



## Ramsgate Town Council

# CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN

<b>Adopted</b>	<b>28 January 2026</b>
<b>Due to review</b>	<b>Yearly or following a crisis or major incident</b>

### **Executive Summary**

The Ramsgate Town Council Crisis Communication Plan provides a structured and coordinated approach for managing communication during emergencies, significant incidents, or events that have the potential to impact public safety, service delivery, or the Council's reputation. The plan ensures that accurate, timely and consistent information is shared with residents, partners, staff, councillors, and the media throughout all stages of a crisis.

This document establishes a clear escalation framework that categorises incidents into four levels of severity, enabling the Council to respond proportionately and effectively. It identifies the Rapid Response Team, outlines their roles and responsibilities, and sets out the processes required for alerting, assessing, activating, administering, and concluding the Council's response.

At the core of this plan is the commitment to transparency, public safety, and community confidence. The Town Clerk leads the overall response, with the Marketing and Communications Officer responsible for coordinating internal and external communications. Additional support roles ensure that key areas, including tourism, events, business engagement and administrative services, are covered across all types of incidents.

The plan also provides practical guidance on communication methods, best practices, and common risks, supported by clear do's and don'ts to maintain professionalism and accuracy under pressure. A post-incident review process ensures that every crisis is evaluated, lessons are learned, and improvements are implemented.

By maintaining and regularly reviewing this plan, Ramsgate Town Council ensures it is prepared to respond rapidly and effectively to any crisis, safeguarding residents, protecting staff, and strengthening the resilience of the community it serves.

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## 1. **Purpose**

This Crisis Communication Plan outlines how Ramsgate Town Council will prepare for, respond to, and recover from any incident that threatens public safety, operational continuity, Council facilities, reputation, or stakeholder confidence.

The document provides:

- A clear escalation framework for evaluating the severity of a crisis.
- Defined roles and responsibilities for Council staff.
- A standardised process for notification, assessment, action, communication, and debrief.
- Guidance for internal and external communication during emergencies.
- Practical steps to ensure responses are coordinated, timely, and consistent.

This plan should be reference immediately whenever a situation arises that could impact residents, staff, Council operations, public events, or the reputation of Ramsgate Town Council.

## 2. Escalation Framework

<b>Level</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action</b>
<p><b>Level 1 (Major Crisis)</b></p>	<p>A severe incident posing immediate risk to life, safety, or major operational failure. High media interest likely. Long-term reputational impact possible.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> Major fire, violent incident at a Council site/event, serious safeguarding breach, large-scale data breach, structural failure, terrorism-linked threat.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Town Clerk</b> assumes immediate command.</li> <li>• Rapid Response Team fully activated.</li> <li>• Immediate coordination with emergency services.</li> <li>• External communications approved only by Town Clerk.</li> <li>• Media statements issued by <b>Marketing and Communications Officer</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 2 (Significant Incident)</b></p>	<p>A disruptive event with potential reputational impact or partial service outage affecting residents or partners.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> Building evacuation, IT outage affecting services, significant complaints surge, incident at a public event.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Town Clerk and Marketing and Communications Officer</b> notified.</li> <li>• Partial activation of Rapid Response Team.</li> <li>• Initial holding statement approved and issued by <b>Marketing and Communications Officer</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 3 (Localised Issue)</b></p>	<p>A manageable issue affecting a specific service, team, or small number of residents. Reputational risk low to moderate.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> Minor health and safety incident, isolated service disruption, inaccurate online information, councillor complaint trending online.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Marketing and Communications Officer</b> manages communications.</li> <li>• Clerk informed.</li> <li>• Internal briefing provided to staff and relevant councillors.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 4 (Routine Disruption)</b></p>	<p>A minor issue resembling an escalation of normal day-to-day challenges.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> Angry resident on social media, short-term website glitch, minor event changes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Marketing and Communications Officer</b> resolves and documents.</li> <li>• Inform Clerk only if escalation required.</li> </ul>

### 3. **Incident Response Team (Rapid Response Team)**

The Rapid Response Team is responsible for coordinating all decisions, internal communication, and public messaging during a crisis. The team ensures quick, accurate and consistent communication across all channels.

*NB. The Town Clerk will keep the Chair informed about any matters that require the Rapid Response Team before action is taken, and all Councillors as action is taken.*

#### **Team Members**

- **Lead:** Town Clerk, Laura Fidler
- **Deputy Lead:** Marketing and Communications Officer, Dean Williams
- **Supporting Officers:**
  - Office Administrator, Katie Kelley
  - Mayor's PA, Kim Hobbs
  - Town Centre & Tourism Manager, Rebekah Smith
  - Visit Ramsgate Project Manager, Gemma Dempsey
  - Community Engagement and Events Organiser for Radford House, Suzy Humphries

#### **First Line of Defence**

These individuals must be informed immediately when any potential crisis is identified.

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Role</u></b>	<b><u>Preferred Contact Method</u></b>
<b>Laura Fidler</b>	Town Clerk	Email
<b>Dean Williams</b>	Marketing and Communications Officer	Email / Microsoft Teams Chat
<b>Katie Kelley</b>	Office Administrator	Email
<b>Kim Hobbs</b>	Mayor's PA	Email
<b>Group Communication Channel</b>	Microsoft Teams Chat	

#### **Greater Response Team**

This team is activated for Level 1 – 2 crises.

Additional support may be drawn from:

- Council Chair
- Councillors (as required)
- HR or Legal advisors
- External emergency services
- Contractors or event partners
- IT support

#### 4. Roles and Responsibilities

<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
<b>Lead Decision Maker</b>	Laura Fidler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authorises crisis level.</li> <li>• Approves public statements</li> <li>• Liaises with emergency services.</li> <li>• Signs off all critical decisions.</li> </ul>
<b>Communications Lead</b>	Dean Williams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drafts and issues statements.</li> <li>• Manages social media.</li> <li>• Updates website.</li> <li>• Media handling.</li> <li>• Maintains message consistency.</li> </ul>
<b>Mayor's Office Communication Support</b>	Kim Hobbs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports coordination for Mayoral comments if required.</li> <li>• Manages incoming enquiries.</li> </ul>
<b>Internal Operations Support</b>	Katie Kelley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manages internal staff updates.</li> <li>• Manages social media.</li> <li>• Updates website.</li> <li>• Maintains message consistency.</li> <li>• Logs crisis actions.</li> </ul>
<b>Tourism and Visitor Communications</b>	Gemma Dempsey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures Visit Ramsgate channels reflect accurate information.</li> <li>• Supports communications for visitor-facing incidents.</li> </ul>
<b>Town Centre and Business Liaison</b>	Rebekah Smith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicates with local businesses, partners, and traders.</li> <li>• Monitors high street impacts.</li> </ul>
<b>Event and Venue Response</b>	Event Organiser / Lead Technicians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manages crises related to events or Radford House.</li> <li>• Ensures venue safety communication and liaison with organisers.</li> </ul>

## 5. **Crisis Management Process**

### **PHASE 1: ALERT**

Any staff member identifying a potential crisis must:

1. Immediately contact the **Town Clerk** and the **Marketing and Communications Officer**.
2. Provide a brief description of the incident.
3. Share photos, evidence, or messages if relevant.
4. Err on the side of caution—**if unsure, report it**.

Rapid Response Team will be activated if required.

### **PHASE 2: ASSESS**

The Rapid Response Team assesses the situation:

- What happened, where, and when?
- Who is affected?
- Is there any immediate danger?
- Are emergency services involved?
- Is there reputational, operational or safety risk?
- Does this require a holding statement?
- Which escalation level applies?

A decision is then made on activation level.

### **PHASE 3: ACTIVATE**

Once an escalation level is confirmed, actions begin.

#### **Example Actions & Allocations**

<b><u>Action Item</u></b>	<b><u>Responsible Party</u></b>
Issue internal briefing	Laura Fidler
Draft initial holding statement	Dean Williams
Approve public messaging	Laura Fidler
Update website and social media	Dean Williams / Katie Kelley
Contact businesses/partners	Rebekah Smith
Update Visit Ramsgate pages	Gemma Dempsey
Manage event/venue impacts	Suzy Humphries
Log all actions	Katie Kelley

### **PHASE 4: ADMINISTER**

The team continues managing the crisis:

- Regular internal check-ins.
- Ongoing monitoring of social media and local news.
- Updating messages as more information becomes available.
- Coordinating with emergency services.
- Supporting residents and stakeholders.
- Keeping councillors appropriately informed.
- Creating a timeline of events.

All communication must remain timely, consistent, and approved.

**PHASE 5: ADJOURN (Post-Crisis Review)**

A full de-brief will be held to evaluate:

- What occurred.
- How communication was handled.
- What worked well and what didn't.
- Response time and accuracy.
- Staff capacity and coordination.
- Public sentiment and feedback.

The Marketing and Communications Officer will produce a post-incident review report, outlining:

- Lessons learned.
- Recommended updates to this plan.
- Training needs.
- Any follow-up communication required.

6. Do's and Don'ts

<b>DO'S</b>	<b>DON'TS</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communicate quickly and clearly.	<input type="checkbox"/> Speculate or offer unverified information.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Confirm all facts before publishing.	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in arguments or emotional responses.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Maintain a calm and professional tone.	<input type="checkbox"/> Publish anything without approval.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Log every action taken.	<input type="checkbox"/> Delay issuing a holding statement.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Keep residents informed through official channels.	<input type="checkbox"/> Forget internal communication - staff must feel informed.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coordinate closely with emergency services.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ignore misinformation online - respond appropriately.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ensure accessibility of all updates.	<input type="checkbox"/> Contradict the agreed core message.

## **7. Maintaining an Effective Response Plan**

To ensure this plan remains effective, the Council will:

- Conduct an annual review of the Crisis Communication Plan (and a review after a Crisis happens).
- Run simulation exercises twice per year.
- Refresh staff training following personnel changes.
- Update contact lists quarterly.
- Review digital channels and accessibility annually.
- Integrate lessons learned from each real incident.