kerly, Chief Executive

Date _____

Signed _____

Councillor Clarkson, Leader

Date _____

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Business Continuity Management is defined as:

‘a process that identifies potential threats to an organisation ... the impacts to business operations that those threats, if realised, might cause, and which provides a framework for building organisational resilience with ... effective response that safeguards the interests of its key stakeholders...’¹

1.2 Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 Ashford Borough Council (subsequently referred to as the Council) has a statutory duty to:

- a) Put in place Business Continuity management arrangements; and
- b) Promote Business Continuity management to businesses in Ashford.

1.3 This Policy therefore sets out the key principles that ensure the Council has effective Business Continuity Management processes in place to meet its legislative and regulatory obligations.

2.0 Policy Objectives

2.1 The objectives of this Policy are to:

- a) Outline the Council’s commitment and approach to Business Continuity Management;
- b) Ensure legislative and regulatory compliance;
- c) Maintain robust plans and arrangements that ensure the Council is able to manage effectively incidents or emergencies that threaten to disrupt delivery of its critical services;
- d) Minimise risk to the Council, its partners and stakeholders; and
- e) Provide effective governance arrangements to ensure appropriate ownership and oversight of the implementation and effectiveness of this Policy.

3.0 Policy Scope

3.1 This Policy applies to all services for which the Council has responsibility for delivery including services delivered ‘in-house’, outsourced, contracted, shared or commissioned services.

¹ British Standards Institute (BSI) - BS25999: Business Continuity Management

3.2 This Policy applies to:

- a) Permanent employees;
- a) Temporary / contract employees employed or engaged by the Council;
- b) Workers / volunteers employed or engaged by the Council; and
- c) Employees of partner or subsidiary organisations whilst at work and / or engaged on Council business.

4.0 Policy Statement

4.1 Vision

- 4.1.1 We will promote safer, stronger communities and provide better quality of services in Ashford by maintaining professional and effective Business Continuity Management processes.

4.2 Values

- 4.2.1 The values underpinning this vision are:

- a) Protecting health, safety, quality of life and economic stability & growth;
- b) Building and maintaining partnerships and collaborations across Ashford, including community, industry, public and voluntary sectors in all aspects of Business Continuity Management; and
- c) Ensuring accountability and transparency of the Council's Business Continuity Management arrangements.

4.3 General Principles

- 4.3.1 This Policy is underpinned by the following general principles:

- a) A transparent, systematic and consistent approach to Business Continuity Management;
- b) Communication is clear and effective and Business Continuity plans are written in Plain English;
- c) Consultative decision making;
- d) Prepared services and Officers who understand their role in responding to an incident or emergency that threatens to disrupt critical services;
- e) Business Continuity Management arrangements are regularly tested, exercised and maintained; and

- f) The application of effective corporate governance and commitment to continuous improvement of this Business Continuity Management Policy and its supporting arrangements, practices and service delivery.

4.4 Commitment

- 4.4.1 The Council will comply with all relevant legislation and statutory codes of practice and respond appropriately to regulatory or legislative change.
- 4.4.2 The Council accepts its responsibilities to continue to provide services to the citizens of Ashford (even in the event of incidents and emergencies) and acknowledges that many of these services are critical to health and quality of life within Ashford.
- 4.4.3 The Council is committed to ensuring critical services will continue to be delivered and that increased demand for services due to incidents or emergencies are managed effectively;
- 4.4.4 The Council will adopt and promote best practice for Business Continuity Management, minimising the impact of disruptive incidents on the Council and the communities of Ashford.
- 4.4.5 The Council is committed to working closely with all Officers to develop and implement Business Continuity arrangements that ensure the Council is able to manage effectively incidents or emergencies that threaten to disrupt delivery of its critical services.
- 4.4.6 The Council will provide information, instruction, training and supervision for employees to help them understand their role in its Business Continuity Management arrangements and to allow them to contribute positively towards those arrangements.
- 4.4.7 The Council is committed to the effective management of 3rd party contracts and their performance to improve Business Continuity Management arrangements with, and on behalf of, the Council.

5.0 Policy Management

- 5.1 This Policy will be managed by the Resilience Team Leader in partnership with Services, and Directors across Ashford Borough Council.
- 5.2 The Policy will be supported by:
 - a) An Overarching Business Continuity Plan (underpinned by Service level Business Continuity Plans);
 - b) Appropriately resourced action plans;

- c) Guidance, tools and templates; and
 - d) A schedule of training & exercising.
- 5.3 To ensure continuous improvement, all documents will be 'living documents', regularly reviewed & updated and take into account internal and external changes that may affect their implementation.

6.0 Roles & Responsibilities

6.1. Elected Members

- 6.1.1 The Portfolio Holder for Health Parking and Community Safety, which encompasses Emergency Planning, Business Continuity and Event Safety, oversees the work of the Service in managing the Borough Councils focus on Business Continuity.
- 6.1.2 Individual Cabinet Members have responsibility for overseeing the implementation of this Policy across their respective portfolios, specifically ensuring:
- a) Legislative and regulatory compliance;
 - b) Decisions taken when developing Council policies and services reflect the Council's commitment to Business Continuity Management; and
 - c) Effectiveness of the Policy across all the Council's services and its administrative area.
- 6.1.3 To support Cabinet in this role, an annual progress report on Business Continuity Management will be submitted to the Audit Committee as part of its wider Strategic Risk Management process. Regular reports will be provided to the Council's Management Team.

6.2. Chief Executive and Directors

- 6.2.1 Whilst Elected Members retain responsibility for overseeing this Policy, the Council's Chief Executive has the overall responsibility for achieving this Business Continuity Policy and accounts to the elected members for the operations of the Council complying with all Civil Contingencies legislation and standards.
- 6.2.2 The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that all statutory requirements are adhered to, and for reviewing the effectiveness of this policy. The Chief Executive will:
- a) Attend the Business Continuity Steering Group;
 - b) Ensure members of the Corporate Management Team establish and demonstrate commitment to the Business Continuity Policy.

- c) Promote a positive preparedness and resilience culture embracing and encouraging positive attitudes amongst all Officers and in the interface with other agencies and the community.
- d) Ensure appropriate priority is given to Business Continuity in Council strategic planning.
- e) Ensure that Business Continuity performance is reviewed annually and at other times when necessary.
- f) Ensure that Business Continuity arrangements are included in the business planning process, other strategic plans and job descriptions and objectives as appropriate.

6.2.2 Individual Directors are responsible for operational implementation within their respective Directorates. They will:

- a) Ensure this Policy, procedures and guidance are followed within the Directorate and implemented for which they are operationally responsible;
- b) Ensure appropriate priority and resources are made available for fulfilling the Council's commitment to Business Continuity Management;
- c) Ensure that Business Continuity Management responsibilities within their Division are properly assigned and fulfilled and that job descriptions reflect these assignments;
- d) Ensure Business Continuity Management arrangements are reflected adequately in Divisional, Service & Unit level business / operating plans.
- e) Implement, according to the agreed plans and processes, Business Continuity plans in the event of a disruption.
- f) Promote a positive Business Continuity Management culture embracing and encouraging positive attitudes amongst all Officers, through partnerships and in all areas affecting the community; and
- g) Ensure an appropriate response is made during incidents and emergencies that threaten to disrupt critical services.

6.3 Business Continuity Steering Group

6.3.1 The principle purpose of this group is to bring together the Chief Executive, named Directors and Heads of Services to oversee the Council's Business Continuity arrangements. They are able to review performance and make recommendations to change this Policy.

6.4. Head of Health, Parking and Community Safety

6.4.1 The Head of Health, Parking & Community Safety whose service has line management responsibility for the Business & Emergency Planning Team will:

- a) Advise and brief the Management Team to assure the achievement of the Council's commitment to Business Continuity Management; and
- b) Provide professional and specialist advice, support and guidance to Elected Members and Officers.

6.5. Heads of Service

6.5.1 Heads of Service are responsible for the provision of services. They will ensure that their service is prepared to deal with rapid increase in demand for services and to deal with incidents and emergencies that will impact performance of their Service. This will be reflected in relevant performance management processes. Heads of Service will:

- a) Promote a Business Continuity Management culture within their service, encouraging activities that develop the resilience of the unit and requiring consideration of Business Continuity Management in the provision of their services;
- b) Ensure their Service's needs and obligations are reflected in their service Business Continuity plans.
- c) Adopt and implement corporate Business Continuity Management guides, plans and procedures;
- d) Ensure Business Continuity responsibilities within the Service are properly assigned, fulfilled and that job descriptions reflect these responsibilities;
- e) Ensure all Officers in their Service are aware of Business Continuity Management issues that may impact on their service delivery;
- f) Ensure that instruction, training and supervision are provided to their Officers appropriate to their role and responsibility.
- g) Participate in Business Impact Analysis and performance review to assist in the development of an annual plan to address Business Continuity issues, including resourcing;
- h) Activate Business Continuity Plans for their Service in the event of an incident or emergency;
- i) Support all Directors and other Heads of Service by providing competent advice and efficient and timely service where a Service's operational effectiveness is critical to the effective delivery of other critical services in the Council e.g. ICT; and

- j) Make recommendations regarding the overall progress of Business Continuity Management and Emergency Planning within the Council.

6.6. Resilience Team Leader

- a) Maintain this Policy, and ensure the most up-to-date version is available to all Officers;
- b) Develop and manage the Council's Business Continuity Management arrangements;
- c) Ensure that adequate arrangements are made for consultation with Officers, including representatives and unions;
- d) Ensure necessary support is in place to enable officers to develop and test their Business Continuity arrangements;
- e) Ensure adequate testing is being undertaken to ensure the validation of the Council's service plans and overarching Business Continuity Plan; and
- f) Maintain the Council's Overarching Business Continuity Plan and, in consultation with Management Team, be responsible for implementing this plan in the event of an incident or emergency.

6.7. Team Leaders

6.7.1 Managers will be responsible for the implementation of Business Continuity Management processes. They will:

- a) Promote a Business Continuity Management culture within their Teams, encouraging activities that develop the resilience and requiring consideration of Business Continuity Management in the provision of their services; and
- b) Support their relevant Heads of Service in implementing their Business Continuity Plans for their Service, Unit or Team.

6.8. Individual Employees

6.8.1 Individual employees must:

- a) Be aware of the Business Continuity Management responsibilities of the Council and their own Service, Unit or Team;
- b) Understand their own role within an incident or emergency;
- c) Promote preparedness and a resilient culture within their own Service, Unit or Team; and
- d) Assist in any Business Continuity incident or emergency.

6.9. Business Continuity Incident Management Team

6.9.1 The principle purpose of this group is to bring together the Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Services to support key services within the Council (i.e. HR, Communications, IT, Finance), during a time of response so that information and issues relating to incidents and emergencies can be shared and appropriate measures for increasing resilience agreed.

6.10 Service Business Continuity Teams

6.10.1 The principle purpose of the Service Business Continuity Team is to ensure appropriate actions are undertaken at service level in order to get services and units back up and running in an acceptable period. This group comprises of the Strategic Lead i.e. the Head of Service and Team Leaders plus any others with key knowledge of the services critical activities.

7.0 Policy Awareness

7.1 This Policy will be communicated through multiple channels:

- a) Cabinet;
- b) Management Team;
- c) Audit Committee; and
- d) Made available on the intranet.

8.0 Policy Review

8.1 This Policy will be reviewed annually. It will be amended, if necessary, to take into account new legal requirements, non-statutory guidance from central government and implementation of relevant industry standards.

9.0 Supporting Documentation

9.1 Information, advice & guidance can be found on the intranet under Services > Emergency Planning and Business Continuity > Business Continuity or by contacting the Resilience Team Leader on:

Email: laurel.niven@ashford.gov.uk

Tel: 01233 330271