Strategic Alliance Business Continuity Policy

Version 1.0

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Foreword

High Peak Borough Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council collectively provide services for over 186,000 residents as well as the many visitors to the area. 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 or a fuel shortage, as they feature heavily in the media and can raise public concerns about our ability to cope in a crisis. However, 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 with these hazards and threats.

Our local business continuity process will help us achieve this by ensuring we have defined procedures in place to reduce threats to service delivery by responding quickly during a major disruption.

Staff are trained to understand their role and responsibility if problems arise which affect the numbers of staff available, the buildings that they use or the equipment, systems and technology they need to do their job.

This plan is not the responsibility of one service area as any serious disruption would need a corporate response to be effective.

It is important that the Business Continuity process, including evaluating and managing risks, should be integrated into the core activities of the Council's. This is done through a programme of awareness raising, training and exercises.

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

Andrew Stokes
Chief Executive

Councillor Anthony McKeown
Leader HPBC

Councillor Mike Gledhill
Leader SMDC

1   Policy

1.1 Scope

High Peak Borough Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council are 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.

- The plan addresses the full range of the council's functions and service areas, including those that have transferred to our external Teckal companies, Alliance Environmental Services and Alliance Norse, and contractors, Parkwood Leisure and NEC. 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 disrupt normal business.

The objectives are to:

- ensure both Councils can continue to exercise its critical functions in the event of an emergency.

- identify the potential areas of vulnerability in both Councils services.

- determine overall priorities for recovery of functions if disruption takes place.

- build on processes already in place for risk management, ensuring all existing and developing 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, elected members, suppliers and partners as appropriate and carry out regular tests of the plan to validate the arrangements.

1.3   Methods and standards

The Councils 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 is also the intention to follow the outline of ISO 22301 in the future.

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 managers 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 functions and contact details are kept up to date.

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 these updates.

Plan maintenance and changes are reported at and approved by the emergency planning compliance group which meets on a quarterly basis. The plan forms part of the corporate risk strategy and is reported to the risk management group six monthly via the corporate risk register entry.

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 Alliance Business Continuity Plan may be audited by either the internal audit team or external auditors appointed by the Council.

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.

1.6   Training and exercises

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

Participants will be defined by agreement with the heads of service/line managers and exercises will be held familiarise them with the content of the plan. This will be directed at the core staff who will form the early minimum staffing levels for each team.

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