

CANVEY ISLAND TOWN COUNCIL

SHORT TERM BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN - IN RESPONSE TO COVID19 PANDEMIC

Introduction

In addition to the Risk Assessment and Business Continuity Plan completed and agreed on the 23rd March 2020 and 27th July 2020, the Council have reviewed its Short-Term Business Continuity Plan considering the Tier 4/lockdown restrictions and the plan for progressing council business as government guidance changes.

This document has been prepared in association with the Town Council's Risk Assessment for COVID19 and reviewed and approved at a Full Council meeting on the 11th January 2021.

A significant proportion of staff and Councillors are either in At Risk groups themselves or have close family members that are. Furthermore, Canvey Island has a high number of people over the age of 60 and various other at-risk groups.

With the potential impact on Council staff, Members, contractors and suppliers, effective Business Continuity planning will therefore be key to maintaining Council services and corporate decision-making capabilities in order for the Council to continue to assist/lead the community as part of any resilience response.

The three main priorities for the Council continue to be:

- a) Ensuring the Health and safety of staff, Councillors, volunteers, contractors, and Members of the Public participating in Council activities
- b) Maintaining effective and lawful decision-making processes
- c) The continuing operation of essential services and contractual obligations

1.0 Health and Safety

Much of this has been covered in the Risk Assessment in respect of the measures the Town Council has already taken since the restrictions were eased and the office opened to the public. Decisions now need to be made as restrictions are increased again and the transmission levels are increasing around the country.

1.1. Staff

The Town Council office is open to the public on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of each week and represents a HIGH risk to the staff and vulnerable residents. The office had been open on a rota basis since the 27th July 2020 and closed again for the national lockdown on the 5th November 2020 with staff working from home. This continued up to the end of December due to the Christmas closure.

RESOLVED

- **Home working continues whilst in Tier 4 or above until government advice allows normal working practices or by recommendation from the Town Clerk to return on a rota basis or normal working practices.**

1.2. Public Events

The Government are still discouraging large social gatherings and social distancing. The Town Council's planned events have been assessed as follows:

EVENT	DATE	NOTES	RESOLVED
Town Mayor Engagements	Anytime	Risk to Town Mayor and high-risk groups	CANCELLED – until further advice provided
Town Meeting/Community Awards	15 th March 2021	Classified as a small gathering in a public place. High risk to a large At-Risk Group.	Awaiting further advice – potential of moving date.

			Community Awards should progress – working group to discuss awards.
Wildlife Day	TBC	Classified as a large gathering in a public place. High risk to a large At-Risk Group.	On Hold until 2022 – Country style event to be progressed
Armed Forces Day	26 th June 2021	Classified as a large gathering in a public place. Extremely high risk to a large At-Risk Group. Limited period to organise once things settle down.	Awaiting further government guidance - Working group to discuss possible options to progress.
Garden Trail	TBC	Classified as a small gathering in a public place. To be reviewed upon further government advice	Organisation should be investigated
Seafront Entertainment	TBC	Encouraging a large gathering in a public place. Limited ability to manage social distancing	TBC
Beach Fun Day	TBC	Encouraging a large gathering in a public place. Limited ability to manage social distancing	TBC
Lake Picnic	TBC	Encouraging a large gathering in a public place. Limited ability to manage social distancing and limited numbers permitted in play area.	TBC
Christmas	TBC	Classified as a large gathering in a public place. Limited ability to manage social distancing and limited period to organise once social distancing relaxed.	TBC

1.3 **Council/Committee Meetings**

All Meetings shall be open to the public and the press unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons. (Public Bodies Admissions to Meetings Act (1960).

Furthermore, current legislation means that any decisions must be made by a quorate meeting of Councillors present and voting in the room by show of hands. (I.e., not by video link or email)

Videoconferencing has been permitted since 4th April 2020 and the Council approved its Standing Orders with the addendum for Virtual Meetings on the 8th June 2020. It is proposed that all

meetings proceed with effect from September 2020 as virtual meetings until social distancing requirements have been relaxed.

RESOLVED

- **All meetings are to proceed during daytime hours as per the agreed timetable of meetings via virtual means until social distancing requirements have been relaxed and government guidance allows face to face meetings to be conducted safely.**
- **Urgent decisions are delegated to the Town Clerk and Town Mayor as per standing order 24.**
- **Planning meetings will continue to be approved by comments made through email agreement with delegated power to approve and submit the comments unless a major/contentious application arises, and this will be considered via Zoom to allow public participation.**

1.4 Services

(a) Publications

Quarterly newsletters can continue whilst staff work from home. Social media and website can also be maintained working from home. This will become increasingly important in respect of the Town Council's information to the public.

(b) Website Compliance

There is a statutory requirement to ensure the website compliant since the 30th September 2020.

(c) Office Opening for Enquiries

The office will be closed until government restriction allow re-opening on a rota basis or normal working practices. Office calls will continue to be diverted to mobile numbers below:

Events Phone – Events & Community Officer

Town Clerks Office - Town Clerk

Town Clerk & Community Warden – Mobile numbers will be available on the website for health and safety issues.

Main Office number – Deputy Clerk

Website – an additional page will remain on the website to provide all relevant information to the public regarding contact details and the council's services.

RESOLVED

- **To close the office whilst in Tier 4 or above until government advice allows normal working practices or by recommendation from the Town Clerk to return on a rota basis or normal working practices whilst adhering to government guidance and social distancing.**

(d) Planning Applications

There is the possibility to continue to respond to required planning applications via committee comments.

RESOLVED

- **To delegate the power to the Town Clerk to continue to respond to applications on behalf of the committee until normal meetings can resume.**
- **To agree to the Town Clerk referring applications to the committee for input unless a major/contentious application arises, and this will be considered by the committee via Zoom to allow public participation.**

(e) Open Spaces

There is low risk to staff from these activities providing that precautions are taking when touching surfaces and not engaging with the public for more than 15mins at 2m distance. If play areas cannot be inspected weekly, they will be closed until inspections can resume. General upkeep during the fast-growing summer months will be affected if staff and

contractors are not available.

Contractors have been instructed to have contingency plans in place, however, if all contract staff are affected service may be affected. All health & safety issues will be referred to the Town Clerk and Community Warden.

RESOLVED

- **That the Town Clerk continue with the delegated authority to manage the staff and services of the Town Council and take whatever decisions are necessary in line with the Council's Risk Assessment.**
- **That the Town Clerk be authorised to utilise short term and temporary contractors where necessary to keep essential services running**

2.0 Delegated Authority

The Councils current standing order No 24 allows for the delegation of urgent matters as below:

There shall be delegated to the Town Clerk the authority to act in respect of any function of the Council which, in his/her opinion, does not admit of delay. Such authority shall only be exercised after consultation with the Town Mayor or Deputy Town Mayor, and the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the committee within whose terms of reference the particular function lies, unless they cannot be contacted, and the urgency is such that action is paramount.

Financial Regulations 4.4.1 confirms that the Clerk shall have authority to authorise normal budgeted items of works up to the value of £5,000 in exercise of ANY of the Councils functions within the agreed budget without referral to the relevant Committee.

However, such payment would normally be signed by two councillors/authorised signatories and signed at a meeting of the Council or reported to the next available council meeting. The Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer are also authorised signatories and will only sign off payments in an emergency but never the same payment.

RESOLVED

To allow the council to operate on a minimum requirement basis, the following items are delegated to the Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer for the duration of the activation of this policy.

- **All required payments to suppliers and staff costs will be made by BACS and authorised by the Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer following an email to a minimum of 2 councillors who are also authorised signatories. All such payments will be recorded, and evidence will be reported to the next available council meeting to be duly authorised by the council.**