

For publication

Emergency and Business Continuity Planning

Meeting:	Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum
Date:	27 January, 2022
Cabinet portfolio:	Governance
Directorate:	Executive Director

1.0 Reason for inclusion on the work programme

- 1.1 The purpose of reviewing the topic is to review the Council's emergency and business continuity planning.
- 1.2 The objectives of the review are to:
 - To review how successful the Council's plans and actions were responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - To consider the lessons learnt from the Council's emergency and business continuity planning relating to the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - To consider other emergencies which could occur and plan a response.

2.0 Summary

- 2.1 This report has been produced to outline for members of the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum the Council's progress against the objectives set out at paragraph 1.2 of this report.

3.0 Report details

Background

- 3.1 Chesterfield Borough Council has contracted with Derbyshire County Council to deliver its Emergency Planning and Business Continuity service, and this relationship has been in place since 2005. The Council benefits from joint working in this area, gaining access to a larger, skilled Emergency

Planning team, together with the provision of a dedicated Emergency Planning resource for 2.5 days per week.

- 3.2 To further strengthen our capacity and co-ordination of emergency or business continuity events, the Council has two senior officers to act in emergency planning liaison roles. These are the Service Director, Corporate and the Strategic Health & Safety and Risk Manager. These staff members work alongside the Derbyshire County Council Emergency Planning team and with the Council's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) in responding to an emergency or business continuity event.
- 3.3 Senior officers receive regular Emergency Planning and Business Continuity training, including training on Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) principles which are used when responding to major multi agency incidents.
- 3.4 The Council has a detailed emergency plan and business continuity plan in place, which is regularly updated. Access to the plan can be obtained by authorised personnel through Resilience Direct, which is an online private network which enables civil protection practitioners to work together across geographical and organisational boundaries – during the preparation, response and recovery phases of an event or emergency. This system meets data protection requirements.
- 3.5 It is dependent on the size and scale of the emergency or business continuity event as to the number and type of strategic and tactical groups that will be initiated to effectively 'manage' the event. This will be determined when an emergency or business continuity event is triggered.
- 3.6 At a local level, Chesterfield Borough Council regularly reviews and updates service specific business continuity plans. The leadership teams review, agree and document the priority services for protection and restoration in an emergency and this process informs the relevant activities which must be undertaken when the business continuity plan is invoked. Individual Corporate Business Continuity Plans exist in respect of winter planning, flood planning, flu pandemic and more recently Coronavirus.
- 3.7 The following business continuity structure has been implemented to enable the management of the coronavirus business continuity activity across Derbyshire:

- Chief Executive and Leader attendance at the Derbyshire Local Outbreak Board
- Executive Director attendance at the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Strategic Co-Ordination Group and Recovery Group
- CLT attendance at the Local Resilience Forum Tactical Co-Ordination Group and at specific partner working groups which are focused on communications, community wellbeing including homelessness and workforce
- Tactical meetings of the CBC leadership team held fortnightly.
- Regular communications in place between CLT and their respective portfolio holders
- Three task and finish groups have been implemented to deliver recovery activities. These groups are focusing on the economy, community wellbeing and the safety of our workforce.

Report to Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum, November 2020

- 3.8 The initial report to Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum in November 2020 outlined how the Coronavirus pandemic had presented us with unprecedented risks, disruption and changes to our working practices. It highlighted that, at that time, our business continuity plans needed further review to ensure they incorporated all the learning from the new pandemic and were updated appropriately. Over the period of the pandemic to date, Business Continuity Plans have been updated, incorporating any new developments.
- 3.9 The report outlined the Councils response to the pandemic e.g. Community support through the delivery of food and medicines, providing support to businesses through the distribution of £27M of Government grants and working through our partnership networks to provide advice and further support.
- 3.10 Urgent work was completed to ensure the Council had arrangements in place to create and maintain safe working environments within our buildings and workspaces. This also included creating a network of support to enable home working for many of our staff.
- 3.11 Where there were capacity pressures on key services e.g. Crematorium, some staff were redeployed to provide service support as part of our business continuity arrangements.

3.12 The report identified that, during 'lockdown' phases of the pandemic, a number of services were temporarily closed and then re-opened during the recovery phases i.e.

- Leisure Centres
- Venues
- Community Rooms
- Visitor Information Centre
- Museum
- Face to Face customer access via the Customer Service Centre
- Non-emergency housing repairs
- Delivery of the Housing Capital Programme

Chronology of Coronavirus developments

3.13 Appendix A of this report sets out a chronology of Coronavirus events and developments since March 2020.

Objective 1 - How successful have the Council's plans and actions been in response to the Covid-19 pandemic?

3.14 Paragraphs 3.1 – 3.7 of this report set out the existing business continuity arrangements for Chesterfield Borough Council. In addition to these, a number of further arrangements have continued to be kept in place specifically in response to the Coronavirus pandemic e.g. three task and finish groups, each focussing on a key strategic area, regular engagement with partners through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) emergency response arrangements and Coronavirus focussed leadership team meetings.

3.15 With regard to the three task and finish groups, each has focussed on the response and recovery of a key theme i.e. Economic, Community and Resources. Both the Economic and Community themes have established strategic recovery plans, which have been previously approved by Cabinet and are in implementation stage.

3.16 The Resources task and finish group has maintained an active role regarding corporate health & safety, risk management and business continuity for the Council during the pandemic. The key areas of focus have been:

- Establishing with managers fit for purpose 'risk assessments' to ensure Covid-secure working practices are in place, supported and maintained.
- Working with premise managers to ensure all Council buildings, staff workspaces and customer access areas are set out and managed in line with the Councils Covid secure and health & safety arrangements.
- Ensuring that all new Governments guidance, and LRF data re: Coronavirus is built into our forward planning and communications with staff.
- Working with managers to forecast service impact regarding emerging Government guidance and capacity to deliver in relation to business continuity. This has included producing action plans to respond if several potential scenarios should they become real.
- Supporting services to temporarily redeploy resources to maintain critical services.
- Supporting the test & trace process and monitoring for the Council.
- During the different phases of the Coronavirus pandemic, supporting and co-ordinating the temporary closure and re-opening of services.
- Working with Trade Union, HR, operational and Health & Safety colleagues throughout to ensure an inclusive and joined up approach to maintaining H&S and business continuity across the Council.
- Providing regular reports to H&S Committee, Employer Trade Union Committee and Officer leadership teams regarding all Coronavirus related issues, solutions and activity.

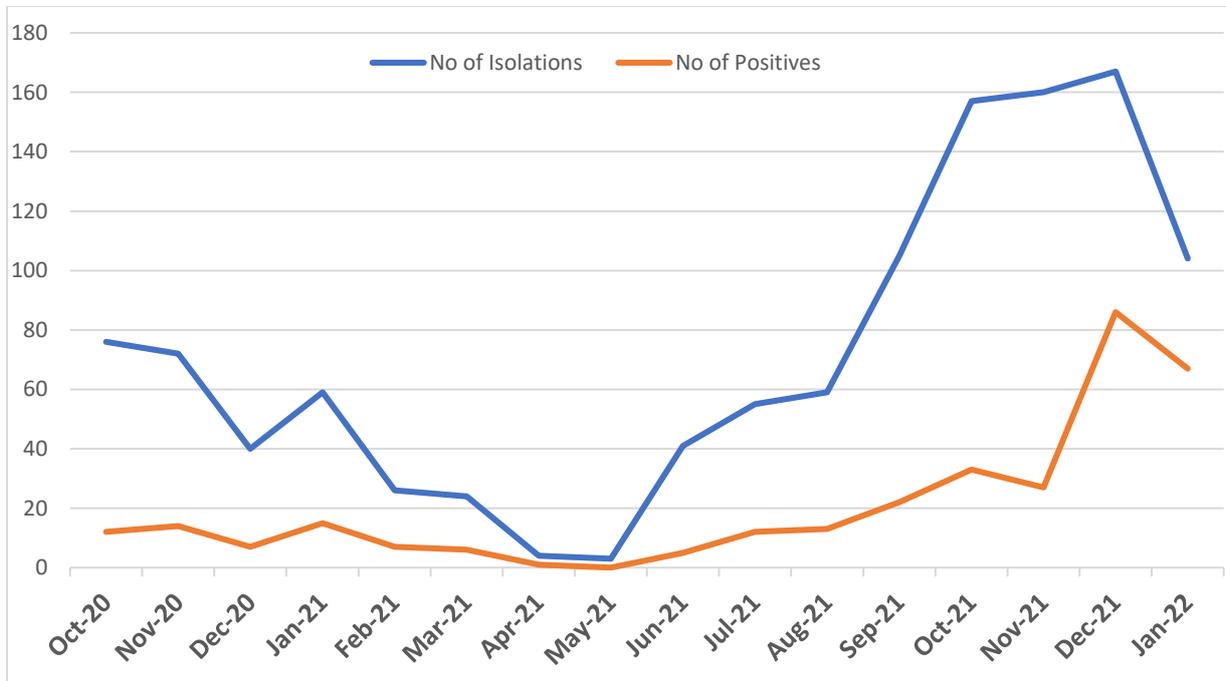
3.17 It has been broadly acknowledged that the work of the Resources T&F group along with managers, teams and Trade Union colleagues across the organisation has been effective. There have been no staff deaths attributed to Coronavirus and only four RIDDOR coronavirus incidents reported since the pandemic began. Three of these were a result of staff non-compliance with existing H&S measures e.g. risk assessments. In every case, a thorough investigation has taken place and further improvements introduced.

3.18 At the end of 2021, the Council had managed to maintain service delivery where those services have been allowed to remain open / operating normally in line with Government restrictions and Council H&S guidance.

3.19 One of the main risks to maintaining business continuity across services is the availability of staff to deliver the service. During July 2021, the Government lifted many of the Coronavirus related restrictions, which has had a direct affect on the numbers of staff self-isolating or testing positive

outside of the workplace. Please see Diagram 1 below which plots the developing totals for these two areas since October 2020.

Diagram 1



- 3.20 Although the figures now appear to be easing, there remains a risk on staff availability to deliver services going forward. This is being monitored on a weekly basis via the Resources task and finish group and in conjunction with the Corporate Leadership Team to proactively respond to any emerging staffing issues.
- 3.21 In summary, the Council's plans, and actions in response to the Coronavirus pandemic have proved effective. Business continuity has remained a key area of focus across these arrangements and plans have been updated as we have progressed and learnt over what has arguably been one of the most unpredictable and disruptive periods in recent times.

Objective 2 - What lessons have been learnt from the Council's emergency and business continuity planning relating to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 3.22 One of the key attributes to how effective the Council has been during the pandemic to date has been our will to learn, be decisive and apply changes without delay. It has equally been our One Council approach to how we have operated seamlessly across services, worked with Elected Members, our partners across the region and other stakeholders e.g. Trade Union colleagues that has enabled us to succeed.

3.23 Our key areas of learning are:

- Don't be afraid to change, it's our constant change that is keeping things on track
- A no blame culture - Learning from one another is great
- Use data and experience to plan for a better future – Co2 Readings.
- Our decision-making process, developed over time has worked well with:
 - Quick access to decisions when required,
 - Strong relationship between governance and decision-making groups.
 - Open communications
- Regular virtual meetings and updates across the organisation continue to work well
- Its key to utilise the strengths of our staff, and we have sustained our business continuity due to the dedication and commitment of our employees.
- Continue to work with our partners across the business continuity network to keep updated, incorporate shared learning, and ensure our business continuity plans are up to date and fit for purpose.

3.24 Having been through the many challenges that Coronavirus has presented the Council since the previous report in November 2020, the Council is in a far more resilient position to respond and manage effectively with future challenges. We have robust H&S systems in place, which can be adjusted accordingly, and we have effective plans which can be activated / re-activated based on changing circumstances. Our business continuity plans, and planning reflects this and developing activity is overseen by effective governance arrangements.

Objective 3 - To consider other emergencies which could occur and plan a response.

3.25 The Council's emergency planning and business continuity arrangements are outlined at paragraph 3.1 to 3.7 of this report.

3.26 From an emergency planning perspective, a response to an emergency is dependent on the size and scale of the emergency or business continuity event. This determines the nature and scale of the response e.g. as to the number and type of strategic and tactical groups that will be initiated to

effectively 'manage' the event. This will be determined when an emergency or business continuity event is triggered.

- 3.27 Regarding the consideration of 'other emergencies which may occur', the current emergency plan incorporates the likely emergency events which are considered could occur. However, it would be helpful if there are members of the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum who have specific areas that they would like to raise, which Officers could consider further.

4.0 Potential Risks

- 4.1 There is a risk with staff maintaining compliance with Council Coronavirus safety measures over the longer term. The main point being that the world outside of our organisation is quite different to the one inside. Many of the previous Government restrictions have been removed, but the Council has maintained a safer environment through a much more cautious approach. It is clear in elements of this report that there remains a threat to staffing levels due to isolation and positive testing numbers.

- 4.2 Coronavirus remains a RIDDOR reportable disease, and the Council is obligated to put in place effective measures to protect its staff. Equally we have a duty of care for the health and wellbeing of our workforce. Our future work in this area will be to carefully review how existing measures may be safely relaxed.

5.0 Future plans and areas for further scrutiny involvement

- 5.1 The risk outlined at section 4.0 of this report needs to be kept under consistent review. The existing Coronavirus governance arrangements will ensure this is the case and reported appropriately.

- 5.2 Since the initial report to Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum in November 2020, the corporate responsibility for business continuity has been re-assigned to the Service Director, Corporate. The Service Director has recently recruited a Strategic Health & Safety and Risk Manager, who will work with the Service Director in the emergency planning liaison roles on behalf of the Council.

- 5.3 There are plans for a strategic review regarding the future of emergency planning and business continuity and it has been agreed that a further

report will be brought forward to Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum to outline this work at a future date to be agreed.

Document information

Report author	
Executive Director	
Background documents	
These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when the report was prepared.	
None	
Appendices to the report	
Appendix 1	Coronavirus Pandemic Chronology