

Business Continuity Policy

September 2023

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BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT POLICY

1 Policy Statement

- 1.1. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a statutory requirement for Local Authorities to put in place a Business Continuity Management Programme to ensure the Council can deliver its priority activities in the event of an emergency. Services are expected to have arrangements in place to ensure the effective identification, evaluation and management of priority activities for the Council to recover.
- 1.2 This policy sets out Sefton Council's commitment to the management of Business Continuity. By ensuring we have a Corporate Business Continuity Plan supported by Service Plans and Operational Recovery plans, this will enable the Council to respond to any incident or disruption and maintain our ability to continue to deliver priority activities and meet our contractual, legislative and regulatory obligations.
- 1.3 The Strategic Leadership Board has overall accountability to ensure this policy is effectively implemented throughout the Council. To achieve this goal, we will:
 - Maintain a Business Continuity Management Programme that broadly aligns to the requirements of ISO 22301 and the Business Continuity Institute Good Practice Guide 2018.
 - Establish Business Continuity objectives and targets, processes, and procedures relevant to managing risk and improving organisational resilience.
 - Ensure that the Business Continuity Management Programme is subject to on-going appraisal against this policy evidenced by a structured testing regime.
 - Maintain and improve Business Continuity Management Programme arrangements through preventive and corrective actions; and
 - Ensure that the Business Continuity Management Programme and associated policy, standards, procedures, and plans are embedded into the day-to-day activities and culture of the business.

2. Purpose

- 2.2. Business Continuity is not an additional activity undertaken by the Local Authority it is a key component of a well-run organisation by ensuring priority activities continue to be delivered in a crisis. Business Continuity provides a structured process to return service delivery to usual working standards should the business be disrupted by:
 - Loss of staff / people
 - Loss of premises
 - IT and information issues
 - Suppliers and partners
 - Civil Emergency Incident

3. Scope

- 3.1 Sefton Council's Business Continuity Management Programme encompasses all of our operations. This includes our outward facing service areas as well as corporate support functions such as HR, IT and Finance.
- 3.2 The Business Continuity Management Policy applies to the following stakeholders:
 - All staff and elected members
 - Contractors
 - Delivery partners within our supply chain.

4. Aims and Objectives

- 4.1 Sefton Council are committed to maintaining our business activities to a high standard and responding to any form of disruption in a structured way. To do this we have an overarching Business Continuity Framework in the form of a Corporate Business Continuity Plan supported by Service Plans and Operational Recovery plans to facilitate the return to business as usual as quickly as possible. The objectives to support the Business Continuity Management Programme (BCMP) create a calendar of regular monitoring events, creating a picture of how the BCMP is performing and providing all the information required to exercise management control.
 - Fully understand the organisation and develop a robust and enduring continuity response in critical areas and activities.
 - Exercise and test continuity arrangements and plans to ensure suitability.
 - Work with Agilisys to ensure IT disaster recovery arrangements are appropriate for the organisation.
 - Provide appropriate training and awareness of the BCMP to further embed the continuity culture within the organisation.
 - Maintain and continually improve the BCMP to ensure it remains current, appropriate, effective and aligned to industry standards and best practice.
 - Manage existing and emerging external continuity considerations (understanding our suppliers)
 - Review and maintain continuity-related risks and threats to the organisation.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Cabinet** - approve the Council's Business Continuity Management Strategy and Policy.
- **Audit and Governance Committee** – monitor the progress of the implementation of the Business Continuity Policy and Strategy on behalf of Cabinet.

- **Chief Executive**
 - Overall responsibility for the design and implementation of Council Business Continuity Framework and its operation.
 - Delegation of the responsibilities for the design and implementation of the Council Business Continuity Framework
 - Responsible for and the approval of the Corporate Business Continuity Plan
 - Attend business continuity training and periodic exercises as requested.
 - Promotion of the benefits and the requirements for Business Continuity across the Council.
 - Will form an Incident Management team at the commencement of a Business Continuity Incident and lead on the Council's response.
 - Review the 1st line and 2nd line assurance provided on the Business Continuity Framework.

- **Executive Directors**
 - Contribute to the completion and periodic updating of the Corporate Business Continuity Plan.
 - Attend training and periodic exercises as requested and guidance indicates should be in place.
 - Ensure that for the Service Areas they are responsible for there are Service and Operational Business Continuity Plans which are kept up to date in accordance with guidance from the Risk and Resilience Team.
 - Will form an Incident Management team at the commencement of a Business Continuity Incident and where nominated take control of the situation.
 - Promote Business Continuity Management within their Service area and the wider organisation.
 - Support the Assistant Directors in providing assurance on the Business Continuity system.

- **Assistant Directors**
 - Contribute to the Corporate Business Continuity Plan.
 - Ensure that for the Service Areas they are responsible for there are Service and Operational Business Continuity Plans which are kept up to date in accordance with guidance.
 - Ensure that the Service and Operational Business Continuity Plans are based on accurate and up to date Business Impact Analysis.
 - Attend training and periodic exercises as requested and guidance indicates should be in place.
 - Promote the benefits of Business Continuity Management within their Service area.
 - Support the Incident Management Team when activated.

- Provide periodic 1st line assurance that the Sefton Business Continuity Framework is embedded within their Service Area.
- Where requested complete additional Business Continuity Plans to address specific risks.

- **Service Managers and other managers**
 - Will complete and keep up to date Business Impact Analyses for the Service and Operational Business Continuity Plans.
 - Attend training and periodic exercises as requested and guidance indicates should be in place.
 - Support the Incident Management Team when activated.
 - Where requested complete additional Business Continuity Plans to address specific risks
 - Promote the benefits of Business Continuity Management within their Service area.
 - Will ensure that Business Continuity Plans include appropriate recovery plans.

- **Executive Director of Corporate Resources & Customer Services (as well as Executive responsibilities above)**
 - Has responsibility for the design of the BCP Framework including the Business Continuity Strategy and Policy.
 - Design a Business Continuity Strategy in line with Sefton's objectives and statutory responsibilities,
 - Set priorities on Business Continuity activities, putting in place measures to assure the relevancy of the BC framework.
 - Ensures the BCM programme is sufficiently resourced.
 - Provide periodic assurance to the Chief Executive, SLB and Audit and Governance Committee on effectiveness of the Council's Business Continuity arrangements.

- **Risk and Resilience Team –**
 - Design, under the guidance of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services, the Council's BC framework and supporting guidance
 - Arrange and provide training,
 - Provide monitoring information to Audit and Governance Committee and Strategic Leadership Board on 1st line and 2nd line assurance on a regular basis.
 - Facilitate the production of BC plans at all appropriate levels by providing guidance and support.
 - Updating the Business Continuity Risk Register on a quarterly basis.
 - Facilitate the undertaking of the key activities of the Business Continuity Policy Metrics,

- **All Staff**
 - Have an awareness of key BC documentation particularly in relation to their Service Area and function
 - undertake the Business Continuity awareness eLearning course on Sefton CLC website.
 - Follow the guidance of the relevant Business Continuity Plan and the BC Policy and Strategy

6. Metrics to support the Objectives

6.1 Metrics are the measurements by which performance of the BCMP to achieve the policy objectives are assessed. Any deficiencies in performance against the metrics will form part of the corrective action process for improvements to be made to the BCMP. The metrics are monitored quarterly, with a summary report produced for circulation to the Audit and Governance Committee.

6.2 The following table outlines the key metrics:

Metric:	How:	Outcome:
Business Continuity Manual and Business Continuity / Recovery Plans are reviewed to ensure up to date and fit for purpose.	Reviewed by Business Continuity Manual and Plan Owners twice a year.	Result of review — update as required. Evidence of review recorded on the Testing and Exercise Schedule.
Strategic and Tactical Exercises to ensure roles and responsibilities are understood and to demonstrate good management of an incident.	Desktop exercise twice per year.	Exercises documented with any improvements recorded on the BCMP Improvement Plan for implementation.
Business Recovery Plan Exercise and testing to demonstrate the organisation can recover key activities.	Exercise and testing to be carried out in line with documented procedure. Testing and exercising schedules provided to the Risk and Resilience team for monitoring to ensure completed.	Results recorded and improvements recorded on the BCMP Improvement Plan for implementation.
Call Cascade to test communicating with Strategic, tactical team members and Heads of Departments during an incident.	Full cascade to be tested twice a year.	Results recorded and improvements recorded on the BCMP Improvement Plan for implementation.
Business Continuity	Review by Risk and	Document outcome of

Metric:	How:	Outcome:
Management Risk Register and Business Impact Analysis Review to capture and manage the risks and impact on the business in relation to Business Continuity.	Resilience Team with action owners quarterly.	review with action owners on the risk register and update the Business Impact Analysis as necessary.
Review Business Continuity arrangements with Council's key suppliers.	Supplier questionnaire sent to key suppliers annually.	Questionnaire and supporting information reviewed to ensure suitability to Sefton's requirements. Actions are managed through the BCMP Improvement Plan
All staff to complete the Council online Business Continuity training module	Online training module updated and released for completion on an annual basis.	Corporate Training monitors completion for compliance training, the results of which are included in the metrics dashboard

7 Policy Principles

- 7.1 Business Continuity Management is an on-going management and governance process and works on the *plan, do, check, act* principle. To achieve this, we follow a management framework to ensure all aspects of the Business Continuity Life Cycle are accomplished.
- 7.2 The Business Continuity Management Programme considers and addresses the following which are detailed in our Business Continuity Plans:
- Conditions for activating plans — lie with identified individuals and specialists who have the delegated authority to invoke their plan to support the recovery of business during an incident.
 - Emergency procedures — are in place with all sites for the safe evacuation of
 - employee partners and alternative arrangements for the continuation of business.
 - Fall back procedures — that support the maintenance of our key services and the identification of key personnel with specialist knowledge and security clearance.
 - Temporary operating procedures — identifying which tasks are key and have
 - alternative operating disciplines pending completion of recovery and return to
 - business as usual.
 - Resumption of normal operating procedures — which explain how we return to
 - business as usual following an incident.

- Maintenance schedule for plans and tests — specifies how and when plans will be tested.
- Awareness and education — a continual process of raising awareness across the whole business and additional education for personnel with Business Continuity responsibilities.
- Roles and responsibilities — identify who has the appropriate delegated authority, and what actions they need to take during an incident.
- Critical assets and resources — identified specialists, documented plans, processes and procedures and their availability to support crisis management. Back-up copies of plans and procedures should be kept both on and off site and available in paper and electronic format.

8. Policy Governance

- 8.1. The Policy is approved by the Cabinet and will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the Risk and Resilience Team who will provide quarterly assurance to the Audit and Governance Committee. Where issues in compliance are identified the team will provide support and guidance to ensure the principles of this policy are fulfilled.

9. Review

- 9.1 The Plan will be reviewed every two years to ensure that it is still relevant to the Council's needs. However, service area plans will be subject to review every six months to ensure that information and contact details are kept up to date.

10. Distribution

- 10.1 This document will be made available to all staff via Sefton Council intranet site.

11. Supporting Documents

- 11.1 The following documents have been produced in association with the Business Continuity Management System.
- Sefton Council Business Continuity Policy
 - Sefton Council Business Continuity Strategy
 - Sefton Council Business Impact Analyses
 - Sefton Council Business Continuity Plans
 - Agilisys Business Continuity Plans