

HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Business Continuity Plan



Maintaining this document is the responsibility of: The Town Clerk

This document is due to be reviewed: September 2026

The following premises are covered in this document:

Hexham Town Council Office
St Andrew's Cemetery
West Road
Hexham
Northumberland
NE46 3RR

Copies of this document can be found:

www.hexhamtowncouncil.gov.uk

Description of Business

Hexham Town Council was established in 1974 and is, as a Parish Council, the first level of local government for the Hexham community. The Council delivers a variety of services such as the Cemetery, allotments, grant aid, play areas (including a skatepark and outdoor fitness equipment), Christmas lighting, planting at Hexham Abbey and some other areas of the town centre, Remembrance and other events, the provision of new public litter bins (except in County Council owned parks) and work with other organisations such as Hexham Community Partnership and Northumberland County Council. It is also working on a Town Plan and the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan is at the referendum stage.

Our Customers

The residents of Hexham, and those who work in and visit the town.

Role of the Councillors

Councillors are democratically accountable to residents of their Wards. The overriding duty of Councillors is to the whole community, but they have a special duty to their constituents, including those who did not vote for them.

In addition, Councillors:

- Are collectively the ultimate policy makers and carry out a number of strategic and corporate management functions
- Contribute to the good governance of the area and actively encourage citizen involvement in decision making
- Effectively represent the interests of their Ward and of individual constituents
- Respond to constituents' enquiries and representations, fairly and impartially
- Participate in the governance and management of the Council
- Maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics
- Serve the public interest and take decisions having regards to the interests of the whole local community
- Act as a responsible employer and ensure the safety of all staff.

Business Continuity Overview

Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to prepare our business in the event of extended service outages caused by factors beyond our control and to restore services to the widest extent possible in a minimum time frame.

Outcome

The outcome of this plan is to ensure that the business is able to maintain a good level of service for our customers.

Plan Objectives

- Serves as a guide for those implementing our business continuity plan
- Assists in avoiding confusion experienced during a crisis by documenting, testing and reviewing recovery procedures
- References and points to the location of critical data
- Provides procedures and resources needed to assist in recovery

Key Staff

If a disaster occurs key staff will be the Town Clerk and Operations Manager.

Staff Welfare

It must be recognised that an incident that results in the enacting of this plan may also cause additional pressures for staff. Staff members need to be given clear direction about the priorities of the business. Staff must be monitored more closely to ensure that their welfare is maintained.

Staff should be aware of what their role is when a major disruption occurs. Clear and concise communication with staff is pivotal to having an organised response. Staff 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.

If the Mayor or Town Clerk suspect that staff members have suffered undue stress or even trauma from the business disruption they must consider providing assistance for those staff who have been affected.

Communicating with and by Staff

The Town Clerk will communicate with staff on all updates and news regarding any emergency incident.

All communication with the press will be through the Town Clerk but any interview will only be with the Mayor or Deputy Mayor.

Communicating with Councillors

The Town Clerk will, in the first instance, notify the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of any updates and news regarding an emergency incident followed by communication to all Councillors.

Communicating with and the Public

Communications with the public should be via the Town Council website, social media, local news outlets and the Town Council noticeboard.

Equipment

Office staff have a work laptop to enable them to work away from the office if necessary. The Operations Manager has a work mobile phone and his number (07891 101236) is known to all staff. When needed, the office number (01434 609575) will be diverted to the Town Clerk's work mobile phone.

Technical support is provided by ICT Service Limited (0191 4162002, support@itcservice.co.uk) and both onsite and offsite backup systems for the server are in place.

Data Protection

When working from home, all data on work laptops must be protected in accordance with the Town Council's Data Protection Policy and working practices must be in line with GDPR. All connections by a work laptop to the internet, when away from the workplace, must be made using a secure password protected internet connection.

Scenario 1

Premises incident

A premises incident can include fire, flood or any other disaster that renders the Town Council office inaccessible.

Step 1: Evacuation of premises and safeguarding of staff, visitors and Councillors

In office hours:

Action	Details	Responsible Person(s)
Evacuate the building	Follow normal fire drill procedure	Town Clerk
Check evacuation is complete	Staff and visitor safety is the priority. Check everyone on site has been evacuated.	Town Clerk
Verify if incident is real	If false alarm, resume business as normal	Town Clerk
Call emergency services	999	Town Clerk
Record details of any injuries sustained in the incident	If possible, use Accident Book kept on the shelf by the entrance door	Town Clerk
Alert staff, Councillors and visitors	Alert anyone due to arrive on-site of the incident	Town Clerk
Assess impact	Town Clerk to discuss the scale of the incident with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and decide next steps	Town Clerk

Outside office hours:

Action	Details	Responsible Person(s)
First person on site to notify Town Clerk and Mayor	Do not enter the building	All staff
Call emergency services	999	All staff
Alert staff, Councillors and visitors	Alert anyone due to arrive on-site of the incident	Town Clerk
Assess impact	Town Clerk to discuss the scale of the incident with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and decide next steps	Town Clerk
Alert Councillors	Alert all Councillors	Town Clerk

Step 2: Business continuity

Critical Activity	Details	Responsible Person(s)
Phones	Staff to use work (or personal) mobile phones. Contact Onecom Ltd (03333 445501) to divert the office phone number to the Town Clerk's work mobile phone.	Town Clerk

Internet	Staff to use home internet connections.	Town Clerk
Inform Insurance company	Contact details: Gallagher, Spectrum Building, 7 th Floor, 55 Blythswood Street, Glasgow G2 7AT (Local Account Executive is Richard Matthews M: 07770 931 630 or 01483 462 895)	Town Clerk
Post	Post should not need to be redirected: if the postbox on the office wall may not be used, post may be delivered to the postbox on the Cemetery Lodge instead.	Town Clerk
Inform customers	If disruption is expected, inform customers via the website, social media, local news outlets and the Town Council noticeboard.	Town Clerk

Scenario 2

Infrastructure incident

An infrastructure incident can include the loss of computer systems, telephones, internet access or power.

Step 1: Understand the extent of the loss

Infrastructure	Details	Responsible Person(s)
Phones	Contact phone provider (Onecom Ltd, 03333 445501) to ascertain outage extent.	Town Clerk
Internet	Contact internet provider (ITC Service Ltd, 0191 4162002) to ascertain outage extent	Town Clerk
Mains power	Contact power provider (Octopus Energy, 020 3389 5613) to ascertain extent of outage.	Town Clerk

Step 2: Business continuity

Infrastructure	Details	Responsible Person(s)
Phones	Staff to use work mobile phones. Phone provider to forward office line to Town Clerk's work mobile.	Town Clerk
Internet	Office staff to use home internet connections.	Town Clerk
IT	Contact ITC Service Ltd if necessary.	Town Clerk
Mains power	Office staff to work from home until power is restored.	Town Clerk
Meetings	Move any scheduled meetings (or have them electronically) and advise Councillors and any other attendees.	Town Clerk
Communication with Councillors	Ensure emails to Councillors are forwarded and other lines of communication are maintained.	Town Clerk
Post	Attend relevant post box	Town Clerk

Scenario 3

Staff incident

A staff incident can include a sudden family emergency, injury or other event which renders a key member of staff suddenly unable to work.

Step 1: Ensure no service interruption

Infrastructure	Details	Responsible Person(s)
Identify interchangeable staff	All members of staff should have at least one colleague who can perform their role, even if in a reduced capacity. Identify the relevant person and support them in carrying out business-critical activities.	All staff
Assess extent of loss	Identify whether the affected staff member's absence is likely to be temporary, longer-term or permanent. Keep in mind this may be a difficult period for the staff member and/or their family. NB A locum Clerk may be provided by Gallagher Insurance.	Town Clerk
Longer term loss of staff	F&GP Committee to consider appropriate action.	Town Clerk: report for F&GP Committee/Staffing Sub-Committee.

If the staff loss is temporary, support the member of staff filling the gap until the absent member of staff returns. If the absence is long-term or permanent:

Step 2: Business continuity

Critical Activity	Details	Responsible Person(s)
Recruit temporary or full-time replacement	Follow the standard recruitment procedure to find a full-time, part-time or fixed-term contract (as appropriate) replacement.	Town Clerk F&GP Committee/Staffing Sub-Committee

Scenario 4

Pandemic

Covid-19 and the current situation in April 2020 was a major challenge to all due to severe restrictions on people's movements and only certain types of business being considered essential with key workers.

Step 1: Ensure no service interruption

Many local government services were deemed essential. For Hexham Town Council this included carrying out burials, Full Council and Committee meetings where necessary, grass cutting, and compliance with legislation such as audit requirements.

The Council is also responsible for responding to new regulations so, for example, closing its play areas, providing advice on allotments, and postponing or cancelling public events such as the planned VE75 Picnic in the Park and Armed Forces Day events.

Infrastructure	Details	Responsible Person(s)
Identify staff required	Depending on the work still being done, some staff such as the Cemetery Workers may temporarily only work part-time (furloughing is not an option as the Town Council's income is not affected). Consideration also needs to be given to any staff sent NHS/Government letters to stay at home as they have been identified as being at high risk (the Town Clerk worked entirely from home, the Admin Officer worked mostly from home but went in to the office daily for post and burials administration).	All staff Mayor and Deputy Mayor
Close office	Follow scenario 2 step 2 where relevant.	All staff Mayor and Deputy Mayor

Although temporary, this may vary depending on whether the situation is short-term, medium-term or becomes long-term.

Step 2: Business continuity

Critical Activity	Details	Responsible Person(s)
Keep up to date with legislation and advice	Note and respond accordingly. Monitor NCC response, NALC and SLCC advice. Keep Councillors updated.	Town Clerk
Keep customers advised	Inform customers via the website, social media, local news outlets and the Town Council noticeboard.	Town Clerk

Social implications/ consider additional response	Liase with other organisations to, e.g., set up Hexham Community Together, coordinating volunteers and vulnerable residents requesting help.	Mayor and other Councillors, Town Clerk
Town Council Budget	Consider potential effects on the budget such as financial aid required by local organisations and charities.	F&GP Committee, Full Council
Effect on Hexham	Consider the effects on the High Street and the loss of tourism. Refer to the Town Council's Action Plan.	F&GP Committee HSHAZ

Recovery Phase

The purpose of the recovery phase is to resume normal working practices for the whole organisation. Where the impact of the incident is prolonged, normal operations may need to be delivered under new circumstances (e.g. from a different building). Also, there is the possibility that online meetings may need to continue for many/all meetings if social distancing is extended and/or many Councillors or staff have to remain in isolation.

Action	Details	Responsible Person(s)
Agree and plan the actions required to enable recovery of normal working practices	Agreed actions will be detailed in an action plan and set against time scales with responsibility for completion clearly indicated.	Town Clerk, Mayor and Deputy Mayor
Respond to any long-term support needs of staff	Depending on the nature of the incident, we may need to consider providing support services.	Town Clerk, Mayor and Deputy Mayor
Publicise that there is now "business as usual"	Inform customers through normal channels that our business is operating as normal.	Town Clerk
Carry out a debrief of the incident and complete a 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 time scales.	Town Clerk
Review this continuity plan in light of lessons learned from the incident and the response to it	Implement recommendations for improvement and update this plan. Ensure a revised version of the plan is read by all staff.	Town Clerk, Operations Manager
Report to Finance & General Purposes Committee	Ensure Councillors are aware of any recommendations arising from a review of the incident.	Town Clerk

Maintenance and Review of Plan

Any staff changes which affect the plan should be addressed immediately.

The plan should also be checked and reviewed as follows:

- When there has been an incident which necessitates use 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 Hexham Town Council is run because of a change in legislation, etc the effects should be evaluated with respect to the plan
- Or after a maximum period of 3 years.

Any changes made as a result of a review should be reported to the Finance & General Purposes Committee and approved by Full Council.

Key Contacts

Town Clerk

clerk@hexhamtowncouncil.gov.uk 07710 053732

Operations Manager 07891 101236

Mayor

derehexham@gmail.com 07812 079593

Deputy Mayor

fayhartland@gmail.com 07443 032772

Civil Contingencies Officer, Northumberland County Council

eplan@northumberland.gov.uk 01670 621207

Hexham Police Station 01661 872555

HSE 0300 003 1647

Northern Powergrid

<https://www.northernpowergrid.com/power-cuts> Emergency Phone no: 105

Northumbrian Water Emergency Phone no: 0345 717 1100