Business Continuity Plan

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Business Continuity Plan (BCP) is to ensure that Lytchett Matravers Parish Council (the Council) can continue to deliver critical services and maintain operations in the event of a disruption, whether caused by natural disasters, IT failures, public health emergencies, or other unforeseen incidents.

This plan should be read in conjunction with the Council's **Internal Control Policy**, **Financial Regulations**, and other relevant policies, ensuring operational resilience, governance, and accountability.

2. Scope

This BCP applies to all Council operations, including administration, financial management, meetings, and public services.

3. Objectives

- Ensure the safety and well-being of staff, Councillors, and the public.
- Minimise disruption to essential services.
- Protect the Council's assets, records, and data.
- Enable the Council to resume normal operations as quickly as possible.
- Comply with statutory obligations and internal governance requirements.

4. Critical Functions

Critical Council functions that must be maintained or restored quickly include:

1. **Financial Management:** Payment of staff, invoices, and management of reserves and investments.
2. **Governance:** Holding Council meetings, decision-making, and maintaining statutory records.
3. **Public Services:** Communication with residents, responding to enquiries, and delivering ongoing services.
4. **IT and Data Management:** Access to Council emails, documents, and online systems.

5. Risk Assessment

Potential threats include:

- Natural disasters (floods, storms)
- Fire or damage to Parish offices
- IT system failures or cyber incidents
- Staff shortages due to illness or other emergencies
- Loss of key documentation

Lytchett Matravers Parish Council
clerk@lytchettmatraversparishcouncil.gov.uk

6. Business Continuity Procedures

6.1 Communication

- Establish an emergency contact list for all staff and Councillors.
- Communicate updates to staff, Councillors, and the public via email, phone, website, and social media.
- Ensure public notices are posted on the Council website and official social media channels.

6.2 Staff and Roles

- Identify key personnel responsible for critical functions.
- Ensure cross-training where possible to cover essential tasks in case of staff absence.
- Enable remote working capabilities where appropriate.

6.3 IT and Data

- Maintain regular backups of financial records, council documents, and emails.
- Ensure backups are stored securely offsite or in cloud storage.
- Protect systems with updated antivirus software and secure passwords.

6.4 Financial Continuity

- Ensure continuity of payments and cash flow in line with the Internal Control Policy and Financial Regulations.
- Maintain access to online banking and authorised signatories.
- Identify alternative methods to process urgent payments if systems are unavailable.

6.5 Meetings and Governance

- Enable remote meetings via video conferencing platforms if the Parish Hall or office is unavailable.
- Ensure statutory requirements for notice and minutes are maintained.
- Document any emergency decisions and ratify them at the next formal Council meeting.

7. Recovery and Restoration

- Assess the situation and prioritise restoration of critical functions.
- Gradually resume normal operations while maintaining emergency procedures until fully operational.
- Review the effectiveness of the BCP and identify lessons learned.

8. Record Keeping and Documentation

- Keep records of all disruptions, actions taken, and decisions made.
- Ensure documentation is stored securely and in line with the Internal Control Policy and data protection regulations.

9. Review and Testing

- This Business Continuity Plan will be reviewed annually or after any significant incident.
- Conduct periodic tests or simulations to ensure the plan is effective and staff are familiar with procedures.

10. Governance and Accountability

- The Parish Clerk is responsible for implementing and maintaining the BCP.
- The Council will oversee compliance and ensure resources are available to support business continuity.
- Decisions taken during emergencies must comply with Financial Regulations, Internal Control Policy, and other relevant Council policies.

Adopted by Lytchett Matravers Parish Council: Full Council 25th February 2026

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clerk@lytchettmatraversparishcouncil.gov.uk