

# Thame Town Council

## Business Continuity Strategy

### Strategy Statement

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Business Continuity Strategy 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.
- 1.2 This Continuity Strategy aims to provide a structured plan to enable the Council to use a checklist to respond to an incident in an appropriate, logical way. It will ensure the Council can fulfill its obligations both as a provider of local services and as an employer and the Strategy is intended to support the Council through this process.
- 1.3 The objective of the Business Continuity Action Plan is to reduce the impact of an incident and to provide the Recovery Team with a pre-planned course of actions. Occurrences may arise which could not have been foreseen or may not have been considered. For these situations, the Recovery Team will use their experience and knowledge to adjust checklists or actions set in the Strategy accordingly.
- 1.4 The Strategy and Action Plan be reviewed by the Council and amended and updated if necessary. If an incident occurs the management of the crisis must be reviewed and documented to learn from mistakes and to improve procedures.

#### 2. Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the Business Continuity Strategy are:
  - To help ensure the continuity of service provision in the event of a business disruption
  - To save time and reduce any initial confusion
  - To preserve the Council's image and reputation
  - To minimise general disruption
  - To ensure control is established by the Recovery Team at the critical early stages of a disaster situation
  - To minimise the social, political, legal and financial consequences of the incident.

### **3. Services**

3.1 The Council provides services to the residents of Thame and raises funds for the provision of those services through the precept. The services include:

- Information sited at the Town Hall
- Outside maintenance services – open space / recreation grounds / nature reserve / floral displays / grass cutting / Ham Wood / memorial gardens
- Provision of play areas and a skate park
- Provision of Allotments
- Provision of street furniture – benches / bus shelters
- Provision of markets
- Provision of Council events
- Room hires at the Town Hall

3.2 The Council also provides administrative services including:

- review of planning applications
- policy and financial management
- public relations / information provision
- civic and democratic support
- community event organisation and support
- Neighbourhood Plan support
- business support

3.3 The residents and businesses of the town are represented by 16 councillors. There are committees which meet on a cyclical basis plus Full Council which meets every 8-10 weeks. All meetings are held in the Upper Chamber at the Town Hall.

### **4. Structure**

4.1 The Council must identify and appoint a Recovery Team which will convene in the event of a disaster and will decide whether to invoke the necessary recovery plans.

The team will include at a minimum:

- The Clerk
- The Mayor and Deputy Mayor
- The Chairmen of all committees (Deputy Chairs in their absence)
- The Corporate Services Manager & RFO
- The Operations Manager
- The Community Services Manager
- The Communications Manager

## **5. Recovery Sites**

- 5.1 The Recovery Site for the Town Hall is located at the Maintenance Depot, Lupton Road, Thame. There is a satellite office sited on the ground floor with limited office furniture, a direct telephone and broadband line. There is also an office on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the building with a direct telephone line, a computer and printer. If necessary remote working can be applied as all administrative staff have working from home equipment.
- 5.2 The Recovery Site for the Maintenance Depot – another building will need to be sourced and equipment to enable short term relocation of staff and council services.

## **6. Priorities**

- 6.1 The Recovery Team priorities will be:
- staff safety and welfare
  - customer/user safety
  - recovery of essential services
  - legal compliance
  - minimisation of financial loss
  - recovery of all other activities
- 6.2 Where possible, the Council will continue to operate with minimum disruption from its own premises. It may be necessary to suspend temporarily the hiring of the Town Hall.

## **7. Documentation**

- 7.1 The Business Continuity Strategy will ideally be updated annually by the Council. A hard copy of the Strategy will be held by the Clerk, the Mayor and the RFO & Corporate Services Manager and within the Information Management filing system at the Town Hall under “Business Continuity”. A Business Continuity file on the Management System on the computer will contain all relevant documents.
- 7.2 Copies of the Strategy and Action Plan will be distributed to all staff and will be filed within the Staff Policy folder held in the Central Office and at the Depot. These documents will also be filed in the emergency ‘grab bag’ situated in the Information Centre which is used when an emergency evacuation of the Town Hall has to take place.

## **8. Disruption Scenarios**

- 8.1 The approach to developing a Business Continuity Strategy and Business Continuity Action Plan is firstly to identify different disruption scenarios and then to plan how to deal with them as detailed in the Action Plan. A number of incidents can affect council operations, for example fire, flood, acts of terrorism, cyber attack,

pandemic or prolonged loss of utilities (eg power / water). Each of these could result in disruption. The disruptions have been grouped into three categories:

- Council buildings – denial of access to the building or loss of the building
- Failure of IT or telephone system
- Unavailability of key or sufficient staff

## 9. Council Buildings

9.1 Following a business disruption or incident, the Town Hall or Maintenance Depot could be inaccessible for two main reasons:

- Denial of access, meaning that though systems and services are unaffected, staff are unable to gain access to the building. This could happen following incidents such as a security threat, environmental contamination, or a serious event nearby.
- Fire, flood or structural damage could damage or destroy all or part of the building. This could also affect systems.

## 10. Failure of Critical IT Service or Telephone System

10.1 Some or all critical IT or the telephone system could be unavailable; for example, a cyber attack, a network problem or the cutting of a communications cable supplying the Town Hall.

## 11. Unavailability of Key or Sufficient Staff

11.1 Staff that support business critical activities could become unavailable. Examples are personal injuries / death of key members of staff, or pandemic affecting a group of staff.

11.2 In the event of the Clerk's absence the senior managers in the team have delegated authority and can distribute responsibilities as required.

## 12. Definitions of Incidents

12.1 Three levels of incident have been defined, the most serious being a Level 3 incident: a major 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 Town Hall. This might

include the isolation or evacuation of part of the Town Hall or Maintenance Depot with the assistance of the Emergency Services.

**Level 3 Incident: Major Incident:**

Defined as an incident causing significant disruption to Town Hall or Maintenance Depot operations. It may affect the entire building, and staff, with the potential to escalate and involve external Emergency Services who could take operational control of the incident and necessitate the Business Continuity Action Plan.

### 13. Types of Incident “Level” Benchmarks

Type of Incident	Level 1 (Local)	Level 2 (Minor)	Level 3 (Major)
<b>Natural Emergencies</b> causing building damage collapse	Minor structural damage. No evacuation necessary	Minor structural damage. Evacuation and limited relocation necessary.	Major structural damage. Evacuation and relocation necessary.
<b>Severe Weather Conditions</b> e.g. excessive rain, snow, wind, ice, extreme cold or heat	No building damage. Some staff absence. Minor disruption to normal services.	Minor building damage/serious disruption to normal services. Significant staff absence.	Serious building damage. Serious disruption to critical services. Significant staff absence.
<b>Fires</b>	Minor damage to rooms, no relocation necessary. Little/no information loss. Room(s) out of use temporarily.	Medium damage, loss of some accommodation – can reorganize to cover internally. Little loss of information.	Major damage to the infrastructure. Significant information loss. Relocation necessary.
<b>Flooding</b>	Minor damage to rooms. No loss of equipment or documents. Little or no disruption.	Medium damage to rooms and equipment. Some damage to documents. Remedial work and relocation necessary.	Major damage to rooms, equipment and information sources. Serious disruption to facilities.
<b>Civil Disorder</b>	Disruption to normal Authority services. Some staff absence.	Serious disruption to normal services. Significant staff absence/inability to use facilities.	Prolonged serious disruption to normal services and significant number of staff unable to use facilities.
<b>Water, Gas or Electricity Supply Failure Explosions</b>	Affecting less than 5% of Town Hall. Little or no disruption. Small localised blast – can be isolated.	Affecting 10-30% of Town Hall. Minor disruption. Small to medium blast, minor damage. No release of toxic/flammable substances.	Affecting more than 30% of Town Hall. Serious disruption. Medium/major blast. Major damage and disruption.
<b>Gas Leaks</b>	Minor leak. No Evacuation.	Major leak. Evacuation.	Major leak. Evacuation.

<b>Type of Incident</b>	<b>Level 1 (Local)</b>	<b>Level 2 (Minor)</b>	<b>Level 3 (Major)</b>
<b>Bomb Threats</b>	Suspicious parcels. Isolate and inform the police. Evacuation may be required.	Evacuation. Following serious threats by known activities. Isolate and evacuate. Involves police. Serious disruption to normal services.	Evacuation. Building closed.
<b>Medical Epidemics</b>	Disruption to normal services.	Serious disruption to normal services. Significant staff absence.	Legionella, Pandemic Flu outbreaks.
<b>Adverse Public Interest</b>	Interest by local press only.	Significant local interest – Press and other media.	Extensive Regional/National Interest – Press and other media.
<b>Internet connection loss / Cyber Attack</b>	Disruption of IT services	Serious disruption to Staff & Councillors services for communication	Prolonged disruption, staff & councillors unable to use emails or internet / communication issues longer than 24 hours

## **14. Recovery Procedures**

14.1 The recovery procedures within the Business Continuity Strategy will address each different type of disruption scenario. In any scenario, the Recovery Team will meet to decide whether to invoke the Business Continuity Action Plan and will consider the level of the incident, the nature, extent, likely duration, and prognosis of the disruption.

### **14.2 Accommodation**

If a Level 3 (Major) incident occurs, the Recovery Team and those staff required to perform priority activities will relocate to the designated recovery location at The Maintenance Depot, Lupton Road, Thame, or work from home where applicable.

If both the Town Hall and the Depot are unavailable for use, then another building will need to be sourced to enable short-term relocation for staff and council services.

Some staff will not be relocated and will be expected to work from home.

### **14.3 People**

Key people are those identified as being critical to the completion of key activities. This depends on people's key skills, knowledge, and qualifications. The Business Continuity Action Plan will include the list of staff members and how the Council will continue to provide the function they carry out. The Action Plan will also address a large-scale absence scenario where insufficient staff are available to provide priority services.

#### **14.4 ICT Systems and Services**

The Council must be able to respond and recover from a disruption to its information and communications technology, i.e., if relocation is required, additional IT and telephones are required.

#### **14.5 Equipment**

Should relocation be required from the Town Hall or Maintenance Depot, it would be necessary to identify those pieces of equipment and furniture which would be required to ensure delivery of the Council's essential services; in essence, what standby facilities and equipment would be necessary and which suppliers could be used to provide emergency equipment on a temporary basis.

#### **14.6 Suppliers**

It may be necessary to make arrangements with third parties regarding the delivery of equipment and furniture at short notice by identifying alternative sources.

#### **14.7 Technology**

The Council must ensure that regular proper back-ups of our IT software are undertaken, and that this information can be restored with immediate effect if required.

#### **14.8 Communication**

The Council must consider all forms of communication that it uses, including e-mails, telephones (mobile and land line), hand-held radios, and PA systems, and how these will assist in delivering services during an emergency.

#### **14.9 Insurance**

The Clerk will be responsible for contacting the Council's insurance company, **Zurich**, to provide details regarding the incident and the level of the losses. The Corporate Services Manager & RFO will be responsible for completing all necessary forms and documentation to ensure the Business Interruption insurance cover becomes effective.

## **15. Testing and Exercising**

15.1 To ensure that the Business Continuity arrangements are viable, and that staff are rehearsed in the role which they may have to take at the time of a disruption, there should be an annual test. Whilst the overall objective is to prove the effectiveness of the arrangements, each test will have its own objectives:

- A desktop review of the Business Continuity Strategy and Action Plan with all staff and the Recovery Team to eliminate gaps and ensure clarity and understanding
- To ensure the Business Continuity Strategy and Action Plan can be used to respond to a range of different disruption scenarios
- To ensure that a working environment at the Maintenance Depot can be established for the members of the Recovery Team in the timescale required
- To provide an opportunity for the Recovery Team and staff to explore and practice their crisis management roles
- A call-out cascade test confirming that simple messages can be relayed throughout the Council (which is usually conducted outside normal working hours)
- IT disaster recovery test proving the IT system can be restored in the timescales required at the Maintenance Depot.
- IT telephone recovery test proving calls can be routed away from the Town Hall and answered at the Maintenance Depot or working from home.

## **16. Conclusion**

16.1 The Business Continuity Strategy and Business Continuity Action Plan are Council owned processes that establish a fit-for-purpose strategic and operational framework to follow should an emergency occur. It provides peace of mind that the Council can still provide essential services to residents following a major incident.