

BUSINESS CONTINUITY POLICY

OVERVIEW

The objectives of a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) are:

- to provide guidance, establish actions to be taken and develop procedures that will allow the Council to manage any incident;
- to ensure the continued operation of key services;
- to keep the organisation working effectively;
- to inform the community and customers of the Council.

The BCP must cover all areas of the Council's business, including issues for the:

- staff – operational issues; to ensure their ability to undertake their day-to-day duties;
- council – statutory requirements, Councillors' business, service provider to customers (residents, visitors); to ensure they are undertaken with minimal disruption, and stakeholders kept informed and details and updates are well communicated.

Responsibility for implementing the BCP rests with the Proper Officer (PO), or, in his absence, the RFO. They must ensure that they have access to the BCP, including appendices, that is not dependent upon access to the office, and that the appendices themselves are updated as soon as any aspect changes.

There are many scenarios that may result in the need to implement aspects of the BCP, but this document focuses on loss of:

- main office location;
- any of the main community buildings; WNC, Broadwater or Pepperpot;
- IT capabilities from internal or external causes;
- Town Clerk or RFO.

In each scenario there will be a series of immediate actions to be considered and undertaken where relevant. There will then be additional considerations specific to each. It is recognised that those listed here are not exhaustive, as there is a balance to be struck between the benefits of preparedness and the investment of effort in planning for an event that might never happen.

The appendices to the BCP contain emergency contact details and other key information where immediate access may be required. For GDPR and other security reasons the actual details will only be included in restricted access versions of the BCP.

IMMEDIATE STEPS – ALL SCENARIOS

1. Follow any relevant guidelines, such as

- fire – evacuate and contact emergency services;
 - smell gas – turn off and phone 0800 111 999;
 - malicious threat – bomb warning.
2. Under no circumstances should staff or others be put at risk.
 3. Contact the PO and RFO, who will then take control of the situation unless the emergency services are involved.
 4. Make a quick assessment or value judgement of the seriousness of the situation and issues likely to be involved.
 5. Notify key stakeholders, using details in Appendices
 - staff;
 - Leader, Mayor and political group leaders, who should be requested to notify the remainder of their group;
 - insurers, if the incident is likely to give rise to a claim.
 6. In conjunction with the Leader, decide roles and responsibilities for staff and other elected members, as appropriate.
 7. Arrange more detailed briefings for staff and councilors.
 8. Decide the nature and extent of more extensive communication with residents and other relevant stakeholders.

SUBSEQUENT STEPS – ALL SCENARIOS

1. Ensure adequate resources are input to assist the recovery of the service, including those available from insurers.
2. Appropriate reviews of the situation are undertaken, through regular updates and Officers, Councillors and customers are kept updated and informed.
3. Officers are utilised effectively and efficiently, particularly in the event of providing cover, to expedite a prompt return to normal service.
4. Adequate checks are carried out when the services and systems are recovered, in particular when systems are restored from back-up records, so that they are fully restored and reinstated and operating correctly.
5. All details, i.e. resources, additional costs etc., are recorded and where applicable photographed.
6. If an insurance claim is to be made
 - ideally retain all damaged property until insurers have the opportunity to inspect;
 - set up a separate cost centre so that all aspects are included. Any aspect not paid by insurers can be reassigned to normal cost centres subsequently.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS – LOSS OF GTC OFFICES

1. Are alternative premises needed or can staff work from home for the expected duration of the interruption? If it is not currently feasible for them to do so for up to a week, are there sensible steps that can be taken now to ensure that they can do so for a few days, at least?
2. Options for alternative premises include:
 - early occupation of 107-109 High Street, depending on the date of emergency. Increased costs of doing so should be met by insurers.
 - adaptation of all or part of a community building for office use. It is recommended that consideration be given to likely requirements for this scenario and an outline plan developed as to how they might be met.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS – LOSS OF COMMUNITY BUILDINGS

1. Repair or reinstatement should be arranged as expeditiously as possible, in conjunction with insurers where appropriate.
2. All customers with bookings in the affected building should be included in the list of stakeholders for immediate contact, even if the booking is beyond the expected period of interruption.
3. Assistance should be offered to affected customers to secure alternative facilities in Council buildings or elsewhere.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS – LOSS OF KEY PERSONNEL

1. The PO or RFO should discuss the situation with the Leader as soon as possible to devise an action plan, including the possible need for additional temporary staff.
2. It is recommended that key aspects of each key role should be reviewed in advance to identify which aspects can be assigned to other staff, and the adjustments that might be necessary to allow for this. These might include:
 - delegation of aspects of their normal role to others;
 - additional training to enable this to happen, especially where this might be an aide to career development;
 - identify aspects of activity that could be suspended altogether or scaled back for the duration.

APPENDICES

The secure master copy of the BCP should contain appendices with the details listed below. PO and RFO must ensure that they have remote access to these details.

- staff phone numbers and private emails addresses;
- elected member phone numbers and private emails addresses, albeit that the initial communication requirement envisages that political group leaders will be responsible for cascading information to their peers;
- entry access codes and alarm codes for all buildings;
- 24/7 contact details for insurers – for use in the event of a major loss;
- office contact details for insurance broker and insurers;
- contact details for all IT service providers, and details of their emergency support commitments;
- details of any pre-planning as outlined in the BCP, including contact details for any potential service providers identified.