



CONTINGENCY PLANS TO DEAL WITH THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Coronavirus COVID-19 is a new respiratory virus that causes lung and respiratory problems in infected individuals and is spreading from its origins in China across the world. On 11th March 2020 the World Health Organisation announced that the coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak is now classified as a pandemic. The UK government is monitoring the spread in the UK and has issued guidance for individuals and employers.

Government Guidance

In order to ensure the impact on the Council is minimised the Clerk will monitor advice issued by the government on a daily basis to ensure up-to-date procedures are in place. The policy will be to remain vigilant and to implement government guidance as it evolves.

Details of the following are available on the Government website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-covid-19>

1. What are the signs and symptoms of COVID-19
2. How is COVID-19 spread
3. Preventing spread of infection
4. How long the virus can survive
5. Guidance on facemasks
6. What to do if an employee or a member of the public becomes unwell and believe they have been exposed to COVID-19
7. Returning from travel overseas to affected areas
8. What to do if a member of staff or the public with suspected COVID-19 has recently been in your workplace
9. What to do if a member of staff or the public with confirmed COVID-19 has recently been in your workplace
10. When individuals in the workplace have had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19
11. Certifying absence from work
12. Advice for staff returning from travel anywhere else in the world within the last 14 days
13. Handling post, packages or food from affected areas
14. Cleaning offices and public spaces where there are suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19
15. Rubbish disposal, including tissues

Business Continuity

Staff illness

The most significant impact to the Council is the likelihood of staff or councillor illness and the main priority of the Council will be to ensure measures are taken to protect the staff and councillors from exposure to the virus in the workplace.

The Parish Council Office will remain operational unless government advice is for work places to close. During this time if any members of staff or councillors feel they are in a high risk group and wish to self-isolate this will be accommodated.

The Council Officers are able in most circumstances to cover each other's roles, and preparations will be made to ensure essential cover is available, in particular to cover for the Clerk.

Salaries and sick leave will continue to be paid in line with staff contracts.

Staff who have holidays booked will be expected to take government advice into account and cancel if necessary. Any cancelled holiday will be honoured at a different time. Staff and councillors will be asked to self-isolate if they have travelled to a high risk area.

Staff should monitor their own health and self-isolate if they develop symptoms consistent with CORVID-19.

Closure of the office

- The decision to close the Parish Council Office will be taken by the Clerk in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council and will be in line with government advice. The situation will be regularly reviewed and staff and residents kept informed.
- The Council's computer systems are now cloud-based which allows staff to work remotely from home, therefore if it is considered necessary to close the Parish Council office, staff can continue to work more or less as normal. Where necessary staff can take the office laptop home to work remotely.
- Phone messages can be accessed remotely and the mobile phone can be used from any location. An answer phone message will direct callers to email or the mobile.
- Information for residents on contacting the Parish Council will be posted on the Council's website and on the door of the office.
- The Clerk will visit the office to collect post and any necessary papers but will avoid contact with others.
- Staff will remain in regular contact with each other and Councillors by phone or skype messaging.
- Any expenses incurred by staff working remotely will be reimbursed

Parish Council meetings

- Parish Council meetings are required to be held in public so will be cancelled if government advice is to avoid contact with others. There is currently no ability to hold remote meetings,

this would require new legislation.

- A short emergency extraordinary meeting of the Council will be held to agree delegations in the event of the council having to cancel its ongoing meetings. Any Councillor who feels they would be at risk from attending this meeting should send apologies.
- If the decision is taken to cancel meetings the Clerk will notify Members by email, and update the Parish Council website. Once meetings can be held again there will be the usual 3 clear working days' notice period of the next meeting to comply with this regulation.
- Councillors will be kept up-to-date with business via their email accounts.
- The authorisation of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return can only be done at a meeting of the full Council and needs to be approved by 1st July. If business does not return to normal in time it may be necessary to hold a short meeting for this approval unless the government legislates to allow for a delay.

Finances

The financial impact on the Council is anticipated to be minimal. The Clerk / RFO will ensure that invoices are paid in the usual way and that the finance records are kept up-to-date. The Deputy Clerk will cover for the Clerk in the event of her illness.

The Clerk will meet with RBS and the internal auditor in order to complete the year end closure of the accounts as these appointments are on a tight schedule. The Deputy Clerk will be briefed to provide cover if necessary.

Local council elections

The election scheduled for 7th May 2020 could potentially be postponed until later in the year. If this happens the existing Council will continue until the notice of an election is published. If the election is cancelled after 31st March 2020 the election notice will have been issued for the election on 7th May so the government will have to implement emergency legislation to deal with this circumstance.

Nomination forms for the election have been issued and should be returned to AVDC unless otherwise instructed.

Looking after our residents

The Parish Council acknowledges its role in the heart of the community but is not the responsible authority for health or social care. If called upon the Parish Council will use its best endeavours to signpost appropriate lead and support services to ensure that vulnerable members of the community are looked after. It is anticipated that health and social care providers will be under enormous pressure so we will do what we can to provide support to these services.

Updating this plan

The Parish Council will be guided by Government advice/instruction, together with advice and best practice guidance issued by NALC, BMKALC, and SLCC.

Ms. Sue Gilbert
Clerk to Haddenham Parish Council
13th March 2020