

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE
MALVERN TOWN COUNCIL**

held on Wednesday 31 January 2024

in the Council Chamber, Belle Vue Terrace, Malvern at 6.00 pm

Councillors

Cllr Caroline Bovey (Chair)
Cllr Jude Green
Cllr David Mead
Cllr David Watkins

In attendance

Linda Blake – Town Clerk
Louise Wall – Minute Clerk

Absent

Cllr Josephine Leibrandt (apologies)

22. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from Cllr Josephine Leibrandt were **NOTED**.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

24. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous Audit Committee meeting held on 25 October 2023 be approved and adopted as a correct record of the proceedings.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

25. BUSINESS CONTINUITY POLICY

At the previous meeting of Audit Committee, a thorough discussion had been held on formulating a business continuity plan. The Town Clerk had incorporated comments made into the draft plan and policy now presented to members for further discussion and consideration.

Members agreed on some further changes within the document and noted the following:

- The terms ‘Deputy Town Clerk’ and ‘Operations Manager’ are both used as it may not always be the case that they are one and the same person.
- References to the building at Belle Vue terrace will be updated as necessary once the Council has relocated.
- Initials of employees included in the tables should be replaced with the position so that the document becomes more general.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the draft business continuity plan incorporating changes as agreed by committee and attached as Appendix A to these minutes would be presented to Full Council for adoption.

26. DATE OF NEXT AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING

It was **AGREED** that the next meeting of the Audit Committee would be on Wednesday 21 February 2024 at 6.00 pm.

The meeting ended at 6.38 pm

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(Chairman)



MALVERN TOWN COUNCIL

**BUSINESS CONTINUITY
PLAN AND POLICY**

MALVERN TOWN COUNCIL

BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN AND POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this plan is to prepare Malvern Town Council's (hereafter known as 'the Council') business in the event of extended service outages caused by factors beyond the Council's control and to restore services to the widest extent possible in a minimum time frame.
- 1.2. This plan has been developed to complement the overall risk arrangements, help maintain critical activities during and after any major disruption and promote recovery.
- 1.3. The plan is intended to provide an overall framework for managing the repercussions of a serious incident which identifies the resource requirements, list of contact names and addresses, and actions that need to be considered and taken, in the event of a serious disruption to the business activities undertaken by the Council.
- 1.4. The outcome of this plan is to ensure that the Council is able to maintain a good level of service.

2. Plan objectives

- 1) To serve as a guide should any serious threats affect the Council's services/activities.
- 2) To assist in avoiding confusion experienced during a crisis by documenting, testing and reviewing recovery procedures.
- 3) To reference and point to the location of critical data.
- 4) To provide procedures and resources needed to assist in recovery.
- 5) To ensure councillors are kept up to date should the plan be activated.
- 6) To minimise the social, legal and financial consequences.

3. Structure

- 3.1. In the event of a major incident the Emergency Decision Making Group will convene, alongside the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk to discuss the Council's response. The Emergency Decision Making Group is made up as follows:
 - The Mayor
 - The Deputy Mayor

- Chair of Policy and Resources Committee
- Vice-chair of Policy and Resources Committee
- Chair of Operations and Planning Committee
- Vice-chair of Operations and Planning Committee

3.2. The group's priorities will be:

- Safety and welfare of employees and councillors
- Customer/resident safety
- Recovery of all services and/or assets
- Legal compliance
- Minimisation of financial loss

4. Documentation

4.1. This plan will be kept as an electronic copy by the Town Clerk with hard copies kept at both administrative and operational bases. Copies of the plan will be published on the Council's website.

5. Definitions of incidents

5.1. Three levels of incident have been defined, the most serious being a Level 3 incident.

Level 1 Incident: Local Incident

- Defined as a local incident that is not an emergency and does not cause serious physical threat to people or property. Results are likely to be limited disruption to services.

Level 2 Incident: Minor Incident

- Defined as an incident that could pose an actual threat to people or property but does not seriously affect the overall functioning of the Council or its services. This might include the isolation or evacuation of open spaces or buildings in use by the Council, with the assistance of the Emergency Services.

Level 3 Incident: Major Incident

- Defined as an incident causing significant disruption to a locality, event or to Council property, resources or services. This may have the potential to escalate and involve

external Emergency Services who would probably take operational control of the incident, or the need to involve external advisors and/or contractors to assist with recovery.

6. Employee welfare

- 6.1. It must be recognised that an incident that results in the enacting of this plan may also cause additional pressures for employees. Employees need to be given clear direction about the priorities of the business.
- 6.2. Managers must monitor employees more closely to ensure that their welfare is maintained. Employees should be aware of what their role is when a major incident occurs. Clear and concise communication with employees is pivotal to having an organised response. Employees 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. Managers must consider aiding any employees who they suspect have suffered undue stress or even trauma from the business disruption.

7. Communication

- 7.1. Employees – the Town Clerk and/or Operations Manager will update employees regarding news of any emergency incident.
- 7.2. Councillors – the Town Clerk will notify the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of any updates and news regarding an emergency incident followed by communication to all councillors.
- 7.3. Public - communications with the public will be via the Council's website, social media, local news outlets and notice boards. All communication with the press will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Communications and Publicity Policy.

8. Categories of possible threats and outline plan of action

- 8.1. The major threats to the continuity of Town Council business have been categorised into three main areas as follows:
 1. Threats to staffing resources and councillors
 2. Threats to data security and IT systems
 3. Threats to buildings, equipment and infrastructure
- 8.2. The Action Plan will involve the following:
 1. Identification of threat or risk

2. Assessment of scale of threat or risk and classification of level of incident
3. Steps to be taken by employees and councillors
 - Immediately and as a matter of urgency
 - Short term actions
 - Long term actions
4. Communication of incident and action plan
5. Recovery phase
6. Review of plan

THREATS TO STAFFING RESOURCES AND COUNCILLORS

9. Employee incident and loss of key employees

- 9.1. An employee incident can include a sudden family emergency, injury or other event which renders a key employee suddenly unable to work.

Action	Person responsible
Identify interchangeable employees. All employees should have colleagues who can perform their roles, even if it is in a reduced capacity. Identify the relevant person and support them in carrying out business-critical activities.	TC/OM
Assess extent of loss, identify whether the affected employee is likely to be temporary, longer-term, or permanent.	TC
Longer term loss of employees, alert Policy and Resources Committee (staffing) to discuss appropriate action.	TC
Recruit temporary or fulltime replacement, following the standard recruitment procedure to find a full-time, part-time, or fixed-term contract (as appropriate) replacement.	TC/OM
Should the loss of employee relate to the Town Clerk, speak to Worcestershire CALC/SLCC for support and possible supply of locum employee.	DTC/EDMG

- 9.2. This is a list of business-critical activities where more than one person should be familiar with the work involved. The final column lists those able to complete the activities.

Activity	Key knowledge	Person responsible
Meetings arrangements.	Issue of agendas and preparation of minutes.	TC/OOC
Financial management systems.	Use of SAGE.	TC/FAO
	Access to bank accounts.	TC/FAO/OOC
	Access to credit card.	TC/OOC
Access to website.	Ability to edit content.	TC/PA/OOC
Clerking meetings.	Standing orders, Local Government Act 1972 and other key legislation.	TC/DTC
Event management.	Ability to manage event on day. Bookings and arrangements.	TC/OM/OOC
Cemetery interments and record management.	Use of grave digger. Completion of accurate records.	OM/OS/GMOs
Cemetery bookings.	Taking cemetery bookings.	TC/PA/OOC
Management of plant and equipment.	Appropriate licences.	OM/OS
Consultation responses.	Responding to planning applications and licensing consultations.	TC/DTC

10. Loss of Councillors

- 10.1. There are legal quorums alongside organisational set quorums in order for Town Council business to take place and the following actions ensure that legally constituted decisions can still be taken.

Action	Person responsible
Apologies to be submitted to meetings and substitutions made where possible.	Town Councillors

Changes to be made to committee quorums if councillor numbers are low.	TC/Full Council
Application for leave of absence to be submitted and granted as necessary.	Town Councillors/ Full Council
Advertisement of vacancies for filling by election co-option.	TC
System of delegations to officers to ensure day-to-day running of the Council.	TC

THREATS TO DATA SECURITY AND IT SYSTEMS

11. IT equipment

- 11.1. If applicable, work laptops and/or other IT equipment is provided to all permanent employees to enable them to work away from the office in an emergency.

12. Data protection and passwords

- 12.1. All data in electronic format is held on a cloud-based system and information relating to the Council's services and activities or which details personal data of suppliers, customers and members of the public should not be stored on any device not linked to the cloud-based system utilised by the Council.
- 12.2. All connections by a work laptop to the internet, when away from the workplace, must be made using a secure password protected internet VPN connection.
- 12.3. Employees should ensure that passwords are updated regularly.
- 12.4. All data held in paper format should be stored in the Council's offices and not left at home or in other locations for any longer than necessary, i.e. it should be brought into the office each time the employee returns there.
- 12.5. Compliance with the Council's data protection policy shall be maintained throughout and practices must be in line with General Data Protection Regulations.
- 12.6. An information sheet detailing all the passwords needed to access the Council's systems, data and online accounts will be maintained by the Town Clerk and kept securely off site, as well as on site, for use by any employee handling an emergency or business continuity matter.
- 12.7. Appropriate training is provided for all Town Council employees to ensure they are kept up to date with security and data threats.

12.8. Important files such as cemetery records should be stored as safely as possible and preferably in a fireproof container.

THREATS TO BUILDINGS, EQUIPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

13. Other equipment and assets

13.1. The Council has a variety of other equipment; principally:

- Vehicles
- Machinery
- Tools
- Grave digging equipment

13.2. Where any of the above equipment is lost or out of use for a period, the following measures should be taken:

Issue	Action	Person Responsible
Theft or other loss of tools.	Temporary hire or purchase of essential tools.	OM/OS
Breakdown or theft of gravedigging equipment.	Contact hire company for replacement digger. Emergency purchase of shoring equipment as required.	OM
Breakdown or other loss of vehicles/machinery.	Temporary hire of replacement whilst permanent solution investigated.	OM/OS

14. Premises incident

14.1. A premises incident can include flood, fire, or any other disaster that renders the premises inaccessible. The Council currently owns the following premises that it currently relies on for the delivery of its functions:

- Building at Belle Vue Terrace – Town Clerk, office and administrative employees
- Cemetery buildings – base for Operations Manager and Team

- 14.2. Whilst the Council is a tenant of, or using the accommodation provided by a third party, whether for office, meeting space or storage of equipment, its employees and councillors will comply with the arrangements and procedures of the premises owner.
- 14.3. Wherever possible and in compliance with the need to remain safe, the Council will seek to remove items of value from the premises affected, including, as a priority:
- Petty cash
 - All laptops and cabling
 - Mayoral chain of office
 - Signed copies of minutes of meetings
 - All other equipment with a value greater than £500
- 14.4. Paperwork and IT equipment can be taken home with employees in the short term. The Mayoral chain of office can be temporarily stored either at the Town Clerk's or Mayor's home address.
- 14.5. When a premises incident occurs during office hours or when a meeting is underway or about to commence:

Action	Person responsible
Evacuate the building following normal fire drill procedure.	TC/OM or responsible employee
Check evacuation is complete and everyone on site has been evacuated. Employee and visitor safety is the priority.	TC/OM
Call emergency services as necessary.	Employees on site
Verify if incident is real. If it is a false alarm, resume business as normal.	TC/OM/Employees on site
Alert employees, visitors and councillors. Alert any employees due to arrive on site soon, and tell them to await further instructions.	TC/OM
Assess impact and scale of the incident and decide next steps.	TC
Inform all councillors.	TC
Record details of any injuries sustained in the incident in the	TC/OM

Incident Book.	
Identify what equipment, materials or records need to be removed from the site and to where.	TC

14.6. Where an incident occurs outside office hours or where there is no one within the building:

Action	Person responsible
First person on site to notify the Town Clerk. No one to enter the building.	All employees
Alert any employees due to arrive on site soon after the incident and tell them to await further instructions.	Town Clerk/ PA to Town Clerk
Assess impact and scale of incident and decide next steps.	Town Clerk/ Operations Manager
Assess if materials or equipment can be removed from premises to secure them and identify to where they can be relocated.	Town Clerk/ Operations Manager
Inform all councillors.	Town Clerk
Move any scheduled meetings and ensure that councillors, press and other known attendees are informed of the change of meeting. Post a notice on the original meeting venue, if possible, to advise of the change of meeting.	Town Clerk/ PA to Town Clerk

15. Business continuity

15.1. Where the loss of premises or facilities results in a threat to the Council's ability to function, the following actions will be applied.

Issue	Action	Person responsible
Telephones.	Employees to use personal mobile phones to maintain contact with each other, with suppliers, members of the public and councillors.	All employees
Council landline.	Appropriate answerphone message and/or call forwarding.	TC/OOC
Post redirection.	Arrange with Royal Mail, including	TC/OOC

	payment of redirection fee using Council credit card.	
Internet.	Employees to use home internet connections.	All employees
Insurance.	Policy held with James Hallam Ltd.	TC
Communications.	Inform service providers, residents and others via website, social media, local news outlets and noticeboards.	TC
Communications.	Ensure all Councillors are aware of incident and actions to be taken to address disruption caused by it.	TC

16. Infrastructure incident

- 16.1. An infrastructure incident can include the loss of computer/telephone systems, internet access or power. If the outage is temporary, inform employee to remain and await further instructions. Refer to actions in the business continuity section above for managing the incident.

Principal contacts are:

Issue	Provider	Details
Telephones.	British Telecom Hi-Line Communications Ltd	0800 616 094 0845 456 4664
Mains power.	National Grid	0800 678 3105
Website.	Design in the Shires	07950 999887
IT.	Quintech	01684 882700
Meeting venue.	MHDC Council Chamber	01684 862197

- 16.2. If power outage is widespread and employees' homes are also affected contact local shared office providers to rent desk space.

17. Recovery phase

- 17.1. The purpose of the recovery phase is to resume normal working practices for the entire organisation. Where the impact of the incident is prolonged, normal operations may need to be delivered under new circumstances, different location etc.

Action	Details	Person responsible
Agree and plan the actions required to enable recovery of normal working.	Agreed actions will be detailed in an action plan and set against time scales with responsibility for completion clearly indicated.	TC/DTC/EDMG
Respond to any long- term support needs of employees.	Depending on the nature of the incident, Council may need to consider providing support services.	TC
Publicise that there is now 'business as usual'.	Inform public/customers through normal channels.	TC
Carry out a debrief of the incident and complete report to document opportunities for improvement and any lessons identified.	This should be reviewed to ensure key actions resulting from the incident are implemented within designated timescales.	TC/OM
Review the Business Continuity Plan considering lessons learned from incident and the response to it.	Implement recommendations for improvement and update the plan. Communicate revised version of the plan to all employees.	TC
Report to Full Council.	Ensure Councillors are aware of any recommendations arising from a review of the incident.	TC

18. Maintenance and review of plan

- 18.1. Any changes in personnel which affect the plan should be addressed immediately.
- 18.2. 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 the Town Council is run because of a change in legislation etc. the effects should be evaluated with respect to the plan.

19. Notes

- 19.1. In all cases, where the Town Clerk and/or Deputy Town Clerk and/or Operations Manager is/are absent, responsibility will fall to the next suitable person or deputy.

20. Glossary of abbreviations

TC	Town Clerk
DTC	Deputy Town Clerk
OM	Operations Manager
PA	PA to Town Clerk
OOC	Operations and Office Co-ordinator
FAO	Finance/Administration Officer
OS	Operations Supervisor
GMOs	Grounds Maintenance Operatives
EDMG	Emergency Decision Making Group