

APPENDIX 2

CHESHIRE EAST BOROUGH COUNCIL

BUSINESS CONTINUITY POLICY AND STRATEGY

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to clearly outline the Council's commitment to business continuity planning and its links to risk management. In addition it defines and clarifies roles and responsibilities.

2.0 Background and Requirements

- 2.1 The Civil Contingencies Act (2004) (CCA) provides the framework for Civil Protection in the UK, and places a number of duties on Local Authorities regarding preparation for and response to emergencies. Cheshire East Borough Council, as a Category 1 (front-line responder) is required to develop and maintain business continuity plans, so that key functions can continue to be delivered in an emergency. This also involves consideration of the resilience of those organisations on whom the Council relies to maintain key services, including any third parties who provide services on its behalf.
- 2.2 As well as implementing Business Continuity Plans, the CCA also requires Local Authorities to promote and provide general business continuity management advice to commercial and voluntary organisations in the area. This duty aims to enable local businesses to better maintain critical elements of their service and recover more quickly should an incident arise, therefore lessening the economic and social impact on the local community.
- 2.3 Business continuity management (BCM) is a planned process aimed at managing the many and varied operational risks inherent in the day-day activities involved in delivering services, and, therefore, it is an essential element of risk management, helping to create a resilient organisation and one which is able to provide continuous service delivery and effective use of resources. Effective risk management can reduce the likelihood of an incident occurring, whilst business continuity planning can reduce the impact if it does occur. As well as increased resilience, there are many benefits to having a structured and consistent BCM process in place:

- Credibility – protecting and enhancing the reputation of Cheshire East Borough Council.
- Supporting corporate governance and the requirement to produce an Annual Governance Statement
- Reduced costs – protecting assets, working more efficiently, reducing recovery cost, assurance of third party providers of services (who may be required to demonstrate effective resilience as part of any tender for business), lower insurance premiums, where the Council can demonstrate proactive management of continuity risks.

3.0 Objective of the Strategy

- 3.1 The objective of this strategy is to set out the requirement for Cheshire East Council to take steps to ensure that, in the event of a service interruption, essential services will be maintained and normal services restored as soon as possible. To ensure that this happens, the Council must have in place robust business continuity and service recovery plans that are regularly reviewed and tested. In addition, the Council will promote and provide business continuity advice to local businesses and voluntary organisations, in order to ensure, in conjunction with the Joint Cheshire Emergency Planning Service, that the Cheshire East region is well prepared for any unforeseen events.

4.0 Implementation and Responsibilities

- 4.1 Business continuity requires senior management commitment and support, and dedicated resource allocated within the Authority to ensure that plans are developed, maintained, reviewed, and, most importantly, tested, so that they are fit for purpose. It also needs to be built into the change management process to ensure the implications of any change are fully considered prior to implementation and that resilience is built into the project deliverables.
- 4.2 Because business continuity is an essential element of risk management, it will be managed as part of the Cheshire East Risk Management Strategy, and responsibility for its delivery will be incorporated into the roles outlined in the Risk Management Strategy.

Members and Member Champion – ensure an effective Business Continuity strategy is in place.

Cabinet – receive monitoring reports and annual report on the progress of Business Continuity within the Council.

Governance and Constitution Committee – provide independent assurance of the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's resilience as part of the Risk Management framework.

Directors and Chief Officers – ensure the production, communication, review and testing of Business Continuity plans for their Directorate/Services and ensure all staff are fully aware of these plans.

Corporate Risk Management Group – monitor the progress and status of business continuity planning and the Council's level of resilience. Report quarterly to the Corporate Management Team, Cabinet and Governance and Constitution Committee.

Directorate Risk Management Groups – coordinate the Directorate's business continuity planning response and report quarterly on its progress and status to the Corporate Risk Management Group.

Internal Audit – Risk Management (Compliance Team)

Provide training, support, guidance and advice, as well relevant templates and documentation to aid the planning process.

Provide support in the coordination and implementation of testing.

Liaise with the Joint Cheshire Emergency Planning Team and the Cheshire Local Resilience Forum, to ensure that the Council is aware of and fully incorporated into the regional emergency and continuity planning processes. Lead in the promotion of business continuity planning to local businesses and voluntary organisations.

Internal Audit

Provide an independent assessment of the robustness, or otherwise, of the Business Continuity Plans within Services.

Other members of staff

Ensure that they are fully aware of the Business Continuity Plans for their particular area of work, and take proactive steps to improve resilience wherever possible.

5.0 Developing Plans

5.1 Understanding the operation – Business impact analyses (BIA) need to take place to identify and agree critical processes or services and the potential damage or loss that may be caused to the Council and the community as a result of a disruption. A BIA must consider the minimum level of staffing, skills and resources required to enable essential services to continue operating at a minimum acceptable level. Following this, risk assessments must be undertaken to identify internal and external threats to the Council, the likelihood of these occurring, and therefore the potential impact.

5.2 Strategies – strategies must be developed to offset the identified risks, e.g. eliminate single points of failure, implement better controls, etc.

5.3 Developing and implementing plans – these must be documented and available for use within any type of emergency incident. They must also include ‘stand-by’ arrangements, including accommodation and specialist equipment, as well as IT systems and telecommunications. They need to tie in with plans already in place, such as the Cheshire East Council Major Emergency Plan and the Emergency Rest Centre Plan.

5.4 Building and embedding a BCM culture – there is a need to have an effective education and awareness programme in place to ensure that all staff are fully aware of the impact of an unforeseen event, and their roles and responsibilities in a recovery situation.

5.5 Exercising, maintenance and audit – there must be a regular testing programme in place within Directorates and Services, to ensure that the critical components of the plans are exercised.

6.0 Review

6.1 This strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis alongside the review of the risk management strategy.