REVISED BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

IN RESPONSE TO COVID19 PANDEMIC

1.0 Introduction

Since the Government lockdown on 23rd March the Council's Business Continuity Plan approved on March 17th has been implemented.

With further laws/statutory instruments passed over the last few weeks, an easing of the Government restrictions announced on Sunday 10th May, with further clarification and advice issued over the course of last week, the Town Council now needs to review the Business Continuity Plan.

2.0 New Information

2.1. 4 of the 6 main directives to the nation still remain as follows:

1. *Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough;*
2. *Avoid non-essential use of public transport, varying your travel times to avoid rush hour, when possible;*
3. *Work from home, where possible. Your employer should support you to do this. Please refer to employer guidance for more information*
4. *Avoid large gatherings, and gatherings in smaller public spaces such as pubs, cinemas, restaurants, theatres, bars, clubs.*

2.2. The only changes relevant to the Council services in respect of the easing of restrictions are the following:

outdoor sports facilities such as tennis and basketball courts, golf courses and bowling greens can re-open but should only be used either alone, with members of the same household, or with one other person from outside the household, while keeping two metres apart at all times.

2.3. Two changes covered by statutory instrument particular to Councils are

a) Councils are now permitted in law to hold remote meetings for urgent business
b) The dates required in law for the public right to inspect the accounts have been moved to September instead of June/July

2.4. Employer and Public Liability Responsibilities

At all times it must be remembered that the Council, both as an Employer and Service provider, remains under a legal obligation to protect its employees, contractors and the public using its services from risks to their health and safety which includes the risk of contracting COVID 19 and ensuring the mental health and wellbeing of its staff.

2.5. The government now requires all Employers to make a 5 point declaration and display at the place of work as follows:

- We have carried out a COVID-19 risk assessment and shared the results with the people who work here

- We have cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures in line with guidance
- We have taken all reasonable steps to help people work from home
- We have taken all reasonable steps to maintain a 2m distance in the workplace
- Where people cannot be 2m apart, we have done everything practical to manage transmission risk

2.6 This document has therefore been prepared in association with the Town Council's Risk Assessment for COVID19. (version 4 dated 18TH May 2020)

3.0 Proposed Changes to Existing Business Continuity Plan

Existing and proposed changes to the Business Continuity Plan are detailed below for consideration by Council. Tennis Courts and the Office are detailed separately below.

	Previous decision	**Proposed changes if any**
Staff	That the Clerk continue with the delegated authority to manage the staff and services of the Town Council and take whatever decisions are necessary in line with the Council's Risk Assessment. That the Clerk be authorised to utilise short term and temporary contractors where necessary to keep essential services running Working from home policy to be implemented from afternoon of Wednesday 18th March Grounds Maintenance continue to come to work unless self-isolating due to symptoms	**None**
Councillors	All Councillors to continue to advise the Clerk of nominated substitutes prior to any Council meeting Councillors will log into their Town council email account on a daily basis whilst social isolation measures are imposed.	**None**
Events	All Public Events including Bandstand performances postponed. No decision made in respect of Winter festival	**All public events <u>including Winter Festival</u> are cancelled for 2020.**
Council Meetings (Appendix 1 refers)	All Council and Cttee meetings postponed until Autumn with the exception of the following if videoconferencing is permitted and urgent business which cannot be	**To proceed with those meetings as agreed by videoconferencing with the exception of June**

	delegated to the Clerk needs to be discussed Planning, Town Council Annual Meeting in May, Finance and Town Council meetings in June (for Annual Return) Grants in August Personnel when required	**Finance Cttee (Internal Auditors report will not be available in time so meeting requires cancellation)** **To reinstate monthly remote Town Council meetings (ie June, July) and to restart all scheduled Committee and Council meetings from September.**
Keynsham News/Arts Newsletter	To continue to produce working from home. Virtual copies published	The current distribution provider is closing down the business. **Unless alternative means of hard copy distribution is sourced , (with COVID Risk Assessment/PPE expense if volunteers used) then only electronic copies can be published.**
Manor Road	All further matches are cancelled for the season Pro rata refunds to be issued to clubs who have paid for the season. Currently football matches prohibited by Government	Goal posts have been removed to discourage social gathering. Football season due to start end of August - use of Pavilion does not permit social distancing. **If subsequently permitted by HM Gov and clubs express a wish to play/practice at their own risk then goal posts to be put back up but pavilion to remain closed with no attendant until Government advice on social distancing measures changes.**
Cemetery	Open to public. Closed during interments	**No change**
Allotments	Open to plot holders providing government regulations adhered to	**Any changes to be made in consultation with Allotments Association. Still restricted to 2 people per plot but joint holders from different households can now work the plot at the same time providing social distancing adhered to.**
Play Areas	Closed by order of Government	**No change**
Skatepark	Closed by order of Government	Notices continue to be reinstated. Council have

		been asked to fence off. However can be used as a form of exercise by no more than two people at a time providing social distancing adhered to. Police have advised it is not worth using HERAS fencing (£1400 to buy as cheaper than renting). They will patrol to discourage social gathering in evenings **i.e. No change**
Tennis Courts	Closed by order of Government	**These could now re-open – however there are practicality issues – see below**
Temple Street Offices	Closed for reinstatement and owing to Working From Home Policy	**These "could" now re-open however Government still encouraging working from home - see issues below**
Delegation of Authority Schedule of Delegation (Appendix 2)	This policy will be rescinded by a subsequent Town Council meeting when all Councillors and Members of the public are next able to meet in person in accordance with Government advice in respect of the COVID19 outbreak and the requirements of the Local Government Act (1972) The Policy also states that Any decision requiring Committee or full Council approval where it is not possible to convene a lawful meeting is hereby delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with 4 Councillors for the Operational Period	**No change** **No change** *(Lawful meeting now includes remote meetings, there will be few occasions where Clerk will need to exercise delegated powers)*
Administration of Finances and Payroll Appendix 3)	Appendix 3 describes the processes whilst working from home	**No Change**

RECOMMENDATION
To approve the above changes to the Business Continuity Plan

4.0 Upper Memorial Park Tennis Courts

4.1. The Government has now instructed that Tennis Courts can be open for public use providing certain conditions are met. Currently the lease of the Tennis Courts is under negotiation with B&NES and the subject of a confidential business item later in the meeting. B&NES would therefore need to be consulted on any decision to open the courts in light of the ongoing dilapidations negotiations.

4.2. There are also practicality issues in that if the Tennis Courts are now unlocked and open to the public, it will encourage the type of social gatherings/barbecues/mess that has been observed in other areas of Memorial Park, noticeably the skate park and Bandstand.

4.3. If the Courts were to be locked at night this presents a problem in respect of key holding and accessibility. Whilst it is possible for the Courts to be unlocked whilst Grounds Maintenance are on duty between the hours of 8am and 4pm Monday to Friday, there is no staff cover at weekends and bank holidays when arguably more people will wish to gain access

4.4. Options

1) Courts remain open Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm and are locked outside these hours
2) Courts remain open all the time with the risk of antisocial behaviour making courts unplayable at a time when there may be no staff working (ie weekends) to clean them
3) Courts remain open between 8am and 4pm 7 days a week with Councillors volunteering to hold the keys to unlock and lock on weekends/bank holiday

RECOMMENDATION
To determine the opening times of the Tennis Courts subject to agreement with B&NES as landowner

5.0 Temple Street Offices

The offices have now been reinstated apart from painting of the walls which needs to be finished by Grounds Maintenance as and when they have time.

5.1. Hygiene: Hot water for hand washing is now supplied as is hand soap, sanitiser, hand towels and 70% alcohol (limited supply) for surface decontamination. Towel and sanitiser dispensers need to be installed, the water cooler requires sanitisation before use and protocols still need to be written by the Clerk on safe working in the office including disinfection of crockery etc. The Council does not have any supplies of masks suitable to protect Council staff from infection (ie FFP3). The limited surgical masks available (or the newly recommended cloth face coverings) would only reduce the risk of staff infecting each other if two or more were working in the office together.

5.2. IT: The server together with 3 desktops used for remote working from home and the photocopier/printer is now working and can also be accessed using Council laptops. The only function that cannot be performed working from home currently is the payroll.

5.3. Furniture: The furniture is still being stored at the removal company until they are able to re-commence work. Currently the main conference table and a chair are in the conference room with two desktops and a third desktop with fold up table and chair are in the Clerk's office. Delivering the furniture back to the office however creates many more surfaces that would require decontamination each day if the office were to be occupied on a daily basis by staff. Although the Burial Registers are now relocated back to the safe, the remaining filing cabinets are still in B&NES Civic centre (albeit staff can still use their B&NES passes to access)

5.4. Phone: The main phone number has remained connected to an answer phone since the offices were vacated last year. The temporary mobile number now in operation is publicised on the website, in staff email signatures and on all publicity and manned by the staff from home. None of the other telephones have been patched in so the staff have used their Council mobiles when in the office.

5.5. Planned use during COVID: Originally it was planned that the office would be manned on a rota basis each day by members of administrative staff and that the main Council phone number would be the central contact number for the COVID19 support group. The office would also function as a collection point for donations. However, given the time taken to reinstate, the COVID19 support group now have a Council mobile and dedicated telephone number and collection points have been established at other community venues.

5.6. Required use: The main requirements to attend the office therefore are now purely for Council business as follows:

- to perform the payroll every month
- to collect and register the Council's incoming post
- to switch back on any of the remote desktops that turn themselves off after a windows update
- to inspect the burial registers to confirm plot numbers and owners (which has not been required to date)
- to produce multiple hard copy meeting Agenda packs for those Councillors requiring hard copy
- To access historic paper copy information from the filing system
- To produce laminated posters/notices or hard copy runs of e.g. Arts Newsletter or leaflets/forms for distribution
- To collate/co-ordinate PPE for distribution to community organisations
- Check answer machine for messages
- Visit by the Internal Auditor 8th June

5.7. Staff Risk Assessment: The Clerk has consulted with and conducted a further Risk Assessment with all administrative staff as detailed in the revised Risk Assessment document. Now that the staff are supported by functioning IT, there is little reason for the Council to go against the Government guidelines to Employers to take all reasonable steps to ensure staff can work from home.

5.8. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk have discussed the matter and are happy to continue to attend the office as and when duties such as those in 5.6 above are required but not for the office to be officially re-opened and accessible to members of the public or other administrative staff.

5.8. It is also felt that the desks etc should remain in storage in order to reduce clutter, encourage safe working and to reduce the amount of time/supplies that would be needed to decontaminate the office surfaces after each visit prior to the other going in the following day.

5.9 Experience to date means that visits would typically be 2-3 times a week for each of the Senior Officers, spending a minimum of half a day in the office at a time. However specific regular days each week could not be guaranteed at present as currently it is not possible to develop a standard daily working routine in the current COVID crisis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(i) That the offices remained closed for business but that the Clerk and Deputy Clerk continue to attend as and when duties require.
(ii) That the office furniture continues to remain in storage until the Risk Assessment shows it is safe for staff to return to working in the office. (cost £56.25 per week)

APPENDIX 1 – POSTPONEMENT OF COMMITTEES

		Approved 17th March 2020	RECOMMENDATION
Planning & Development Committee	Statutory consultee – will depend upon whether B&NES will still be processing Panning Applications	Delegate response to DTC in consultation with 3 Councillors unless videoconferencing permitted.	Reinstate by videoconferencing
Grants Committee		Decision in August, Presentation on October	Remote meeting in August
Personnel	Meeting required	Await Government legislation to permit virtual meetings	As required
Env & Sus Working Party	Tree planting	Postpone – DTC Can proceed with checking landowners WFH	Postpone until September
EATH	Winter Festival	Postpone – Initial arrangements re road closures etc can proceed by DTC WFH Theme etc can be decided at a later date Any orders to be delayed until there is a better idea of whether public events will remain cancelled after September	Postpone until September Cancel Winter Festival
Finance	Apart from AGAR, any new or revised policies and Annual Governance timetable can be delayed until Committee resumes meetings.	Videoconferencing of June meeting if permitted POSTPONE TC can prepare documentation and policies WFH and circulate to members for information/comment. Approval can then be considered at meeting in Autumn	Cancel June meeting and restart in September
NDP Steering Group	Meeting not necessary Work on policies Work on travel survey Start putting document together	Postpone –Can be done WFH	Postpone until Autumm
NDP YP Survey	Requires participation of all schools	POSTPONE	Postpone until schools return

APPENDIX 2:

APPENDIX 2: KEYNSHAM TOWN COUNCIL DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY POLICY DURING COVID19 OUTBREAK APPROVED 17TH March 2020

1 BACKGROUND

1.1. The Town Council has been monitoring Government advice as the COVID19 pandemic escalates in the UK. This policy has been developed in response to that advice which as of 16th March 2020 has introduced social isolation measures to such an extent that the Town Council is no longer able to meet according to the requirements of the Local Government Act (1972) to conduct its business and all Council staff are required to work from home

1.2. The Town Council has conducted a full Risk Assessment and approved a Business Continuity Plan which is now dependent upon the delegation of further authority to the Town Clerk/RFO in order to ensure that the Council will be able to operate its business to the best of its abilities during the pandemic while protecting, as far as is reasonably possible, its employees, Councillors, volunteers, contractors and members of the public

2 OPERATIONAL PERIOD

2,.1 This policy will come into effect immediately the Chairman closes the meeting of Town Council at which this policy is approved on Tuesday 17th March 2020

2.2. This policy will be rescinded by a subsequent Town Council meeting when all Councillors and Members of the public are next able to meet in person in accordance with Government advice in respect of the COVID19 outbreak and the requirements of the Local Government Act (1972)

3.0 ROLE OF THE CLERK

3.1. The Clerk as Proper Officer /RFO is the only individual in law who can act on behalf of the Council and lead the administration of all the Council's activities. Some obligations are statutory whilst others are determined by the Council as part of the Clerk' job description. These delegated powers therefore arise as the everyday duties of the Proper Officer and Responsible Finance Officer, including management of all staff, services and finances.

3.2. The purpose of this policy is to delegate further authority to the Clerk/RFO in order to ensure the Council can continue to operate its business to the best of its abilities for the benefit of the Keynsham community.

3.3. The Clerk can delegate authority to other staff. In the event that the Clerk is temporarily incapacitated and unable to carry out their duties during the operational period, all delegated authority will pass to the Deputy Town Clerk for the period the Clerk is incapacitated.

4.0 DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

4.1. With the exception of

a) matters which the law states cannot be delegated and are reserved for full Council, and

b) Employment Appeals procedures requiring the involvement of Personnel Committee as detailed in section 6 of the Employee Handbook

any decision requiring Committee of full Council approval where it is not possible to convene a lawful meeting is hereby delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with 4 Councillors for the Operational Period

4.2. Where practicable, the 4 Councillors should consist of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council together with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of a relevant Committee.

4.3. In the event that a Councillor in 4.2 is incapacitated during the operational period, then they should nominate a substitute for the period they are incapacitated and notify the Town Clerk accordingly

5.0 TEMPORARY ALTERATIONS TO FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

5.1. The Clerk is authorised to make expenditure on revenue items up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget. Financial Regulation 4.1 is suspended during the operational period in favour of authorisation as follows:

- 4 Councillors as described in clause 4.2. of this policy for all items over £5,000
- Chairman and vice Chairman of a duly delegated committee of the council for items over £1000; or
- the Clerk, in conjunction with Chairman of Council or Chairman of the appropriate committee, for any items below £1000

5.2 In cases of extreme risk to the delivery of Council services, Financial Regulation 4.7 permits the clerk to authorise revenue expenditure on behalf of the Council which in the clerk's judgement it is necessary to carry out. Such expenditure includes repair, replacement or other work, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure. During the operational period this shall be subject to an increased limit of £15,000 for a single transaction. The Clerk shall report such action to the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council and Chairman and Vice Chairman of Finance & Policy Committee as soon as possible and to the Council as soon as practicable thereafter.

5.3. The Clerk/RFO shall prepare the monthly Schedule of Invoices for payment which shall be circulated electronically to all Councillors for inspection and questions. After 3 working days, the schedule shall be approved for payment as per clause 4.2 and electronically signed by the Chairman.

5.4. In respect of Financial regulation 6.15, access to internet banking accounts will be permitted from home addresses but shall still be via Council computers or Council tablets using the prescribed methods in the regulation. As this will also entail

retention of the Council's bank cards at the respective home addresses, users will be required to make arrangements to ensure the security of cards and PIN numbers.

5.5 In respect of Financial Regulation 10.3, it is accepted that in these unprecedented circumstances, there may be insufficient suppliers available to obtain 3 or more quotations for a specific transaction. Therefore, provided that at least 3 suppliers have been approached to quote, an order may be placed on best value terms available at the time without the requirement for 3 or more responses.

Financial Regulations to be suspended/amended
FR 4.1. Expenditure on revenue items may be authorised up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget. This authority is to be determined by: • the council for all items over [£5,000]; • a duly delegated committee of the council for items over [£1000]; or • the Clerk, in conjunction with Chairman of Council or Chairman of the appropriate committee, for any items below [£1000]. Such authority is to be evidenced by a minute or by an authorisation slip duly signed by the Clerk, and where necessary also by the appropriate Chairman Contracts may not be disaggregated to avoid controls imposed by these regulations.
FR4,.7 In cases of extreme risk to the delivery of Council services, the clerk may authorise revenue expenditure on behalf of the Council which in the clerk's judgement it is necessary to carry out. Such expenditure includes repair, replacement or other work, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of £5000 for a single transaction. The Clerk shall report such action to the chairman as soon as possible and to the Council as soon as practicable thereafter. Any further transaction during the financial year requiring such expenditure should not take place without the approval of an Extraordinary meeting of the Town Council.
10.3. All members and officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times. An officer issuing an official order shall ensure as far as reasonable and practicable that the best available terms are obtained in respect of each transaction, usually by obtaining three or more quotations or estimates from appropriate suppliers, subject to any *de minimis* provisions in Regulation 11.1 below.

APPENDIX 3 – ADMINISTRATION OF FINANCES AND PAYROLL WHILST WORKING FROM HOME

Approval of Invoices for Payment	Normally by Full Council at monthly meeting and signed by Chairman	Delegate approval to Clerk and 4 Councillors
BACS payment authorisation Ring Bank Start mandate change Check if authorisation procedure can be suspended in the event no Councillors are well enough to authorise	TC and DTC plus Cllr Simmons, then Cllr Fricker signs for expenditure >£500 as second signature	Bank cards to be taken to be kept at respective homes and log on to electronic banking from home using Council PC's (staff) or Council tablets (Councillors). Hard copy invoices to be collated by DTC to prepare schedule for approval. TC then signs/codes and once authorised puts on BACS system to be released by Cllr Simmons. Tc then takes hard copies to Cllr Fricker for secondary signature.
Bank reconciliations	Requirement by Internal Auditor for Councillor to sign off statements and bank rec –(Finance Committee)	Continue as current – DTC and Finance Officer
Procurement/placing of orders	Day to day/within budget can be effected from home by TC and DTC as usual.	Clerk has power to spend in an emergency…….Temporarily increase value to £15,000 in consultation with 4 Councillors
Monthly Staff payroll (Iris software) Ring payflow and make arrangements for standing order	The Council is contractually obliged to ensure wages are in employees bank accounts by the 16th of every month. March payroll has been run but now end of year procedures must be implemented first before software can be utilised for new financial year.	Payroll software accessible over VPN. Both Clerk and Deputy Clerk can utilise software. Salary amounts are rung through to Payflow processing. Temporary Standing Order for monthly salary payments (using March 2020 amounts) to be set up with Barclays payflow in the event both TC and DTC are unable to process payroll.