

Wimborne Minster Town Council Business Continuity Plan

Author: Louise Harrison, Town Clerk, 27 June 2023.

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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, Wimborne Minster Town Council (the 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

The Council is the first level of local government for the community of Wimborne Minster parish and delivers a variety of services and facilities including: allotments, the annual Christmas Lights switch-on event buildings, bus shelters, cemetery, consultee on planning applications to represent the best interests of the parish, financial support to local groups and organisations, footpaths, liaising with Dorset Council and other partner organisations on issues and consultations that affect the community, noticeboards, managing the finances of Council and using the precept for the benefit of the community, recreation and play areas, sport pitches, street lighting, waste bins, websites, and weddings.

To facilitate services and facilities Council employ members of staff and are in the process of setting up a number of service level agreements with some local organisations.

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

Councillors are democratically accountable to residents of Wimborne Minster 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 (i.e. resignation) and equipment (i.e. theft) and unique one-off events (i.e. global contagious virus pandemic).

(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, hirers and contractors are kept up to date should the plan be activated.

(ii) Council contacts/key individuals:

Chairman / Town Mayor	Diann March	01202 888504	26 West Street BH21 1JS
Deputy Chairman / Deputy Town Mayor	Simon Wheeler	07775 544250	10 Cogdean Way, BH21 3XD
Town Clerk	Louise Harrison	07841 523008	N/A
Deputy Town Clerk	Kevin Brooks	07824 704851	N/A
Grounds Manager	Glen Holdsworth	07434 256392	N/A
Office Manager	Jam Wright	01202 881655	N/A
<i>Emergency contact details are available in Council's Emergency Plan</i>			

(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, the Council must consider providing assistance for those staff who have been affected.

(iv) Communications:

- a. Staff - the Town Clerk (or the Deputy Town Clerk if the Town Clerk is unavailable) 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.
- d. IT equipment – the Town Clerk has a home laptop securely linked to Council's electronic folder system to enable the Town Clerk 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 881655 will be diverted to the Town Clerk's mobile phone in the first instance. 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 Town Hall:

a. In office hours Monday to Friday 9.30am to 1pm

Action	Details	Responsible person
1. Evacuate building	Follow normal fire drill procedure	Senior member of staff on duty
2. Check evacuation is complete	Check everyone on-site has been evacuated	Senior member of staff on duty, hirer
3. Verify if incident is real	If false alarm, resume business as usual	Senior member of staff on duty, hirer
4. Call emergency services	999	Senior member of staff on duty, hirer
5. Record any injuries	Incident book in kitchens x 2	Senior member of staff on duty, hirer

6. Alert staff, visitors, hirers, Councillors, contractors.	Alert anyone due to arrive on-site as soon as practicable of the incident and tell them to await further instructions	Senior member of staff on duty, hirer
7. Assess impact	Town Clerk, relevant staff, and Chairman (or Vice Chairman if Chairman unavailable) to assess the scale of the incident and decide next steps	Town Clerk

b. Outside office hours

Action	Details	Responsible person
1. First person on-site to notify Town Clerk/Office Manager	Do not enter the building	Person on site
2. Call emergency services	999	Person on site
3. Alert staff / hirer / contractor	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	Town Clerk to attend and assess the scale of the incident & decide next steps	Town Clerk
5. Alert Councillors	All Councillors made aware	Town Clerk / Office Manager

c. Business continuity for either of the above scenarios:

Critical activity	Details	Responsible person
Phones	Staff to use personal mobile phones and Town Clerk / Office Manager to contact IT contractor to forward office lines to Clerk's / Office Manager mobiles.	Town Clerk
Internet	Town Clerk to use home internet connections. If home connection unavailable contact local shared office providers to rent desk space.	Town Clerk
Insurance	Town Clerk to inform insurance company (contact details: Gallagher Insurance, Kevin Millard, 07458 124847.	Town Clerk
Post redirection	Form available on Royal Mail website	Town Clerk/Office Manager
Inform customers	If disruption is expected, inform customers via website, social media, local news outlets and noticeboards.	Town Clerk/Office Manager

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

a. Assessment of loss of infrastructure:

Infrastructure	Details	Responsible person
Phones	Contact IT provider (Rejuvenate) to ascertain extent of outage – 01202 892249	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.		

b. Business continuity:

Critical activity	Details	Responsible person
Phones	Staff to use mobile phones. Councillors home and mobile numbers to be used as required	Staff
Internet	Clerk to use home internet connection, staff use mobile phones Wi-Fi is applicable	Staff
IT/emails	Contact IT contractor	Staff
Mains power	Call 105	Office Manager
Meetings	Move or cancel and ensure all are informed	Town Clerk
Post	Attend Town Hall or redirect as required	Office Manager

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

a. Short term issue with no service interruption:

Critical activity	Details	Person responsible
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.	Town Clerk
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.	Town Clerk/Chairman
3. Long term loss	Notify HR Committee to consider appropriate action	Town 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		

b. Long term/permanent absence (Town Clerk recruit temporary of full-time replacement as per Performance Management Policy, recovery phase to achieve normal working practices for Council):

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.	Town Clerk
2. Respond to any long term support needs of staff	Depending on the nature of the incident, Town Clerk / HR Committee may need to consider providing support services	Town Clerk / HR Committee
3. Publicise that there is now 'business as usual'	Inform customers through normal channels that our business is operating as normal	Town Clerk
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.	Town Clerk and relevant staff
5. Review this 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.	Town Clerk / HR Committee
6. Report to HR Committee	Review incident, make and implement recommendations from incident.	Town Clerk / HR Committee

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 (via NALC), review delegated powers, Town Clerk liaise with Chairman (Vice Chairman if Chairman not available), update Council website and all calls diverted to Clerk/Office Manager mobiles.		

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

4. Maintenance and review of Plan

Any changes in personnel which affect the plan should be addressed 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 the Finance and Governance Committee and recommended to Full Council.

[End]