

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

29TH APRIL 2009

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mrs Jill Dyer M.B.E.
Responsible Head of Service	Phil Street
Non-Key	

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 Business Continuity Management ensures that the Council can respond effectively and efficiently to any emergency that may affect the Council's work. The Council has prepared a Business Continuity Plan that aims to minimise the impact of an emergency and allow the Council's work to recover quickly.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Business Continuity Plan be approved and that work proceed with separate plans for specific emergencies such as pandemic flu and for individual departments service recovery plans

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 It is important that in the case of an emergency the Council can maintain critical services and make sure that it recovers speedily. The majority of emergencies are short term and modest in their scale. Normally it will involve such things as temporary power cuts, problems with heating systems, IT failures or short term severe weather problems.
- 3.2 Occasionally the emergency can be slightly more disruptive such as a fire in a section of the building, a gas leak or discovery of a war time bomb.
- 3.3 In many cases the disruption is extremely modest and services experience little by way of dislocation and the problem can be overcome without major difficulties.
- 3.4 However, Council's and businesses need to be in a position where they are prepared for more extensive disruptions to services. The Council needs to be capable of addressing more wide scale problems that are either longer in duration or more intense in their effects. This may include prolonged periods of severe weather, extensive fire damage or significant levels of illness.

- 3.5 It is for this reason that the Council and other businesses require business continuity plans. The business continuity plan, which is inextricably linked to the Council's emergency plan, provides a framework in which the Council can operate in the eventuality of a significant disruption to services.
- 3.6 The work on the plan has involved understanding the Council's business. Through a process of business impact assessment the Council has analysed those parts of the Council's work that are the least tolerant to disruption. In this instance tolerance means which parts of the Council's work is most critical to its customers or regulatory demands.
- 3.7 The Council has analysed its work in terms of tolerance and in certain cases there are aspects of its work that could cope with relatively extensive periods of disruption or service failure without major impact on customers or the organisation's functional capacity. There are other services that are mission critical and have such a low tolerance that they must be restored within 48 hours or less.
- 3.8 The Council has analysed its services in time frames of tolerance for one day, one week and one month. The services that have the lowest tolerance are IT; refuse and recycling; payroll; benefits; Lifeline; environmental health; communications; human resources and strategic housing.
- 3.9 The Business Continuity Plan has examined some of the causes of disruption and has identified strategies for coping with the emergency. It has also examined the impact of an emergency on the various facets of the Council's work. The business continuity plan details steps to be taken in the case of a disruption. It identifies minimum operating requirements and equipment needs. It examines whether work can be continued from home or whether an alternative location can be identified. It primarily considers those services that are mission critical and assumes that in the instance of a prolonged period of disruption actions will be developed that can be introduced in a longer time frame.
- 3.10 The plan assigns responsibilities for its implementation to both senior management and departmental management.
- 3.11 The analysis has revealed that in certain areas of the organisation there are adequate arrangements in the case of an emergency. However, the process of drawing up the plan has also revealed significant gaps in relation to business continuity, such as alternative accommodation in the event of extensive damage or inability to access one of the Council's buildings.
- 3.12 Business continuity management and the production of a plan for an organisation as complex as the Council takes a considerable amount of time and effort. An initial draft has been prepared, but it is an evolving

document and this process of may never be genuinely regarded as completed. The business continuity plan for the Council will need to be supplemented by departmental service recovery plans. Furthermore, there are some emergencies that will require specific plans including one that guides the organisation during a period of an epidemic.

- 3.13 The success of the business continuity management lies in establishing effective relationships with other organisations including other local council's. The business continuity plan provides an important first stage in having a robust response to organisation disruption. However, this has to be followed by further actions such as described in 3.12 above.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 In the case of most disruptions there will be no or extremely limited financial implications. However, if the disruption amounts to a 'quiet catastrophe' or a more extensive emergency there may be substantial financial implications.
- 4.2 It may be necessary to hire alternative accommodation, rent a portacabin, or acquire equipment or materials.
- 4.3 In many cases the Council's insurance will cover many of the circumstances surrounding a disruption, but there may be costs incurred that are not included in the Council's insurance policies.
- 4.4 It is difficult to project in advance the financial implications associated with disruption as this will depend on the nature and scale of the disruption.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Civil Contingencies Act requires Category 1 responders, of which district councils form part, to maintain plans to ensure that they can continue to exercise their functions in the event of an emergency so far as is reasonably practicable.
- 5.2 The BCM duty in the Act relates to all the functions of a Category 1 responder, not just its civil protection functions. Hence the legislation requires Category 1 responders to maintain plans to deal with emergencies and put in place arrangements to warn and inform the public in the event of an emergency. But, it also requires them to make provision for ensuring that their ordinary functions can be continued to the extent required. The Regulations also require Category 1 responders to put in place a training programme for those directly involved in the execution of the BCP should it be invoked.

6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 Business continuity management contributes to customer service and maintaining performance as well as assisting in further the sense of community.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 In the absence of a business continuity plan, the impact of an emergency could be severe, adversely affecting day to day functions. Business continuity has to be linked to corporate risk register and ensure actions are in place to limit the likelihood of disruptions and formulating responses to disruptions that are outside of the Council's control.
- 7.2 There are risks to reputation as well as operations from not having adequate business continuity in place. The business impact assessment has identified those areas of the organisation that are mission critical and have the lowest level of tolerance.
- 7.3 The provision of IT is essential to the effective provision of services and the Council's work. Similarly, if refuse is not collected it can effect public health and wider community well-being.
- 7.4 The business continuity ensures the Council considers the risks to mission critical services and has in place arrangements to maintain these services in the context of disruption.

8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Customers will expect continuity of service even in quite challenging circumstances. They will expect the Council to be able to maintain its work and provide its services. The business impact assessment has had as one its main drivers the impact a disruption will have in providing critical services to customers.

9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no direct implications for equalities and diversity. However, a significant disruption may affect vulnerable people especially those who depend on benefits. A major disruption can affect their income and homes.

10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Business continuity assists in identifying risks in advance. This will lead to the Council allocating its resources and taking actions that may result in their more effective and efficient deployment. For example, through acquiring fire proof storage this may reduce the council's needs to expand resources in acquiring documentation that can be stored safely.

Expenditure on back up for IT may reduce the need for temporary relocation or acquiring new equipment.

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues – May affect procurement if additional equipment or resources are required in the case of loss through fire or other incidents.
Personnel Implications – According to the scale of the disruption personnel issues may be a significant consideration for example payroll and managing staff absence and staff deployment.
Governance/Performance Management – A prolonged disruption could effect performance
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998 – None in the short term
Policy – Business Continuity Management is an important aspect of Council activities.
Environmental – None directly

12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	Yes
Chief Executive	Yes
Executive Director (Partnerships and Projects)	Yes
Executive Director (Services)	Yes
Assistant Chief Executive	Yes
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	Yes
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes
Head of Organisational Development & HR	Yes
Corporate Procurement Team	No

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13. WARDS AFFECTED

All Wards

14. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Initial draft of business continuity plan

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Background papers included Business Continuity Institute Good Practice Guidelines; West Mercia Local Resilience Forum leaflet on Business Continuity; Cabinet Office Guidance on Business Continuity and Civil Contingencies.

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