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## **BUSINESS CONTINUATION POLICY**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 Rusper Parish Council recognises the importance of maintaining essential services and decision-making capability during periods of disruption, including but not limited to pandemics, severe weather events, loss of staff, cyber incidents, or other emergencies.

1.2 This Business Continuity Policy sets out the arrangements for ensuring the Council can continue to operate effectively during such disruptions.

1.3 This Policy shall be applied in conjunction with the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Risk Management Policy, and any relevant legislation. Where there is conflict during an emergency situation, this Policy may temporarily take precedence, subject to confirmation by Full Council as soon as practicable.

1.4 This Policy shall be reviewed annually or following any significant disruption affecting Council operations.

### **2. Meetings and Council Operations**

2.1 The Council shall normally meet in person. However, meetings may be postponed or cancelled where:

- Government, Public Health, or other statutory guidance advises against public gatherings;
- It is unsafe or impractical for Members or the public to attend;
- Insufficient Members are available to form a quorum; or
- The meeting venue is unavailable.

2.2 The Clerk, in consultation with the Chair (or Vice-Chair in their absence), shall determine whether a meeting is to be cancelled or rescheduled.

2.3 Notice of cancellation or changes to meetings shall be communicated to Members as soon as reasonably practicable and published via the Council's website and noticeboards where appropriate.

2.4 The Council may, where legally permitted, hold remote or hybrid meetings in accordance with applicable legislation and guidance.

### **3. Decision-Making and Delegated Authority**

3.1 In circumstances where meetings cannot be held or quorate decisions cannot be made, the Council delegates authority to the Clerk to act in consultation with the Chair or nominated Member, except where legislation prohibits delegation.

3.2 The following process shall apply:

- The Clerk will circulate urgent matters requiring decision to Members by email or other agreed communication method;
- Members may provide comments within a specified timeframe;
- The Clerk shall record all responses and make a decision based on consultation with the Chair or nominated Member;
- All decisions taken under delegated authority shall be reported to the next available Full Council meeting for ratification.

3.3 Matters of significant public interest, major expenditure outside budget, or new major projects should be deferred where possible until a formal meeting can be held.

#### **4. Financial Controls and Payments During Disruption**

4.1 To ensure continuity of essential financial operations, the Clerk may authorise payments in consultation with the Chair (or nominated Member), within the following limits:

- Payment of invoices up to £2,000 (excluding VAT)
- Purchase of essential equipment up to £500 (excluding VAT)
- Payment of salaries, wages, and employee expenses within approved budgets
- Grants, subscriptions, and donations up to £250 (excluding VAT)

4.2 All payments made under emergency or continuity arrangements must:

- Be properly evidenced with invoices or supporting documentation;
- Be recorded in the Council's accounts;
- Be reported to Full Council at the next available meeting.

4.3 Normal financial controls under the Council's Financial Regulations shall resume as soon as practicable.

#### **5. Staffing and Loss of Key Personnel**

5.1 In the event of the temporary or permanent absence of the Clerk (who also acts as Responsible Financial Officer), the Chair shall be informed as soon as practicable.

5.2 The Chair shall notify Members and oversee interim arrangements to ensure continuity of administration.

5.3 The Council shall appoint temporary or locum support as required to ensure statutory obligations are met.

5.4 Access to key Council records, systems, passwords, and documentation shall be maintained securely and transferred appropriately under Council-approved arrangements.

#### **6. Communications**

6.1 The Clerk shall ensure that Members, staff, and the public are kept informed of any significant operational changes.

6.2 The Council website, noticeboards, and other communication channels shall be used to ensure transparency of decisions taken under this Policy.

#### **7. Review and Activation**

7.1 This Policy shall be reviewed annually.

7.2 The Policy may be activated in whole or in part by the Clerk in consultation with the Chair where an incident or disruption materially affects Council operations.

7.3 Any activation of this Policy shall be reported to Full Council at the earliest opportunity.