BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT POLICY

Reviewed: October 2023
Next Review: October 2026

1. Introduction

1.1   The Civil Contingencies Act 2004, while mainly concerned with civil protection and emergency planning, requires local authorities (designated as Category 1 responders) to put in place business continuity management arrangements.

1.2   Business continuity is concerned with ensuring the council can, so far as is practicable, continue to deliver critical services in the event of any disruption. This aim is supported through the preparation of business continuity plans for these essential services.

2. Aims

2.1   This Policy provides a structure through which:

- Critical services and their supporting activities/resources can be identified;
- Plans can be developed to aid continuity of critical service delivery following disruption arising from loss of facilities, personnel, technological and/or communications failure, or other external factors;
- Plans can be activated and used to limit the impact of interruptions;
- Plans are subject to periodic review and validation through exercising and testing.

3. Objectives

3.1   Business continuity plans must, as a minimum, consider the following:

- Statutory and contractual obligations
- Identification of risks and mitigating actions
- Safety and welfare of staff and service users
- Communications, both internal and external, as appropriate
- The timely resumption of critical functions.

4. Scope

4.1   This policy is based on standards defined by BS25999 and the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

4.2   These require councils as Category 1 responders to develop a Business Continuity Management methodology, identify critical services and functions, and develop Business Continuity Plans. This process includes identifying key activities/business processes and key staff within each service, as well as determining potential options for mitigating risks that impact on the resources, including assets, staff, and technology, required to maintain critical services.

4.3   This policy extends to the management of supply chains including outsourced service contracts. It requires those responsible for negotiating and managing contracts to ensure, where appropriate, that business continuity conditions are included in contractual agreements. Such conditions require the supplier or

contractor to demonstrate capacity to maintain acceptable levels of service during and after any disruptive incident.

4.4 All business continuity plans include a clear procedure for invoking the plan, identifying key roles and responsibilities for its delivery, and are aligned as appropriate with the council's Emergency Planning Policy and Procedures.

4.5 Oversight of the development, maintenance and testing of plans is undertaken by the Audit and Risk Manager, supported by a Business Continuity and Risk Management Officer. These focus on the following components:

- Scope – to ensure that all critical functions are identified.
- Support – to enable plans to be updated in a manner consistent with this policy and other related policies of the council.
- Validation – to verify the plans work and are fit for purpose.
- Training and exercising – to ensure key staff know what is expected of them in a period of disruption and prepare them to deliver an appropriate response.

5. Benefits

5.1 The policy demonstrates a clear commitment to business continuity management, enabling the Council to:

- Be clear about its critical services and have processes in place to ensure these are prioritised for recovery in times of disruption.
- Make best use of personnel and other resources; increasingly important when capacity to respond to incidents is constrained.
- Limit, so far as is practicable, any period of disruption to the organisation, service users and communities.
- Resume normal working more efficiently and effectively after a period of disruption.
- Improve the resilience of the organisation and its ability to respond to service disruption.
- Reduce the operational and financial impact of any disruptions.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Chief Executive

- Main "sponsor" of Business Continuity Planning within the Council.
- Will prioritise recovery tasks, in consultation with the Corporate Management Team (CMT), if conflicts of needs are identified.

6.2 Corporate Management Team

- Direct all critical services to develop continuity plans, in line with agreed policy.
- Provides appropriate strategic guidance and resources where required.

- Ensure each service conducts an annual review of any business impact analyses (BIAs) used to prepare business continuity plans for critical services and uses these analyses to update plans as required.

6.3   Service Management Teams

- Each activity within the council is owned by a designated service. The Head of Service will ensure that plans capable of maintaining a minimum acceptable standard of delivery are in place for each critical service and supporting activities.
- Each service must review its business continuity plans for critical functions annually and make modifications where necessary to take account of service changes or as a consequence of any exercise results.
- Each service will ensure risks identified through the Business Impact Analysis, completed to inform Business Continuity Plans, are recorded in service risk registers and actioned in service or team plans as appropriate.

6.4   Incident Management Team

An Incident Management Team (IMT) may be formed where service disruption affects multiple or major services and/or is likely to be prolonged. A decision to form an IMT may be triggered by the Moray Emergency Response Co-ordinator (the Senior Officer on duty on a rota basis) or on the advice of the Local Resilience Partnership that co-ordinates emergency planning. Pandemic or a major weather event are examples of situations where it may be necessary to form an IMT. The IMT will comprise members of the Corporate Management Team and Heads of Service, supported by others as appropriate, who will assess and direct the response at a strategic level. All council services will be required to work in accordance with the directions issued by this Corporate Team.

6.5   Audit and Risk Manager

The Audit and Risk Manager is the professional lead for business continuity within the council and, with the support of the Business Continuity and Risk Management Officer, will:

- Support and advise CMT on business continuity and progress issues arising.
- Provide support and guidance to managers on business continuity planning.
- Co-ordinate the completion of business impact analyses for critical functions, recovery timescales and strategies.
- Identify business continuity requirements common to multiple services, including provision of power, fuel, and ICT services. Work with appropriate services to determine these requirements.
- Work across all services to ensure inter-dependencies are recognised and a consistent approach is applied across the organisation.
- Review and develop this policy in line with best practice guidance and the needs of the Council.
- Monitor standards and compliance, across the council, with the policy.

- Oversee and report on development and testing of plans.
- Provide access to appropriate training, with support from the Organisational Development Team.
- Promote the link between risk management and business continuity to support and improve the resilience of critical services delivered by the council.

7.   Moray Council Corporate Business Continuity Plan

7.1   A corporate Business Continuity Plan provides an overview of the council's approach to developing effective back-up and recovery strategies to mitigate or avoid the impact of disruptive events in order to be able to continue to provide these services, whilst responding to an emergency. This plan will be read in conjunction with Service Business Continuity Plans that consider in more detail responses to specific service disruptions.

7.2   The corporate Business Continuity Plan will take into consideration risks identified through the corporate risk management review process, with the opportunity taken where appropriate to mitigate identified risks through improvements to business continuity planning. This will be subject to an assessment of cost benefit considerations and the availability of resources identified as a prerequisite to improving resilience.

8.   Compliance and Certification

8.1   Legal Basis

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 introduced a statutory requirement for certain public bodies to maintain plans for the purpose of ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, that if an emergency occurs the body can continue to perform its functions. This policy and associated plans detail the council's approach to business continuity management arrangements.

8.2   Monitoring and Review

Business continuity management is increasingly important at a time when council resources are stretched and there are elevated risks in a number of areas e.g. the potential for more frequent extreme weather events. If the council is to meet its obligations to provide critical services to the public alongside partner agencies during a period of disruption, it is important that policy and practice is kept up to date. The policy will be reviewed on an ad-hoc basis as required with formal approval taking place every three years or sooner if circumstances dictate.