Business Continuation Plan

Contents

1. Introduction 1
2. Purpose and Policy Statement 1
3. Scope of the Plan 1
4. Governance and Responsibilities 2
5. Risk Assessment Overview 2
6. Critical Services and Prioritisation 3
7. Continuity Strategies 3
8. Plan Activation 4
9. Recovery and Restoration 4
10. Training and Testing 4

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1	September 2026	New Plan

1. Introduction

1.1 East Grinstead Town Council plays a critical role in the civic and administrative life of the town, delivering a range of services including cemetery management, community events, public facilities, and grounds maintenance. These services contribute directly to the wellbeing and daily life of residents, and it is essential that the Council maintains service delivery during periods of disruption.

1.2 This Business Continuity Plan (BCP) outlines the measures in place to ensure that essential functions continue or are rapidly restored in the event of a disruption. These could include staff absences, IT failures, severe weather, utility failures, or the loss of premises. The plan identifies key services, outlines continuity strategies, and assigns responsibilities to ensure a timely and coordinated response.

1.3 This Plan is based on good practice, while addressing the unique local needs of East Grinstead.

2. Purpose and Policy Statement

2.1 The purpose of this BCP is to ensure East Grinstead Town Council can maintain critical services and governance functions during and following a significant disruption. The Council is committed to the safety of staff and the public, continuity of essential services, protection of its assets and data, and swift recovery to normal operations.

2.2 The Business Continuity Plan sets out clear procedures for managing risks, activating emergency responses, maintaining communication, and restoring operations efficiently. The Council recognises that even limited disruptions can have a significant impact on its ability to deliver statutory functions and therefore adopts a proactive and responsive approach to resilience planning.

3. Scope of the Plan

3.1 This plan covers all operations and services managed by East Grinstead Town Council. This includes:

- Administrative services provided from East Court Mansion and the Library
- Management and bookings for Meridian Hall and other community venues
- Burial administration and maintenance at Mount Noddy Cemetery
- Grounds maintenance, including public spaces and floral displays
- Organisation of civic and community events
- Provision and upkeep of public conveniences
- Maintenance of Council-owned assets such as noticeboards and war memorials

3.2 The plan also applies to Councillors, staff, contractors, volunteers, and service providers working with or on behalf of the Council.

4. Governance and Responsibilities

4.1 The Town Clerk is responsible for owning and implementing this plan, including initiating the response to an incident and ensuring staff are aware of their roles. In the absence of the Town Clerk, the Deputy Clerk or Head of Finance and Support Services will take over this responsibility.

4.2 Staff members are required to understand their responsibilities under the plan and to participate in relevant training and testing activities. The Estates Manager is responsible for securing physical assets and enabling access to alternative facilities if needed. Event coordination, communications, and public liaison in times of disruption are managed by relevant officers under the direction of the Town Clerk.

4.3 The Mayor and Deputy Mayor have oversight roles and will support strategic decision-making and communications with Councillors and stakeholders during an emergency.

5. Risk Assessment Overview

5.1 The Council has considered a range of scenarios that could cause business disruption. These include:

- **Loss of key personnel**: In the event the Town Clerk or another senior officer is unavailable due to illness or other absence, documented procedures and trained deputies are in place to maintain essential operations. Locum support may also be arranged via professional bodies such as SLCC or WSALC.

- **Loss of premises:** Should the Council offices at East Court Mansion become inaccessible due to fire, flood, or other structural issues, operations can be temporarily relocated to an alternative venue such as Meridian Hall and Sunnyside Barn or another community facility. Essential equipment and documents will be retrieved or accessed remotely.

- **ICT failure or cyberattack:** The Council uses secure, cloud-based systems for data and communications, with daily backups and remote access. In the event of a major outage or breach, systems will be restored from backup and critical services prioritised for reactivation.

- **Severe weather**: Events such as snowstorms or storms may limit access to buildings or impact travel for staff. Where appropriate, remote working will be implemented and non-essential services paused.

- **Utility failures:** Extended power or water outages may necessitate the temporary closure of Council premises. In such instances, services will be reprioritised or moved to other locations.

- **Widespread illness or pandemic:** The Council will follow public health guidance, facilitate home working, and reduce non-critical services as needed. Cross-training ensures multiple staff can cover essential duties.

6. Critical Services and Prioritisation

6.1 Some services are considered critical to public welfare and statutory compliance and must be restored within short timeframes. These include:

- **Burial administration:** Must be resumed within 24 hours to support funeral arrangements and cemetery operations.

- **Council communications and governance**: Public updates, meeting coordination, and statutory notices must continue within 24 hours to maintain transparency and legal compliance.

- **Bookings and venue operations:** While not immediately critical, disruption to venue hire or public hall access should be resolved within 48 hours to avoid income loss and public dissatisfaction.

- **Grounds maintenance:** Essential for safety and appearance, but tolerable for up to 72 hours.

- **Civic events and projects:** Can be delayed for up to one week or more, depending on the nature and scale of the disruption.

7. Continuity Strategies

7.1 To ensure the Council is prepared for emergencies, the following strategies are in place:

- **ICT and data access:** All essential documents and systems are hosted in the cloud, with secure, two-factor authentication for remote access. IT support is available from an external provider to ensure rapid recovery of digital systems.

- **Alternative workspaces:** In the event East Court Mansion is unavailable, staff will relocate to a secondary venue such as Meridian Hall, Sunnyside Barn. Home working is enabled for staff where appropriate.

- **Supplier arrangements**: Contact lists are maintained for all key contractors and suppliers, including those responsible for IT support, funeral services, building maintenance, and utilities. These are reviewed regularly to ensure accuracy.

- **Public communication:** The Council website, Facebook page, and physical noticeboards will be used to keep residents informed. Media statements are issued by the Town Clerk or Community & Tourism Manager, with phone redirection systems in place for continuous public contact.

- **Staff:** In the event of a complete failure communication and ICT services, staff should assemble at East Court.

8. Plan Activation

8.1 This plan will be activated when a significant disruption affects the Council's ability to operate normally. The Town Clerk or a nominated officer will assess the severity and nature of the disruption, determine which elements of the plan to activate, and notify Councillors, staff, and contractors as appropriate.

8.2 The activation process includes:

- Assessing risk and identifying affected services
- Contacting key personnel and stakeholders
- Relocating staff or services if needed
- Publishing updates and information to the public
- Coordinating recovery or restoration efforts

9. Recovery and Restoration

9.1 Once the disruption has ended or stabilised, the Council will begin a recovery phase. This includes:

- Conducting a formal debrief with all involved personnel
- Reviewing service delivery impacts and identifying any backlogs
- Filing insurance claims where applicable
- Restoring services to normal levels of operation
- Updating this Business Continuity Plan to incorporate lessons learned

9.2 The recovery period will vary depending on the type and extent of the disruption but will prioritise the fastest possible restoration of core services.

10. Training and Testing

10.1 The Council is committed to regularly testing this plan to ensure its effectiveness. This includes:

- Reviewing the plan annually or following any major incident
- Ensuring all new staff and Councillors receive appropriate induction on business continuity

- Keeping emergency contact and resource lists up to date on a regular basis including a hardcopy of staff & tenant contact details.

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