

Report No. TC03021 Appendix: F Agenda Item No. 14	Meeting of the Council Date of Meeting: 14 th July 2021
OAKHAM TOWN COUNCIL	
Report Author: Adrian Orchard OBE	Title: Councillor
Subject: CREATION OF AN 'OAKHAM TOWN COUNCIL (OTC) EMERGENCY RESPONSE POLICY	
Strategic Aim: Ensure that Oakham remains a viable and pleasant environment in which to live, work and play	

Background

Issue

1. Events at the Rutland Showground over the period 20-26th of June 2021 highlighted shortfalls in OTC policy for responding to unplanned events or natural disasters.

Background

2. The Vision of the Council: Oakham Town Council aims to improve the social and economic wellbeing of the community, and to **protect the built environment of the town**. It aims to work with other organisations and the community to provide efficient and high-quality services.

Additionally:

3. Oakham Town Council has a **central role to play in developing and participating in all aspects of life in the town. It is a community leader, advocate and representative body** comprised of residents elected to represent the community.

4. OTC Councillors agree to this vision and in order to ensure public accountability for councillors' actions, all routine business discussed and subsequently voted upon by OTC shall be made available in advance via notices published in accordance with Standing Orders.

5. However, certain unplanned events or natural disasters may occur that demand a level of OTC discussion, debate and possibly a response that cannot wait until a next Council meeting – OTC needs to demonstrate leadership and sense of being in control at a time when the public will look to those in public office for reassurance.

6. Such events or natural disasters are, but are not limited to:

- a. Public disorder or antisocial behaviour on a large scale or over an extended period¹.
- b. Public violence against property on a large scale or over an extended period.
- c. Extreme weather such as heatwave or extreme cold; flooding; drought; ice and snow; or high wind events that create a risk to public safety, health or loss of public services (blocked roads, damaged power cables etc).

¹ This is subjective but the example of the Rutland Showground is an example of both scale and time that acts as a trigger event

- d. Emergency events of significant size such as fire, explosion, chemical spill, or toxic fumes that pose an immediate threat to the public.
- e. Major event of public concern, such as a missing person or criminal at large.

7. Events of 20-26th of June 2021 saw understandably cautious OTC e-mail reactions to the rapidly evolving and volatile situation at the Rutland Showground become conflated with a perceived need to discuss the viability of holding the OTC band concert event on the 27th of June. The current limitations of the Standing Orders and any associated policies ceased further discussion when, had any OTC ER Policy been triggered (as a result of the pandemic or indeed, because of the perceived risk of public unrest – or even both) the decision could have been resolved swiftly and efficiently via e-mail. Any OTC ER Policy response would have also helped inform the response issued via OTC social media which created a distraction between OTC and RCC at a time when all were striving for unity.

8. In most scenarios, the OTC response is likely to be one of communication, acknowledging any situation and signposting residents to those agencies who have the lead. The local resilience forum, emergency service websites and RCC are some of the sources to offer. Specific cases, such as where OTC property is involved, or where OTC staff or councillors are involved, may demand more direct action and these scenarios should be considered ahead of time.

9. The ERO and DERO would be expected, over time, to build relationships with all agencies that deal with policing, emergency scenarios and natural disaster events in order to be best informed and prepare responses. (either at the time or ahead of time for set scenarios).

10. Any thread initiated to discuss a situation may be terminated at any time by the Chair once an official OTC position has been resolved or should the Chair feel the benefit of discussion has been realised. Where it is deemed essential to carry on discussion, VTC would be more efficient.

11. A record of all e-mail traffic is to be kept and made available for review at the Council Chambers head of the next full council meeting, and the trigger event be discussed by Council in order to finalise any points of concern and to learn lessons from the event.

Recommendations

OT Councillors agree that:

- a. OTC adopts an 'Oakham Town Council (OTC) Emergence Response (ER) Policy'.
- b. OTC nominates, in due course, an ER Officer (ERO) and a Deputy ER Officer (DERO).
- c. In a trigger event categorised in the OTC ER policy, Standing Order 35c is automatically suspended, and auditable electronic messaging (OTC official e-mail) or recordable video-teleconferencing if available (Zoom, MS Teams etc).
- d. Standing Order 31 remains extant and is superior in precedence to any agreed OTC ER Policy, but where time allows The Clerk is, as a minimum, to contact the OTC Chair, OTC Deputy Chair, ERO and DERO in order to trigger activity under the OTC ER Policy.
- e. Where e-mail is used to discuss or coordinate a response, for accountability a single thread is to be used using the OTC e-mail addresses provided and the format in the subject line is to be: **OTC Emergency Response – [event description] – [initial event date]**