



Executive Summary

Please type your executive summary here. The summary should be no more than 500 words. Please use Arial font, size 11, at 1.5 line spacing. Use additional spacing between paragraphs.

Charles Thomas is the Corporate Risk & Business Continuity Manager for Essex County Fire & Rescue Service. The Service developed its Risk and Business Continuity arrangements over the last three years, but it is only in the last 12 months that these business areas have begun to mature.

Due to staffing issues, Risk and Business Continuity had lost steerage and momentum. Arriving as an interim in March 2008, becoming a permanent member of staff in August last year, Charles set about revitalising these two vital and connected areas of business. Identifying business risk was initiated through departmental business continuity plans. Each department had to provide a word picture of its activities, which in turn identified critical functions, and resources required to support those and less critical functions. Surgeries were held with department managers to assist them on their way. Concurrently, Charles began work on the corporate business continuity strategy. Both threads of work were brought together in the late summer and early autumn of 2008, culminating in The Essex Fire Authority accepting a Corporate Business Continuity Plan on 24 September last year.

Meanwhile, the Corporate Risk Register needed a fresh view. Working with the Brigade Managers, who are the Deputy Directors of the five Directorates in the Service, Charles reviewed entries, and reinstated the Corporate Risk Management Committee. This brought together certain other senior uniformed and non-uniformed officers, with two Elected Member risk champions, with the Deputy Directors. Risk descriptions were put under scrutiny, as well as the inherent and residual risk scores. Meetings now take place on a regular basis.

During the summer of 2008, risk and business continuity training was provided to middle managers within the Service, linking this to the yearly business planning cycle. This latter aspect meant collaborating with the Business Planning Manager, to whom business plans are submitted, with risk registers attached. Once received, these plans are forwarded to Charles in order to review risk register content against business aspirations. Feedback was then provided to plan authors for amending if necessary.

Risk documentation within the Service was in several forms. Charles successfully amalgamated this documentation into a single risk compendium. He revised the scoring methodology by expanding on the original statement concerning PESTLE headings by



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adding impact values in order to provide risk register authors with some tangible product to consider when scoring risks. This work was transported to a revised form of corporate risk register. The working copy of this provides the basis for Risk Management Committee meetings.

Since joining the Service, Charles has become an active and keen member of the Alarm Fire Group, and seeks to contribute where he thinks he has something of value to say.

Within a little over 12 months, Charles has rapidly assimilated into an organisation somewhat different to his local government background. His quick and ready understanding of a Fire Service has meant that he can contribute with authority to the managers he works with.



Main Submission

Please write your main submission here. The submission should be no more than 1500 words. Please use Arial font, size 11, at 1.5 line spacing. Use additional spacing between paragraphs.

Charles Thomas is the Corporate Risk & Business Continuity Manager for Essex County Fire & Rescue Service. This is a new post, following staff turbulence since 2007 and into 2008. The Service had developed its Risk and Business Continuity arrangements over the last three years, but due to the absence of dedicated staff, Risk and Business Continuity had lost steerage and momentum. It is only in the last 12 months that these business areas have begun to mature, largely due to the efforts of Charles. The Corporate Risk and Business Continuity Manager's responsibilities include:

- Ensuring the Service has effective systems in place to provide sound corporate risk management across its activities, including developing policy and process, that all groups across the Service understand their responsibilities in respect of corporate risk management, and that the Service maintains an awareness of external developments in risk management.
- Leading, developing and maintaining an effective framework for managing the Service's risks and promotes, supporting and co-ordinating its implementation at both officer and Member level to ensure that sound risk management is accepted as an essential element of every manager's role.
- Dealing with the management of the Corporate Risk Management Committee.
- Providing support and advice to managers within the Service to ensure that their approach to risk management considers both the risks and opportunities of actions and inaction. This includes quality control of risk registers during the business planning cycle.
- Providing constructive challenge to Members and officers to ensure that corporate strategies, standards and processes for the management of risk and business continuity planning are complied with across the Service's activities and partnerships.



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- Ensuring that risk action plans and management processes are embedded into the Service's culture and practices;
- Maintaining a register of strategic and operational risks and reports to Members and senior officers on progress in embedding risk management and the management of risk exposure across the Service at all levels.

Charles began with the Service as an interim in March 2008, becoming a permanent member of staff in August last year. He set about revitalising Risk and Business Continuity, two vital and connected areas of Service business and corporate governance. Identifying business risk was initiated through departmental business continuity plans. Each department had to provide a word picture of its activities, which in turn identified critical functions, and resources required to support those and less critical functions. Surgeries were held with department managers to assist them on their way. Where asked for, second surgeries were held to assist managers. Concurrently, Charles began work on the corporate business continuity strategy. Both threads of work were brought together in the late summer and early autumn of 2008, culminating in The Essex Fire Authority accepting its first Corporate Business Continuity Plan on 24 September last year. Departmental Business Continuity plans had their first review in December 2008, and the Corporate Business Continuity plan, now including references to Recovery, is under review on its yearly cycle.

Meanwhile, the Corporate Risk Register needed a fresh view. Working with the Brigade Managers, who are the Deputy Directors of the five Directorates in the Service, Charles reviewed entries, and reinstated the Corporate Risk Management Committee. This brought together certain other senior uniformed and non-uniformed officers, with two Elected Member risk champions, with the Deputy Directors. If appropriate, risks at the Departmental level were considered against corporate interests. Risk descriptions were put under scrutiny, and the inherent and residual risk scores were challenged. Meetings now take place on a regular basis.

During the summer of 2008, risk and business continuity training was provided to middle managers within the Service, linking this to the yearly business planning cycle. This latter



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aspect meant collaborating with the Business Planning Manager, to whom business plans are submitted, with risk registers attached. Once received, these plans were forwarded to Charles in order to review risk register content against business aspirations. Feedback on risk registers was then provided to plan authors for amending as necessary. An outcome from this early experience was that uniformed sectors of the Service in particular would benefit from further training in the construction of risk registers. Whilst operational risk at an incident was the subject of dynamic assessment, other workplaces required a different approach. Consequently, the 2009/10 business planning process will include revised methodologies, with improved risk descriptions and individually scored and adjudicated levels for each Fire Station or Community Command. Risks will be targeted, and performance based. Additional collaboration with colleagues in the Performance and Data and the Audit and Review Departments will ensure that a robust rounded and consistent approach will, over time, improve risk management and business planning. Building on last years success, Risk, Business Continuity, and Business Planning training will be repeated this year.

Risk documentation within the Service came in several forms. Charles successfully amalgamated this documentation into a single Risk Compendium. This document sets out Risk Policy, Strategy and Implementation. He revised the scoring methodology by expanding on the original statement concerning PESTLE headings by adding impact values in order to provide risk register authors with some tangible product to consider when scoring risks. This work was transported to a revised form of corporate risk register. The working copy of this provides the basis for Risk Management Committee meetings. A product of revising risk scoring is that the Service risk threshold moved from being fairly low to a higher and more sensible value. Many of the entries on the Corporate Risk Register are now medium instead of an unrealistically high.

Since joining the Service, Charles has become an active and keen member of the Alarm Fire Group, and seeks to contribute where he thinks he has something of value to say. Charles brings with him over ten years experience of contingency planning, being a Member of the Emergency Planning Society. He has a Diploma in Emergency Planning from Coventry University. Having noted the work of the Society around core competencies, he looks forward to Alarm introducing its own core competencies for risk managers. Charles has a



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new assistant whom he looks forward to mentoring through her training for an International Certificate in Risk Management in due course.

Within a little over 12 months, Charles has rapidly assimilated into an organisation somewhat different to his local government background. His quick and ready understanding of a Fire Service has meant that he can contribute with authority to the managers he works with. He sets high standards, but recognises that the culture and learning of the Service in risk and business continuity is vital to success. There is no quick fix, and the strategy behind gradual embedding is one of persistence and determination to improve risk and business continuity management along with business planning. The Service has moved considerably from its position at the start of 2008, and much of this is due to the hard work and effort put in by Charles Thomas.

Charles delivered a risk based approach to the prioritisation of business continuity plans. This proved to be a valuable piece of work with two elements of the BCM arrangements being utilised in anger during a number of service interruptions.

Firstly the new HQ building accommodating the central administrative function suffered a loss of service resulting in the redeployment of over 200 staff. Charles implemented the business continuity arrangement he had developed with line managers. The training and exercises which had been run served to reinforce the decisions made by managers on the day. Within one hour all staff had been vacated. Essential staff cover was identified and redeployed to sites around the service. In total the service suffered a total loss of 3 hours business.

Secondly Charles had developed a fuel contingency plan in the event of fuel supply due to industrial action from fuel suppliers. Having developed and established a sound continuity plan, this was brought in to action through the establishment of a critical incident team.

Charles has applied knowledge and experience to his role which has maintained the functionality of a front line emergency service on several occasions. His application of risk principles and business continuity has transformed and assured the resilience of ECFRS.



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Having worked in a risk based industry and a number of risk managers I am of the view that Charles is a rare mix of knowledge, experience and professionalism which has set him apart from other risk managers that I have previously worked alongside. I therefore have great pleasure and no reservations in recommending Charles for this award.



Main Submission

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