

Ferndown Town Council Business Continuity Plan

Author: Louise Harrison, Town Clerk Ferndown Town Council, 15 February 2021.

Approved by the Finance and General Purpose Committee on 22 February 2021.

1. Scope

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a duty on a local authority that it is prepared, as far as reasonably practical, to continue to provide functions/services in the event of a disruption by whatever cause. Whilst this is not a statutory duty for a Parish or Town Council, Ferndown Town Council (Council) recognises the importance of producing and maintaining a Business Continuity Plan for implementation in the event of disruptions to the day to day running of the Council.

This plan identifies the instances of disruption, the immediate responses, the procedures to follow to maintain continuity of service and the follow-up procedures and necessary changes to service delivery, where such services are disrupted by factors within the Council's area of responsibility.

2. Description of business

Council is the first level of local government for Ferndown community and delivers a variety of services and facilities including: websites, noticeboards, newsletters, salt bins, sand bags, street lighting, waste bins, bus shelters, buildings (including the Barrington Centre, Youth Centre), allotments, footpaths, sport pitches, play areas, car parks, annual Christmas Lights switch-on event, financial support to local groups and organisations, consultee on planning applications to represent the best interests of the parish, managing the finances of Council and using the precept for the benefit of the community and liaising with Dorset Council and other partner organisations on issues and consultations that affect Ferndown community. To facilitate services and facilities Council employ 12 members of staff and have service level agreements with a number of contractors. Additionally, all councillors are sole trustees of KGV Field Charity which employs three members of staff and has a number facilities including a skate park, tennis courts, football pitches, cricket pitch, buildings, play area, car parks, footpaths, tennis courts and bowling club and green.

Customers include the residents and visitors to Ferndown and any other individual who qualifies to use the services we provide.

Councillors are democratically accountable to residents of Ferndown and collectively are the ultimate policy-makers by carrying out strategic and corporate management functions; contribute to the good governance of the area by actively encouraging and responding to citizen involvement in decision making processes having regard to the interests of the whole local community; maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics, and act as a responsible employer and ensure the safety of all staff.

3. Business Continuity Overview

The purpose of this plan is to prepare our business in the event of extended service outages caused by factors beyond our control and to restore services to the widest extent possible in a minimum time frame.

Examples of risks that could invoke this Plan include severe adverse weather, fire, terrorism, flood, the failure of equipment or services, losses of staff (resignation/death/long-term injury/illness, death or serious injury whilst working for Council) and equipment (theft, breakage or major damage) and unique one-off global contagious deadly virus pandemics.

(i) Plan objectives:

- serve as a guide for those implementing our business continuity plan,
- assist in avoiding confusion experienced during a crisis by documenting, testing and reviewing recovery procedures,
- references and points to the location of critical data,
- provide procedures and resources needed to assist in recovery,
- ensure Councillors, residents, staff and contractors are kept up to date should the plan be activated.

(ii) Council contacts/key individuals:

Chairman/Town Mayor	Julie Robinson	07513 578177	18 Medway Road BH22 8UX
Vice-Chairman/Deputy Town Mayor	Lawrence Wilson	07793 440765	163 Leeson Drive BH22 9TL
Town Clerk ¹	Louise Harrison	07841 523008	N/A
Office Manager	Maria Fallon	07825 325877	N/A
Emergency contact details are available in Council's Emergency Plan			

(iii) Staff welfare

It must be recognised that an incident that results in the enacting of this plan may also cause additional pressures for staff. Staff members need to be given clear direction about the priorities of the business. The Town Clerk must ensure that they monitor staff more closely to ensure that their welfare is maintained. Staff should be aware of what their role is when a major disruption occurs. Clear and concise communication with staff is pivotal to having an organised response. Staff must be made aware of what communication methods are going to be used so they can find out the latest information if they are going to be working from a different location than normal. If a staff member has suffered undue stress or even trauma from the business disruption must consider providing assistance for those staff who have been affected.

(iv) Communications:

- a. Staff - the Town Clerk will communicate with staff all updates and news regarding any emergency incident. All communication with the press will to be through the Town Clerk, none through other members of staff. Any interview with the press will be undertaken by the Chairman/Town Mayor or Vice-Chairman/Deputy Mayor of Council.
- b. Councillors - the Town Clerk shall, in the first instance, notify the Chairman (or Vice-Chairman if Chairman unavailable) of any updates and news regarding an emergency incident followed by communication to all Councillors.
- c. Public - communications with the public should be via Council's website, social media, local news outlets and notice boards all to be issued by the Town Clerk and Office Manager.

¹ If the Clerk is unavailable the Deputy Office Manager will take the lead for actions in this Plan.

- d. Equipment – the Town Clerk has a home desktop securely linked to Council's electronic folder system to enable her to work away from the office in an emergency. Staff have mobile phones; laptops and their numbers are shared with all members of staff. Staff will be reimbursed for any out-of-pocket expenses incurred (with the approval of the Town Clerk). In the event of an emergency all calls to the Council offices on the landline 01202 892249 will be diverted to the Town Clerk's mobile phone. The IT system will be backed up as usual by the IT contractor.
- e. Data protection - when working away from home, because of unexpected office closure, all data must be protected in accordance with Council's Data Protection Policy and working practises must be in line with GDPR. All connections by a work laptop to the internet, when away from the workplace, must be made using a secure password protected internet connection.
- f. Insurance – Council has appropriate insurance cover for its business provision.

4. Scenarios

Scenario 1 - Short term evacuation/disruption of premises and safeguarding of any users/visitors at the Barrington Centre/ Council Offices:

In office hours (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm):

Action	Details	Responsible person
1. Evacuate building	Follow normal fire drill procedure	Clerk
2. Check evacuation is complete	Check everyone on-site has been evacuated	Clerk, hirer
3. Verify if incident is real	If false alarm, resume business as usual	Clerk, hirer
4. Call emergency services	999	Clerk, hirer
5. Record any injuries	Injury book kitchen	Clerk, hirer
6. Alert staff, visitors, Councillors, hirers, contractors	Alert anyone due to arrive on-site as soon as practicable of the incident and tell them to await further instructions	Clerk, hirer
7. Assess impact	Clerk, Facilities Contractor and Chairman (or Vice Chairman if Chairman unavailable) to assess the scale of the incident & decide next steps	Clerk

Outside office hours:

Action	Details	Responsible person
1. First person on-site to notify Clerk	Do not enter the building	Person on site
2. Call emergency services	999	Person on site
3. Alert staff	Alert any staff/hirer/contractor due to arrive on-site soon of the incident, and tell them to await further instructions	Person on site
4. Assess impact	Clerk to attend and assess the scale of the incident & decide next steps	Clerk
5. Alert Councillors	Alert all Councillors	Clerk/Office Manager

Business continuity:

Critical activity	Details	Responsible person
Phones	Staff to use personal mobile phones. Contact IT contractor to forward office lines to Clerk's mobiles	Clerk
Internet	Clerk to use home internet connections. If home connection unavailable contact local shared office providers to rent desk space.	Clerk
Inform insurance company	Contact details: Zurich, contact Caroline Hopgood 01243 832075	Clerk
Post redirection	Form available on Royal Mail website	Clerk/Office Manager
Inform customers	If disruption is expected, inform customers via website, social media news outlets and noticeboards	Clerk/Office Manager

Scenario 2 - Infrastructure incident (e.g. loss of computer/telephone systems, etc).

Assessment of loss of infrastructure:

Infrastructure	Details	Responsible person
Phones	Contact IT provider (Rejuvenate) to ascertain extent of outage – 01202 892249	Clerk/Office Manager
Internet	As above	As above
Mains power	Call 105	As above
If outage is temporary, inform staff to stay put and await further instructions.		

Business continuity:

Critical activity	Details	Responsible person
Phones	Staff to use mobile phones Councillor's home and mobile lines to be used by staff as required	Staff
Internet	Clerk to use home internet connection, staff use mobile phone Wi-Fi if applicable	Staff
IT/emails	Contact IT contractor (Rejuvenate) 01202 892249 Access to log ins and passwords available to Clerk and Chairman.	Staff
Mains Power	Call 105	
Meetings	Move / cancel and ensure all are informed	Clerk
Post	Attend Office or redirect as required	Clerk/Office Manager

Scenario 3 - Staff incident (e.g. sudden family emergency, injury or another event which renders a key member

Short term issue with no service interruption:

Critical activity	Details	Responsible person
1. Identify interchangeable staff	Office staff can perform roles, even if it is in a reduced capacity. Identify the relevant person and support them in carrying out business-critical activities. Cleaner and Lengthsman roles to be performed by external contractors.	Clerk/ Chairman re. staff, and re. contractor
2. Assess extent of loss	Identify whether the affected staff member's absence is likely to be temporary, longer-term, or permanent. Keep in mind this may be a difficult period for the staff member and / or their family.	Clerk/Chairman
3. Long term loss	Alert Personnel Committee to consider appropriate action	Clerk
If the staff loss is temporary, support the member of staff who will be filling the gap until the absent member of staff returns.		

Long term/permanent absence): Clerk recruit temporary of full-time replacement as per Performance Management Policy. Recovery phase to achieve normal working practices for Council ("business as usual"), including alternative promises use:

Action	Details	Responsible person
1. Agree and plan the actions required to enable recovery of normal working practises	Agreed actions will be detailed by the Clerk and set against time scales with responsibility for completion clearly indicated.	Clerk
2. Respond to any long term support needs of staff	Depending on the nature of the incident, Clerk/Personnel Committee may need to consider providing support services	Clerk/Personnel Committee
3. Publicise that there is now 'business as usual'	Inform customers through normal channels that our business is operating as normal	Staff
4. Carry out a debrief of incident and complete report to document opportunities for improvement/lessons identified	To be reviewed to ensure key actions resulting from the incident are implemented within designated time scales.	Clerk

5. Review this Continuity Plan in light of lessons learned from incident and the response to it	Implement recommendations for improvement and update this plan. Ensure a revised version of the plan is read by all members of staff.	Clerk/Personnel Committee
6. Report to HR Committee	Review incident, make and implement recommendations from incident.	Clerk

Scenario 4 - Total loss of business continuity (forced national implementation - office closure, no council services/facilities):

Action	Details	Person responsible
Follow Government and appropriate national body directives (NALC), review delegated powers, Clerk liaise Chairman of Council (Vice Chairman if Chairman not available), update Council website and all calls diverted to Clerk/Office Manager mobiles.		Clerk/Chairman

Recovery phase to achieve normal working practices for Council ("business as usual") as detailed above in Scenario 3.

5. Maintenance and review of Plan

Any changes in personnel which affect the plan should be address immediately and alternate fulltime staff should be located to carry out the vacant roles.

The plan should also be checked and reviewed as follows:

- when there has been an incident which necessitates the utilisation of the plan, an incident report should be prepared and an assessment of the plan's performance should be carried out,
- when there is a significant change in the way that Council is run because of a change in legislation etc. the effects should be evaluated with respect to the plan,
- or after a maximum period of 1 year.

Any changes made as a result of the annual review should be approved by FGPC and Full Council.

[End]