



## RAMSGATE TOWN COUNCIL

### **Emergency Communications Procedure**

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| <b>Adopted</b>       | <b>14<sup>th</sup> June 2023, Reviewed 8<sup>th</sup> July 2026</b>   |
| <b>Due to review</b> | <b>As required, and at least annually or following any significant emergency, legislative change, or update to the Council's Communications Policy, Communication Strategy or related procedures.</b> |

An emergency communication procedure is a critical document that guides how a council communicates during emergency situations and should be read alongside the Council's Communications Policy and related emergency, business continuity, media, social media and data protection procedures.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the emergency communication procedure is to ensure that Ramsgate Town Council can effectively communicate with the public, media, and other stakeholders during an emergency in a timely, accurate, lawful, accessible, inclusive and proportionate way.

#### **Objectives**

The objectives of the emergency communication procedure are to:

- Provide accurate and timely information to the public and media.
- Ensure consistency in messaging and communication channels.
- Establish clear lines of communication within the council and with external partners.
- Protect the council's reputation and credibility.
- Provide guidance on the use of social media and other communication technologies during an emergency.
- Ensure emergency communications are lawful, objective, even-handed, appropriate, cost-effective and mindful of equality and diversity.
- Ensure that any communications issued during a pre-election period are handled with particular care and do not promote or disadvantage candidates, councillors or political groups, or seek to influence voters.
- Ensure personal data is only collected, used or shared where necessary, proportionate and lawful.
- Ensure that online and social media communications are monitored and moderated where required, including in relation to unlawful or harmful content.

## **Scope**

The emergency communication procedure applies to all council employees, councillors, and contractors involved in emergency response and communication and to anyone authorised to communicate on behalf of Ramsgate Town Council during an emergency.

## **Key Roles and Responsibilities**

- The Town Clerk or designated emergency management coordinator is responsible for coordinating the council's emergency communication efforts and authorising official Council communications, unless this authority is delegated.
- The Marketing and Communications Officer is responsible for developing and implementing the emergency communication plan and ensuring that messaging is consistent, accurate and aligned with the Council's communications procedures.
- The Emergency Communications Team is responsible for communicating with the public, media, and other stakeholders during an emergency situation through agreed and authorised channels only.
- All council employees are responsible for following the council's emergency communication procedures and must refer media enquiries or potentially sensitive communications to an authorised spokesperson.

## **Communication Channels**

The council will use a variety of communication channels to distribute information during an emergency situation. These channels may include:

- Media releases
- Social media (e.g., Facebook, X / Twitter, and other official Council channels)
- Website updates
- Public information lines
- Radio broadcasts
- Public meetings
- Email newsletters or resident updates where appropriate
- Noticeboards and printed notices for residents who are less active online
- Direct communication with partner organisations, community groups and relevant public bodies
- Other accessible online or offline formats where necessary and proportionate

## **Emergency Communications Plan and Team**

The council will develop an emergency communications plan that outlines the specific communication procedures and messaging for different emergency situations. This plan will be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that it remains current and effective and identifies authorised spokespersons, approval routes, key contacts, channels, monitoring arrangements and escalation processes.

The council will establish an emergency communications team that includes key staff members and external partners. This team will be responsible for coordinating communication efforts during an emergency situation.

## **Coordination with External Partners**

The council will coordinate with external partners, including other levels of government, emergency services, and community organisations, to ensure that messaging is consistent and coordinated **and does not conflict with official emergency service, local authority, public health, safeguarding or civil contingency messaging.**

## **Messaging**

All messaging must be consistent and accurate **and based on verified information wherever possible.** The council will provide regular updates on the situation, including:

- The nature of the emergency.
- The council's response.
- Any actions the public should take.
- Any updates on the situation.
- **Where information is not yet confirmed, this should be made clear and updates should be provided when verified information becomes available.**
- **Communications must avoid speculation and must not disclose personal, confidential or sensitive information unless necessary, proportionate and lawful.**

## **Media Relations and Monitoring**

Ramsgate Town Council will establish clear lines of communication with the media during an emergency. All media inquiries will be directed to the Marketing and Communications Officer or designated spokesperson **in accordance with the Council's Press and Media Communications Procedure.** The council will provide regular media briefings and updates as needed.

The council will monitor media coverage during an emergency situation to ensure that messaging remains consistent and accurate. This will also help the council to identify any misinformation or rumours that need to be addressed **through clear, factual and proportionate communication, including signposting to official sources where appropriate.**

## **Social Media**

The council recognises the importance of social media during an emergency situation. The council will use social media to distribute information and engage with the public. All social media messaging must be consistent with the council's overall messaging. Only official channels of social media should be used in the instance of the emergency **and Council-controlled online content should be monitored and moderated where required.** Personal social media accounts must not be used to issue official Council emergency communications.

## **Training**

The council will provide regular training **or briefing where appropriate** to employees and councillors on the emergency communication procedure. This training will ensure that all staff members are aware of their roles and responsibilities during an emergency situation and are familiar with the communication channels and messaging guidelines. **Training or briefing should include spokesperson arrangements, media handling, use of official channels, accessibility, data protection, pre-election restrictions and escalation routes.**

## **Accessibility and Privacy**

The council will ensure that all communication channels and messaging are accessible to all members of the public, including those with disabilities and those who speak languages other than English or who may be digitally excluded, using appropriate formats and channels where necessary and proportionate.

The council will ensure that all personal information collected during an emergency situation is handled in accordance with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Council's relevant data protection policies.

## **Post-Emergency Communication**

The council will develop a post-emergency communication plan to inform the public of the council's response to the emergency situation, any ongoing risks and hazards, and recovery efforts. This may include educational materials, potential follow up public meetings, and other outreach efforts using appropriate communication channels.

This plan will also provide an opportunity for the council to gather feedback from the public on its communication efforts.

## **Evaluation and Review**

The council will evaluate the effectiveness of the emergency communication procedure following an emergency situation. The evaluation will include a review of the council's communication efforts, messaging, and use of communication channels. The emergency communication procedure will be reviewed and updated as needed, at least once per year and after any significant emergency, exercise, communications incident or relevant policy or legislative change.

By implementing this emergency communication procedure, the council will be better equipped to effectively communicate with the public, media, and other stakeholders during an emergency situation, ultimately contributing to a safer and more informed community.