



Business Continuity Management Policy

Document Owner	Graham Seeley - Resilience Officer emergencyplanning@swale.gov.uk
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1. Introduction

Business Continuity Management is defined as:

The capability of the organisation to continue delivery of products or services at acceptable pre-defined levels following a disruptive incident.

SBC has a legal duty within the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to ensure that **we can continue to provide our services to the public during times of disruption to our business.**

The main risks to our business are:

- a) Loss of staff (staff shortage)
- b) Loss of building or premises
- c) Loss of ICT services
- d) Loss of utilities
- e) Loss of Critical suppliers/ contractors

The Business Continuity Framework will describe how we plan for and manage such events and risks.

We risk assess the activities and services we deliver and identify our most important ones. These are known as our critical services. By pre-planning, we can make sure that we know what to do to carry on with the activities necessary to deliver these services in the event of disruption.

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

1.1 Link between Business Continuity and Emergency Planning

Any response to a council wide event of disruption will invoke the council's Major Emergency Plan which has established systems for activation and escalation. This is done through a Duty Officer or Emergency Coordinator reporting to Corporate and working with other staff with roles within the Major Emergency Plan.

2.0 Policy Objectives

2.1 The objectives of this Policy are to:

- a) Outline SBC's commitment and approach to Business Continuity Management.
- b) Ensure legislative and regulatory compliance.
- c) Minimise risk to SBC, its partners, and stakeholders
- d) Provide effective governance arrangements to ensure appropriate ownership and oversight of Business Continuity arrangements.

3.0 Policy Scope

- 3.1 This Policy applies to all services where SBC has responsibility for delivery. This includes services delivered 'in-house', outsourced, contracted, shared, or commissioned services.
- 3.2 This policy applies to all departments and services provided by the council irrespective of whether they have been identified as a critical service or not.
- 3.3 This policy identifies the following as critical services delivered by the council for which recovery arrangements may be prioritised following an incident or disruption.

SBC Critical Services and Business Continuity Leads

While the services below have been pre identified as the council's critical services, there may be a need to re prioritise during an incident. This will be dependent on the type of emergency or business continuity incident the council is responding to. Reprioritisation of services could also be based on seasonality/time critical functions within service areas not otherwise included in the list e.g. Elections.

Irrespective of the type of incident however, the council's top 5 critical services in all cases will be **ICT, Payroll, Communications, Customer Services, and Finance.**

The council delivers many more important services not listed in the table below. The nature of these other services means staff working in these areas could be redeployed to support work in other parts of the council.

	Department/Service	Business Continuity Lead
1	ICT	Head of ICT
2	Payroll	Head of Mid Kent HR
3	Communications	Communications and Police Manager
4	Customer Services	Customer Services Manager
5	Finance	Principal Accountant
6	Environmental Health	Environmental Health Manager

7	Revenues & Benefits	Head of Kid Kent Revenues and Benefits
8	Housing Options	Housing Advice Service Manager
9	Building Control	Buildings and Operations and Maintenance Manager
10	Emergency Planning & Resilience	Community Services Manager
11	Waste	Environmental Services Manager
12	Legal	Head of Legal Partnership
13	Leisure & Open Spaces	Leisure and Technical Services Manager
14	Control Centre	Community Services Manager
15	Parking Services	Parking Services Manager

3.4 The methodology for determining the critical services is an assessment of **FORCES** – **F**inancial, **O**perational, **R**eputation, **C**ustomers, **E**nvironment, and **S**taff.

3.5 This Policy applies to:

- a) Permanent employees
- b) Temporary / contract employees employed or engaged by SBC
- c) Workers / volunteers employed or engaged by SBC
- d) Employees of partner or subsidiary organisations whilst at work and/or engaged in SBC business

4.0 Principles, guidelines, and minimum standards

This policy is underpinned by the following general principles:

- 4.1 Prepared services and staff who understand their role in responding to an incident or emergency that threatens to disrupt critical services.
- 4.2 BC arrangements are regularly tested, exercised, and maintained.
- 4.3 SBC will adopt and promote best practice for Business Continuity based on the Good Practice Guidelines (2023 edition)
- 4.4 SBC is committed to working closely with all staff to develop and implement Business Continuity arrangements.
- 4.5 SBC 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.
- 4.6 SBC is committed to the effective management of third-party contracts and their performance to improve Business Continuity Management arrangements with, and on behalf of, SBC.

5.0 Policy Management

- 5.1 Implementation of this Policy will be delivered through the SBC Corporate Business Continuity Management Programme, managed by the Emergency Planning and Resilience Team in partnership with all Services and Directorates.
- 5.2 The Programme will be supported by:
 - a) Appropriately resourced work plans
 - b) Guidance, tools, and templates
 - c) A programme of training & exercising
 - d) Business Continuity Plans
- 5.3 To ensure continuous improvement, all documents will be 'living documents', regularly reviewed, and updated to consider internal and external changes that may affect their implementation.

6.0 Roles & Responsibilities

6.1. Elected Members

- 6.1.2 **Monitoring and Oversight:** Members will be kept updated on this policy and actions being taken in response to disruptive incidents.
- 6.1.3 Councillors will ensure that the council is making progress in improving its business continuity capabilities. To facilitate this, members will be updated on key outcomes and recommendations arising from debrief sessions following a major business continuity incident.

6.2 Corporate Directors and Executive

- 6.2.1 **The Chief Executive** acts as the corporate sponsor for Business Continuity Management and is accountable for ensuring we deliver our critical services.
 - a) While the Chief Executive is accountable for Business Continuity, this role is delegated to the Head of Housing & Community Services under whose 'service area' the Emergency Planning and Resilience service currently sits.
- 6.2.2 Individual Corporate **Directors** are responsible for implementing this Policy in their respective directorates to:
 - a) Prioritise and allocate resources towards achieving the council's business continuity management objectives.
 - b) Promote a positive Business Continuity Management culture embracing and encouraging positive attitudes amongst all staff

6.2.3 Directors will ensure that the services reporting to them are prepared to deal with rapid increase in demand for services and to deal with disruptive events that could impact on the performance of their service. Directors will:

- a) Ensure that Business Continuity Management responsibilities within their directorate are properly assigned and fulfilled and that job descriptions reflect these assignments.
- b) Ensure Business Continuity Management arrangements are reflected adequately in directorate and service level business operating plans.

6.2.4 The Head of Housing & Community Services Chairs the Emergency Planning & Business Continuity steering group meetings and has the delegated role of being accountable for and overseeing the business continuity arrangements and emergency planning work plan and programme for the council.

6.2.5 Strategic Leads/ Duty Directors – As part of the council's Major Emergency Plan, the duty director will be responsible for providing strategic direction during or in response to a disruptive event. The duty director will make the strategic decision to commence staff redeployment from their primary role to support other services where necessary.

6.3 **Enterprise Risk & Resilience Manager (Maidstone BC)**

6.3.1 The Enterprise Risk & Resilience Manager along with support from the Community Services Manager will:

- a) Advise and brief the Executive Management Team to assure the achievement of SBC's commitment to Business Continuity Management.
- b) Maintain this Policy and ensure the most up-to-date version is available to all staff.
- c) Develop and manage the SBC Corporate Business Continuity Management Programme,
- d) Ensure that the corporate training programme makes adequate provision for the development of Business Continuity Management skills.
- e) Maintain SBC Corporate Business Continuity planning arrangements.

6.4 **Tactical Lead/ Emergency Coordinator**

6.4.1 As part of SBC's Major Emergency Plan, The Emergency Coordinator will work with the strategic lead to declare an incident when appropriate and coordinate the council's response to any business continuity or emergency incidents.

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 and to deal with incidents and emergencies that will impact on performance and service delivery. This needs to be reflected in their performance management processes. Heads of Service will:

- a) Promote a Business Continuity Management culture within their service, encouraging activities that develop resilience.
- b) Ensure the needs and obligations of their service are reflected in the Business Continuity Plans.
- c) Ensure Business Continuity responsibilities within the Service are properly assigned and that job descriptions reflect these responsibilities.
- d) Participate in Business Impact Analysis for their service area.
- e) Activate Business Continuity Plans for their Service in the event of an incident or emergency

6.6 Managers and Team Leaders

6.6.1 Managers and Team Leaders will be responsible for the implementation of Business Continuity Management processes and plans within teams. They will:

- a) Promote a Business Continuity Management culture within their teams, encouraging activities that develop resilience.
- b) Support their relevant Heads of Service in developing and implementing a Business Continuity Plan for their Service, Unit or Team.

6.7 Individual Employees

6.7.1 Individual employees must:

- a) Be aware of the Business Continuity Management responsibilities of SBC and their own Service, Unit or Team
- b) Understand their role within an incident or emergency
- c) Assist in the promotion of a prepared and resilient culture within their Service, Unit or Team.

7.0 Policy Awareness

7.1 This Policy will be communicated through multiple channels, such as all staff webinars and available on:

- a) SBC sharepoint pages as read only

- b) The council's website

8.0 Policy Review

- 8.1 The BC policy will be reviewed every 3 years, following an incident or significant changes in the organisation including:
- a) A change in the council's approach to risk
 - b) An acquisition or disposal of a major asset
 - c) Changes to services (including outsourced services)
 - d) Changes to legal or regulatory requirements

9.0 Sign off

- 9.1 There are 5 stages to signing off the BC policy which includes the following:
- a) The Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Steering Group (which meets quarterly) will be consulted.
 - b) Agreement from the Executive Management Team.
 - c) Initial review through the Informal Administration meeting
 - d) Sign off through the Swale Committee System, by the Policy and Resources Committee
 - e) Final sign off by elected members