



CHESTERFIELD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Business Continuity Policy

Version 4.0
March 2024

Foreword

Chesterfield Borough Council provides services for all our residents, all those who work in our borough and for the many visitors to our borough.

The importance of our services to the community means that we must be able to continue providing core services effectively even when things go wrong.

It would be easy to concentrate on what residents may perceive as the 'larger' threats, such as terrorism, fuel shortage or pandemics, as they feature heavily in the media and can raise public concerns about our ability to cope in a crisis. But we also have a duty to look ahead to the less high profile but predictable problems, such as adverse weather conditions or loss of communications, power and water.

Risk assessments have been carried out nationally, regionally and locally to assess the likelihood and impact of external hazards and threats - we need to ensure we have done everything necessary to prepare our services to cope.

This Business Continuity Plan helps us to be confident that we are in a position to respond if things go wrong by ensuring we have defined procedures in place to reduce risks by responding quickly during major disruption.

Staff will continue to be trained to understand their roles and responsibilities should problems arise which affect the numbers of staff available, the buildings they use or the systems and technology they need to do their job.

The plan covers all council services and looks at priorities to continue critical service provision. Business continuity service area arrangements have been introduced across the council and cover all the authority's activities, partnership working and external suppliers.

Each service area has a responsibility to deliver its particular part of the plan and support other areas as requested, as any serious disruption will need a corporate response to be effective.

It is important that this process, including evaluating and managing risks, is integrated into the core activities of the council. This will continue to be done through a programme of awareness raising, training and exercises.

We encourage every service area to participate in and support the development of this forward planning so any problems which may arise can be handled with minimum disruption to retain the confidence of local people and organisations.

Huw Bowen
Chief Executive

Councillor Tricia Gilby
Leader

1 Policy

1.1 Scope

Chesterfield Borough 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.

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 placed a statutory duty on the council to ensure that it can:

- respond to an emergency
- continue to support emergency response partners
- continue to provide critical services to the public.

The Business Continuity Plan provides the operational structure for responding to serious disruption, and can be summarised as follows:

- To have an operational document that sets out priorities, management structures and communications mechanisms to ensure an appropriate response to any disruption.
- Addresses the full range of the council's functions and service areas. Where appropriate, it considers the interdependencies of different organisations, mutual aid and partnership arrangements.
- Specific strategies have been produced to mitigate the effects of loss of infrastructure including buildings, communications, IT and staff.
- Service areas will continue to prepare and maintain business continuity service area arrangements as appropriate.

1.2 Aim and objectives

The aim of the plan is to anticipate risks, mitigate where possible and to have flexible and tested plans in place to minimise disruption when unplanned events significantly interrupt normal business.

The objectives are to:

- ensure the council can continue to exercise its critical functions in the event of an emergency
- identify the potential areas of vulnerability in council services
- determine overall priorities for recovery of functions if disruption takes place
- build on processes already in place for risk management, ensuring that all plans are integrated into the overall framework
- 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
- undertake training and awareness programmes for staff, suppliers and partners as appropriate and carry out regular tests of the plan to validate the arrangements.

1.3 Methods and standards

The council's business continuity management arrangements currently meet the mandatory requirements within the Cabinet Office document 'Expectations and Indicators of Good Practice Set for Category 1 and 2 Responders'. It also follows the principles of ISO 22301.

1.4 Responsibilities

The business continuity management process is designed to ensure it is a mainstream activity rather than simply an emergency response.

The chief executive champions business continuity management across the authority, however the responsibility for business continuity does not rest solely with the chief executive but is shared by all staff.

Service directors have been identified as lead officers for business continuity, responsible for obtaining information and co-ordinating service area actions, or identifying another officer to undertake the responsibility on their behalf. Information gathered is subject to peer review to seek a consistent approach to service prioritisation and a shared understanding of the overall needs.

1.5 Governance

This plan takes into consideration the community risk register to ensure business continuity reflects the current assessment of likelihood of adverse events. It is also reviewed annually to ensure that information on service area functions is kept up to date. The borough council's universal contact list which contains contacts and telephone information is reviewed six-monthly.

The plan will be reviewed when there are significant changes to accommodation, structural reorganisations within the council or if new duties or responsibilities are taken on, however it is the responsibility of lead officers within each service area to notify the senior emergency planning officer of any significant changes that occur between updates.

In line with current legislation the plan will be comprehensively reviewed every four years in parallel with the community risk register, but this is intended as a maximum period and the plan will remain a central management activity linked to risk management.

Periodically and in line with the council's auditing policy, the Business Continuity Plan may be audited by either the internal audit team or external auditors appointed by the council. The last internal audit was completed in October 2015 and the results were found to be satisfactory.

The plan has also been benchmarked against local authority business continuity plans in Derbyshire and peer review at strategic level to seek a consistent approach to service prioritisation and a shared understanding of the overall needs. The benchmarking could be enriched by extending to plans outside of Derbyshire, and this is proposed in the future.

1.6 Training and exercises

Training takes place regularly for those officers likely to be called on to lead or be part of the business continuity management and support teams.

Lessons learnt from training and exercises are used to determine any amendments or inclusions required when the plan is updated.