



ATTLEBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL

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CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC CONTINGENCY AND ACTION PLAN

The following plan sets out the contingency measures Attleborough Town Council has brought into effect as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. The plan aims to ensure the Council is able to operate its business to the best of its abilities throughout this public health emergency while protecting, as far as is reasonably possible, its members, employees, and volunteers as well as local residents. This plan will be continuously reviewed and updated to take account of the changing status of the Pandemic.

No.	Item	Comments	Risk	Actions	Consequences	Updates
1	Town Council Meetings, including Committees	Meetings usually take place at the Town Hall with 15 members, staff and a number of public present. Government guidance does not allow for such meetings to take place	High	Cancel monthly Town Council meetings and Committee meetings until further notice.	Impact on ‘democratic decision-making’ as Council decisions will have to be delegated or made via email consultation with members of the Council, the latter being the most difficult and time consuming option. (see table below).	Town Hall (meeting venue) closed until further notice. Full Council meeting to be held remotely on 6 April 2020 via email communication - postponed
2	Annual Parish Council Meeting (Annual Town Assembly)	Meetings usually take place at the Town Hall with 15 members, staff and a number of public present. Government guidance does	High	Postponed - scheduled for 1 June 2020.	Statutory requirement for meeting to be held in 1 st March and 1 st June each year, however, Government considering bringing forward legislation to amend this statutory requirement. Legislation	Town Hall (meeting venue) closed until further notice.

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		not allow for such meetings to take place			now in force – postponed to May 2021	
3	Annual Town Council Meeting	Meetings usually take place at the Town Hall with 15 members, staff and a number of public present. Government guidance does not allow for such meetings to take place	High	Postponed until further notice	Statutory requirement for meeting to be held May each year. However, Government considering bringing forward legislation to amend this statutory requirement – legislation in force - postponed until May 2021	Town Hall (meeting venue) closed until further notice.
4	Networking Meetings & Forums	Face-to-face meetings, sometimes involving large groups of people.	High/Med	Members, employees and volunteers not to attend meetings of more than 2 unless compliant with Government exceptions	Should not impact on Council business. Networking can be done via email, telephone or by holding virtual/remote meetings, if necessary.	The CEO/Town Clerk has access to several national and local contacts and forums. The Chairman has access to NflkALC
5	CEO/Town Clerk and all office staff	Works from Town Council Office which is open to the public daily. Attend meetings and operates within the Town, open spaces, cemetery, allotments, etc	High	Cancel face to face meetings. Post will be collected regularly. Items will be dealt with by email and post. Burial paperwork to be processed following ICCM guidance	All office staff will work from home until further notice. Will attend Town Hall and other premises if essential work and compliant to Government guidance. Government updates awaited on phased return to work	Council files and data can be accessed remotely by all office staff. Main office telephone number has been diverted to work mobile. Telephone cascade system in use
6	Other staff	Works outdoors and/or at the Town Hall and toilets. Unable to work from home due to the nature of the work involved.	High	Attending to carry out safety and security checks. Following Government Guidance and ICCM re: servicing of burials.	Essential attendance only at open spaces, Town Hall and public toilets. Grounds staff working full time and use of PPE as required. Covid burials now being dealt with in line with ICCM guidance	In line with Government guidance all the Council play and gym equipment has been closed. Open Spaces remain open. Public toilets are

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						closed. Market is currently not operating at the choice of the traders other than the fish stall which is open.
7	Volunteers	Volunteers man the Archive Office, the TIC office and enable the Community Car Scheme, constant interaction with public	High	Most Volunteers are in the older age range and at high risk and vulnerable themselves. Archive, TIC and Community Car Scheme closed until further notice	Services are postponed until further notice as unable to operate within current guidance.	General information enquiries are dealt with by office staff. Councillors have offered assistance to vulnerable residents.
8	Employee Sickness Absence	Possibility of CEO/Town Clerk being unable to carry out normal Council work due to illness or self-isolation. CEO's Assistant will deputise in her absence. Senior Groundsperson being unable to work due to illness or self isolation, Grounds staff will continue and report to the CEO/Town Clerk	Med	Ensure employees are aware of sickness absence procedures/ Coronavirus advice.	Works from home (self-isolation not a problem). Short-term absence due to illness would not impact greatly on Council business as office and grounds staff are all experienced and capable in their duties	
9	Internal Audit	Internal Auditor unable to attend as face to face not compliant	Med	Consider alternatives for audit to take place	Council's accounts due to be approved by the Council in time to meet the deadline of 30 September 2020, and thus internal examination must have been completed ahead of this date.	Government has confirmed the deadline for local government financial audits will be 30 September 2020. Internal audit agreed to be done remotely.

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						Internal audit now completed satisfactorily and no issues. Awaits sign off by Council before progression to External Audit
10	External Audit (Approving The AGAR)	Accounts must be approved at a meeting of the Council by no later than 29 June and submitted to External Auditor by 1 July 2020. May not be possible for a physical meeting of the Council	High	Await advice regarding extension of time for submission of the AGAR.	A statutory recommendation will be issued to all authorities that fail to submit their documents by 15 September 2020. These are charged at the standard fee rate depending on the authority's expenditure banding, giving rise to a minimum additional fee of £200 plus VAT.	NALC in discussions regarding council audit deadlines. Government has confirmed the deadline for local government financial audits will be extended to 30 September 2020. Extension granted, accounts to be submitted once signed off by Council
11	Payments and banking arrangements	There are several payments the Council is required to make on a regular basis	High	Urgently progress online banking and consider use of BACs payments.	The majority of payments are made via cheque, however, this will not be possible if the banks close or signatories become ill or unavailable due to self-isolation	Online access is being enabled. All account balances have been reviewed and necessary transfers identified. Banking arrangements to be reviewed at meeting 6 April 2020 – postponed. BACs payments requested by suppliers as unable to process cheques

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12	Serving the community and providing services	The main function of the Town Council is to serve the community and enable its services	Med	Consider continuation of services and functions	All staff continue to provide essential services in conjunction with other authorities. Town Councillors remain available subject to illness or self-isolation	Government and NHS guidance and ICCM advice is being followed. The public, the members and staff are regularly updated. Liaison with other organisations including local churches. Assistance being given as requested.
13	Emergency assistance for vulnerable residents	During the pandemic the Council will liaise with all emergency services and other authorities and assist where possible. The Town Council is not an emergency service but recognizes there may be a need to assist vulnerable residents	High	Councillors and staff are available to offer assistance where appropriate. Funding for emergency action must be considered.	The CEO/Town Clerk in liaison with the Mayor and Committee Chairman has applied for the Community Funding available. This will enable access to community groups assisting vulnerable people.	Emergency funding to be considered at the meeting of 6 April 2020. (meeting postponed) Some vulnerable residents have contacted the Town Council and are receiving support. Several Councillors are also making regular befriending and social calls to counteract loneliness. Covid Community Funding applied for and now received awaiting applications
14	Information sharing and updates	The Town Council provides a vital contact point for residents and external	Low	All briefings, updates and communications are received via the	Regular briefings and updates including Government and NHS guidance are regularly distributed	All communications are being cascaded as appropriate and the

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		agencies and authorities. The website, noticeboards and social media pages provide information to residents and businesses.		Town Council contact points, post, email and telephone; these are maintained. Remote access to the Council's data and website is enabled.	to Councillors, staff and the public. Temporary disruption to service may occur because many national services have been overloaded during the Pandemic eg BT	website has full information relating to the pandemic, available services and advice and is updated regularly. Zoom and Teams are being considered to enable meetings.
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Democratic & Lawful Decision-Making

Local authorities are required to hold meetings to make decisions. Given that these are exceptional times (a declared 'pandemic' should meet the test for this), all Town and Parish Councils must cancel their usual meetings and these need to be replaced with alternative decision-making processes. The lawful way to do this is that a decision that would otherwise have been on the agenda for a committee or Council is now made by an Officer. The law permits a Council to delegate decision-making and discharge of statutory powers/functions (including "power to spend") to a Council Officer such as a Parish Clerk and/or Responsible Finance Officer. In such cases, the Officer performs these functions on the Council's behalf but legal responsibility always remains with the Council. Although there are certain matters that the law states cannot be delegated and must be discharged by a meeting of the Full Council, delegation can remove the requirement to convene a Full Council Meeting whilst still enabling essential functions to be undertaken lawfully. It has now been confirmed the Coronavirus Bill will make provision for the Council to meet virtually/remotely and this will be implemented to enable meetings to continue and transact essential business. Various options are being explored to achieve same.

Use of remote meetings has now been incorporated into legislation, various platforms are being considered to enable the Council to meet.