



FOUR MARKS PARISH COUNCIL

BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

Introduction

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/36/contents>) places a duty on a local authority to ensure it is, as far as reasonably practical, prepared to continue to provide important functions and services in the event of a disruption.

Whilst this is not a statutory duty for a Parish Council, Four Marks Parish Council ('the Council') recognises the importance of producing and maintaining a Business Continuity Plan for implementation in the event of disruption to the day to day running of the Council.

This Business Continuity Plan identifies the:

- instances of disruption
- plan for the management of risk, including:
 - risk areas
 - immediate responses
 - procedures to follow to maintain continuity of services
 - follow-up procedures and necessary changes to delivery of services
 - external contacts

where such services are disrupted by factors within the Council's areas of responsibility.

Core Business of Four Marks Parish Council

The Council provides local services to its Parish electorate which includes the provision of:

- A Clerk and assistant employed to carry out appropriate functions for the Council
- Management of the finances of the Council, using the Parish precept for the benefit of the Parish and issuing of discretionary grants
- Administration of the Benians Trust
- Consultation on local planning applications to represent the interests of the Parish
- Liaison with East Hampshire District Council, Hampshire County Council or other relevant third party bodies on the provision of services to the parish and on issues that affect the parish;
- Maintenance services around the Parish including Parish Lengthsman duties (currently funded by Hampshire County Council) and sub-contracted grounds maintenance of the recreation

area, cemetery, the green at Lymington Bottom, wildlife areas surrounding Badger Close, Kingswood Copse, Oak Green parade and all other open space owned and managed by the Parish Council

- Parish Noticeboards
- The Council's website;
- Parish facilities, including:
 - The recreation ground inclusive of children's play area, adult gym and sports pitches
 - The Sports Pavilion
 - Swelling Hill pond
 - Litter bins and dog waste bins on Parish owned land in conjunction with East Hampshire District Council
 - Four Marks cemetery
 - Parish Council owned open public spaces and woodland.
 - Four Marks allotments.

Disruption

Potential causes of disruption include:

- Force majeure events ("acts of God"), disaster and disruption including:
 - severe adverse weather (for example: storms, winds, snow)
 - flooding
 - acts of war, terrorism
 - fire
 - illness
 - National pandemics – e.g., the outbreak of Covid-19.
- Vandalism, damage to, or theft of Council property
- Illegal and/or unauthorised encampments or incursions
- Failures, including of:
 - equipment due to failure or breakage
 - utilities and infrastructure provision; and
 - public services
- Losses, including of:
 - Council staff and Parish Councillors through death, illness, injury, resignation or dismissal, which, in the case of parish councillors, may leave the Council inquorate;
 - Equipment through theft, breakage or major damage; and
 - Council records through theft, fire or corruption of files.

Risk Management Plan

Event	Impact Minimisation	Immediate Action	Continuity
Closure of Parish Office due to Government advice or Public Health requirements.	<p>Clerk and assistant should continue to carry out their work remotely wherever possible.</p> <p>Equipment, insurance and risk assessments have all been considered to enable remote working.</p> <p>Office landline to be diverted to Council owned mobile to receive incoming calls.</p>	<p>Chair and Vice Chair are made aware. The Clerk will then ensure that all Council members are informed.</p> <p>To ensure that the maximum number of people within the community are informed, notices will be displayed at the Parish Office, on Parish noticeboards and via social media and the Parish website.</p>	<p>Ensure those contacting the Parish Office know that staff are working from home. This will be achieved by informing individuals that phone and amending email signatures to highlight that staff are working remotely. A note will also be added that staff will be working in a home environment and possibly using their own devices to cover any GDPR issues.</p>
Disruption to Council meetings due to prohibition by the Government or other body of authority.	<p>Where possible, meetings will be held to fulfil statutory obligations, however, if government guidance prohibits meetings, the Council will suspend meetings until further guidance is given.</p>	<p>Clerk to make all Councillors and public aware that meetings are prohibited. This will be via the website, social media and Parish noticeboards where possible.</p> <p>Clerk to monitor situation and await supplementary draft and full legislation, keeping the council informed at all times.</p> <p>Council to adopt temporary scheme of delegation</p>	<p>The Clerk will respond to any guidance from the Government or any legal changes as and when they come about.</p> <p>In the meantime, the Clerk will investigate alternative methods which will allow the meeting to take place virtually in readiness to execute this if it is permitted in the absence of a physical meeting.</p>
Loss of Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (“RFO”) due to accident, illness, incapacity, death, resignation or dismissal	<p>Ensure key tasks are up to date, including all Council accounts and minutes.</p> <p>Document containing log ins and passwords to be kept in office safe.</p> <p>Finance and General Purposes Committee to ensure continued compliance with Financial Regulations.</p>	<p>Inform Chair and Vice-Chair. Chair or Vice Chair to inform Council.</p> <p>Notices on parish noticeboards and website, inform local newspaper, if and as appropriate.</p> <p>Chair to inform Health & Safety Executive, if necessary.</p>	<p>Clerk’s assistant to cover and consult with Medstead Parish Clerk where necessary.</p> <p>Recruit permanent Clerk.</p> <p>Review procedures to ensure minimal impact from loss.</p>

Event	Impact Minimisation	Immediate Action	Continuity
Loss of Councillors causing the Council and/or one or more of its committees to be inquorate	<p>Inquorate Planning or Open Spaces committee: utilise reserve members (if appropriate)</p> <p>Inquorate Finance & General Purposes Committee – decisions will go to Full Council.</p> <p>Inquorate Full Council: Co-option of Councillors from waiting list (if any) / reserves by EHDC, if necessary</p>	<p>Clerk to inform remaining Councillors and employees of the Council.</p> <p>Inquorate Full Council: Clerk to inform EHDC Electoral Service.</p>	<p>Inquorate Full Council: EHDC to decide on temporary working strategy for Council business.</p> <p>By-election or co-option procedure to be instigated.</p> <p>Council to review procedure for recruitment of Councillors.</p>
Loss of Council documents due to fire, flood or other causes	<p>Scan important documents and keep an electronic copy, or keep in fire/flood proof storage.</p> <p>Important documents include: Staff and Parish Councillors' contact details, next of kin details; external contacts, including accountants and auditors details; Land Registry documents; all contracts, including leases/tenancy agreements; bank account details). Rights of burial and records also to be scanned.</p> <p>Regular back up of electronic documents held on the desktop on portable back up drive to be kept in an off site separate location by Clerk.</p> <p>Laptops to be backed up on regular basis.</p>	<p>Clerk to inform Chair and Vice Chair.</p> <p>Retrieve last back-up.</p> <p>Clerk to inform Insurance company if necessary.</p> <p>Report incident to Full Council.</p>	<p>Review procedures to ensure improvements and security.</p>
Loss of Council equipment or electronic data due to theft, fault, damage or breakdown	<p>Back up of Clerk's PC – also save items to drop box and save on office laptops where necessary.</p> <p>Carry out regular risk assessments, including security reviews.</p>	<p>Clerk to inform Chair and Vice Chair.</p> <p>Report theft to police and Insurance company.</p> <p>Decide on immediate replacement.</p> <p>Report incident to Full Council.</p>	<p>Replace in accordance with current regulations.</p> <p>Review procedures to ensure improvements.</p>

Event	Impact Minimisation	Immediate Action	Continuity
Damage to Sports Pavilion.	Maintain adequate insurance cover. Carry out periodic maintenance checks	Clerk to inform insurance company. Clerk to inform police, if necessary. Clerk to inform Chair and Vice Chair and Full Council to be informed. Clerk to notify Benians Committee. Clerk to notify public of any closure via notices on parish noticeboards and website, inform local newspaper, if and as appropriate.	Review procedures to ensure improvements.
Damage to Allotment Site	Maintain adequate insurance cover for items the Council is responsible (the perimeter fencing) Maintain the infrastructure of the Allotment Site which (including hauling ways, external boundaries, any trees not growing on plots, water mains and tanks and buildings owned by the Council.	Clerk to inform insurance company, if appropriate. Clerk to inform police, and water board, if and as necessary. Clerk to inform Chair and Vice Chair. Full Council and Four Marks Allotments Association to be informed.	Not applicable.
Damage to Council open spaces and/or play equipment	Maintain adequate insurance cover, where available and appropriate Carry out all necessary risk assessments and routine checks, maintenance and repairs	Clerk to inform insurance company, if appropriate. Clerk to inform police, if necessary. Clerk to inform Chair and Vice Chair. Full Council to be informed. Health and Safety audit of play equipment and cordon off, as necessary and appropriate.	Regular inspections by trained Councillors Annual inspections by certified RoSPA body
Illegal and/or unauthorised encampments or Traveller incursions	Regularly maintain and update the Council's policy on dealing with illegal and unauthorised encampments Maintenance of deterrence to illegal access of Council owned open spaces.	As detailed in the Council's policy on dealing with illegal and unauthorised encampments	Not applicable

Event	Impact Minimisation	Immediate Action	Continuity
Non availability or damage to the Councils regular meeting place (currently FM village hall)	Awareness of alternative meeting places; Benians Pavilion COGS Primary School	Clerk to inform All Councillors of alternative meeting place. Clerk to notify public via notices on parish noticeboards and website, inform local newspaper, if and as appropriate.	Short Term use of other local facilities Review procedures to ensure improvements. Hold meetings remotely if allowed, or delegated authority to the Clerk in place
Local disaster	Maintain up to date risk assessments of all Council property/liabilities. Maintain up to date contact detail list of Councillors, Clerk, and assistant, including next of kin. Maintain up to date list of emergency contacts. Promulgate awareness of East Hampshire District Council and Hampshire County Council Disaster Planning and key contacts.	Clerk to inform all Councillors. Contact relevant emergency services if appropriate. Call extraordinary meeting of Full Council to review the position and any necessary action.	Review risk assessments. Review procedures to ensure improvements.
Disruption to Council work due to severe adverse weather conditions	Clerk and assistant unable to travel to workplace mitigated by Clerk and assistant working from home. Clerk or assistant and Councillors unable to attend Council meetings: may be mitigated by rescheduling of meetings	Clerk, Chair and Vice Chair to reschedule impacted meetings and Clerk to notify Councillors of rescheduled meetings. Clerk to notify public via notices on parish noticeboards and website, inform local newspaper, if and as appropriate.	Review procedures to ensure improvements.

The Clerk is the first point of contact for all emergencies and business continuity actions. If the Clerk is not available, the actions should be implemented by the Chair, or in their absence, the Vice-Chair or a member of the Council that has been nominated by the Chair or Vice-Chair.

FOUR MARKS PARISH COUNCIL
TEMPORARY SCHEME OF DELEGATION

Background

Following the recent pandemic, a temporary scheme of delegation to the Executive Officer was put in place for the Council to fulfil its obligations and continue as democratically and compliant as legal possible. In line with the adopted Business Continuity plan best practice would indicate that it would be reasonable to have a standard temporary scheme of delegation available to put in place should there be a requirement in an emergency. The temporary scheme of delegation will be enacted either by motion at the next appropriate Full Council meeting, or by the Chairman and Vice Chairman if the Council are unable to meet for ratification at the next council meeting when held.

Terms of Reference

Under Section 101 of the LGA (1972) there is provision for delegating authority to the Proper Officer for making decisions on behalf of the council as and when appropriate. The purpose of introducing the temporary scheme of delegation to the Executive Officer is to ensure that the Council can still operate with full compliance with the current Government restrictions in legislation.

1. To take action on any issue that cannot wait until the next Parish Council meeting
The Executive Officer will address any need/resolution to all Councillors by email. Action taken should be routinely carried out with the input of at least two Councillors. The Executive Officer would normally be expected to consult with the Chairman and Vice Chairman, or Committee Chairman, to take their views into account.
2. Planning Applications
To prepare and submit a response to planning applications on behalf of the Council, following recommendations from the Planning Committee, via discussion meeting or email.
3. Financial thresholds
 - a. To authorise expenditure on items where the Council within a budget approved by the Council has agreed to the expenditure, as per the temporary alterations to financial regulations and agreed delegated authority levels as per Appendix 1.
 - b. To incur expenditure on behalf of the Council which is necessary to carry out any repair, replacement or other work or essential project which is of such extreme urgency that it must be done at once, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure submit to a limit of £1000, as per the delegated authority level as per Appendix 1.
 - c. To take any action regarding minor repairs (up to a cost of £1000) and to report minor matters to the relevant authority.
4. Record keeping
Record keeping and the maintenance of a solid trail (particularly around decision making in any form) should be retained in writing and reviewed and certified to ensure good documentary evidence.
5. Reporting back to Full Council

A log will be kept of all decisions made under this Temporary Scheme of Delegation and reported back to the next available Council meeting.

Delegated actions should be in accordance with Standing Orders and Financial Regulations (unless suspended see 3b), and in line with directions given by the Council from time to time and this Scheme of Delegation and where applicable any other rules/regulations and legislation.

Council matters

The following items are reserved for Council decision only and cannot under any circumstances be delegated to an Officer.

- To appoint the Chairman and Deputy Chairman in May each year
- To sign off and approve the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) Statement by 30th June each year
- To set the Precept
- To appoint or dismiss the Clerk/RFO
- To make byelaws
- To borrow money
- To consider any matter required by law to be considered by Council
- To incur capital expenditure or revenue expenditure not specifically included within the Annual Estimates approved by the Council
- To approve or amend Standing Orders and Financial Regulations as to the conduct of the Council's business
- To approve the Committee structure including terms of reference, membership and voting rights
- To confirm eligibility to use the General Power of Competence

APPENDIX 1

TEMPORARY ALTERATIONS TO FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

- 1.1 The Executive Officer is authorised to make expenditure on revenue items up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget. Financial Regulation 4.1 is suspended during the operational period in favour of authorisation as follows:
- 4 Councillors to include the Chairman and Vice Chairman for all items over £5000
 - the Executive Officer, in conjunction with Chairman of Council or Chairman of the appropriate committee, for any items above £1000 but below £5000.
- 1.2 In cases of extreme risk to the delivery of Council services, Financial Regulation 4.5 permits *the Executive Officer to authorise revenue expenditure on behalf of the Council which in their judgement is necessary to carry out. Such expenditure includes repair, replacement or other work, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure.* During the operational period this shall be subject to an increased limit of £5000 for a single transaction. The Executive Officer shall report such action to the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council as soon as possible and to the Council as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 1.3 The Executive Officer shall prepare the monthly Schedule of Invoices for payment which shall be circulated electronically with the Council paperwork prior to the respective Meeting, to present to the Council or Committee for review and authorisation by resolution, as per Clause 5.2, and signed by the Chairman at the first opportunity.
- 1.4 In respect of Financial Regulation 10.3, it is accepted that in difficult circumstances there may be insufficient suppliers available to obtain 3 or more quotations for a specific transaction. Therefore, provided that at least 3 suppliers have been approached to quote, an order may be placed on best value terms available at the time without the requirement for 3 or more responses.

APPENDIX 2 - FINANCIAL REGULATIONS TO BE SUSPENDED/AMENDED

FR 4.1

Expenditure on revenue items may be authorised up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget.

This authority is to be determined by:

- the council for all items over £5,000
- a duly delegated committee of the council for items over £1000 but below £5,000; or
- the Clerk (Executive Officer), with subsequent approval from the Chairman or relevant Committee Chairman, for any items above £1000 but not greater than £5000

Such authority is to be evidenced by a minute or by an authorisation slip duly signed by the Executive Officer, and where necessary also by the appropriate Chairman

Contracts may not be disaggregated to avoid controls imposed by these regulations.

FR 4.5

In cases of extreme risk to the delivery of Council services, the Clerk (Executive Officer) may authorise revenue expenditure on behalf of the Council which in the Clerk's (Executive Officer's) judgement it is necessary to carry out. Such expenditure includes repair, replacement or other work, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of £1000 for a single transaction. The Clerk (Executive Officer) shall report such action to the Chairman as soon as possible and to the Council as soon as practicable thereafter.

FR 5.2

The RFO shall prepare a schedule of payments made or requiring authorisation, forming part of the Agenda for the Meeting and, together with relevant invoices, present the schedule to the Council, or Committee. The Council/Committee shall review the schedule for compliance and, having satisfied itself shall authorise payment by a resolution of the Council or Committee. The approved schedule shall be ruled off and initialled by the Chairman of the Meeting. A detailed list of all payments shall be disclosed within or as an attachment to the minutes of the meeting at which payment was authorised. Personal payments (including salaries, wages, expenses and any payment made in relation to the termination of a contract of employment) may be summarised to remove public access to any personal information.

FR 10.3.

All members and officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times. An officer issuing an official order shall ensure as far as reasonable and practicable that the best available terms are obtained in respect of each transaction, usually by obtaining three or more quotations or estimates from appropriate suppliers, subject to any *de minimis* provisions in Regulation 11.1.

APPENDIX 3 – ADMINISTRATION OF FINANCES AND PAYROLL IN THE EVENT OF NOT BEING ABLE TO AUTHORISE IN PERSON

Approval of Invoices for Payment	Normally by Full Council at monthly meeting and signed by Chairman	As per amended Financial Regulation 5.2 to allow for circulation by email.
Parish Council Credit Card	Normally held in Parish Office	EO will keep the credit card at her home address, until such time as the office becomes operational.
BACS payment authorisation	EO plus Chairman and Vice Chairman	Invoices for payment will be examined, verified, checked for accuracy, coded and signed by the EO. Payments will be entered onto the BACS payment system for authorisation. Scanned copies to be taken of each invoice and circulated with the schedule of payments and/or bank authorisation payment sheet. Payment sheet and invoices will be sent to two signatories electronically. In the first instance the Chairman and Vice Chairman, or other designated signatory Councillors, as appropriate. The signatories will send an email confirming authorisation for retention on file. EO to file hard copies for signature at the first available opportunity by both Chairman and Vice Chairman, or other designated signatory Councillors, as appropriate.
Cheque payment authorisation	EO plus two signatories	Cheque payments should be avoided due to the need of three physical signatures. However, in exceptional circumstances where cheque payment is the only option, two signatories will be asked to visit the office by appointment to sign the respective paperwork, cheque and stub as required, or the EO to visit two Councillors homes, if the office is not available.
Bank reconciliations	Financial Regulation 2.2 requires bank reconciliation verification by an appointed Councillor on a regular basis.	Continuity agreement to be made with appointed Councillor as applicable.
Procurement/placing of orders	Day to day/within budget can be affected from home by EO.	EO has power to spend in an emergency. Temporarily increase value to £5,000 in consultation with 4 Councillors
Monthly payroll (Basic PAYE tools RTI)	Payroll software is only on desktop computer	Salary payments have reverted to BACS system. Payroll can only be processed from desktop computer. Desktop will be removed to home location to enable continuity.