



Report to:	<i>Full Council</i>
Tabled on:	<i>17th March 2020</i>
Agenda reference:	20/039 Administration
Report by:	Caroline Holgate, Clerk

UPDATED 17th March to take account of the latest Government issued advice

COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT AND ACTION PLAN

1. Introduction

- 1.1. On 30th January 2020, The World Health Organisation (“WHO”) declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a “Public Health Emergency of International Concern” (PHEIC). WHO re-categorised the outbreak as a pandemic on 11th March and subsequently stated on 14th March that Europe is now the centre of the pandemic.
- 1.2. On 12th March 2020 UK Chief Medical Officers classified the risk to the UK as high.
- 1.3. [The Health Protection \(Coronavirus\) Regulations 2020](#) have been put in place to reduce the risk of further human-to-human transmission in this country by keeping individuals in isolation where public health professionals believe there is a reasonable risk an individual may have the virus.
- 1.4. On 3rd March 2020 the Government published its response plan to the virus which consists of 4 phases
 - Contain: detect early cases, follow up close contacts, and prevent the disease taking hold in this country for as long as is reasonably possible (This includes individuals at risk of carrying the virus being asked by NHS111 to self-isolate for 14 days. People who test positive are placed in quarantine (either under appropriate medical care or at home) and are required to undergo further testing with two negative results before being released from quarantine.
 - Delay: slow the spread in this country, if it does take hold, lowering the peak impact and pushing it away from the winter season. This may involve social distancing measures including closure of schools and cancellation of public events.
 - Research: better understand the virus and the actions that will lessen its effect on the UK population; innovate responses including diagnostics, drugs and vaccines; use the evidence to inform the development of the most effective models of care
 - Mitigate: provide the best care possible for people who become ill, support hospitals to maintain essential services and ensure ongoing support for people ill in the community to minimise the overall impact of the disease on society, public services and on the economy
- 1.5. The main public health campaign messages from the Government are as follows:
 - wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
 - always wash your hands when you get home or into work



- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
 - cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
 - put used tissues in the bin straight away and wash your hands afterwards
 - try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell
 - do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
- 1.6. As of 12th March, the Government announced it was moving from containment phase into delay phase. New advice has been issued as follows:

Anyone who shows certain symptoms is now required to self-isolate for 7 days, regardless of whether they have travelled to affected areas. This means people should stay at home and avoid all but essential contact with others for 7 days from the point of displaying mild symptoms, to slow the spread of infection

The symptoms are:

a high temperature (37.8 degrees and above)

a new, continuous cough

- 1.7. Individuals are no longer asked to call NHS 111 to go into self-isolation. If their symptoms worsen during home isolation or are no better after 7 days contact NHS 111 online at 111.nhs.uk. If they have no internet access, they should call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.
- 1.8. **The Government has announced that it will be considering further social isolation measures including banning large public events as from this week. Whilst schools remain open at this time closure may be considered at a later date. It should be noted that breaking news over the weekend indicates elderly people may be quarantined for 4 months and other drastic measures may need to be implemented including forced requisitioning of buildings as temporary hospitals.**
- 1.9. **As of 16th March 2020 the advice from the Government is that if you live with others and you or one of them is displaying symptoms then the household should self-isolate for 14 days. You should stop non-essential contact with others and work from home where possible. People should avoid pubs, clubs, theatres and other social venues.**

2. Sources of Information

- 2.1. The Parish Council will be acting on information and guidance available from the following sources to which all Councillors, staff and members of the public will be signposted.
- Coronavirus – UK Government Response
<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>
 - General information to the public
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>
 - Guidance for non-clinical settings – Employers and Businesses
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/covid-19-guidance-for-non-clinical-settings-and-the-public>



- NHS Overview, symptoms and advice
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- Government Action Plan
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-action-plan>
- Government Advice for Self-Isolation at home
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-people-with-confirmed-or-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>
- WHO – Getting Workplace ready
https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=359a81e7_6

2.2. In the preparation of this risk assessment and action plan, additional information/guidance has been obtained from the following sources:

- Society of Local Council Clerks
- Northants Association of Local Councils
<https://www.northantscalc.com/coronavirus.html>
- Local Government Association information for Councils
<https://www.local.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-councils>
- National Joint Councils for Local Government Service – Advisory notice 6th March
- Northamptonshire County Council

3. Key facts

- 3.1. The key to managing the risk of contracting the virus is to limit the opportunities for its spread. This not only includes the main campaign measures in respect of hand washing and sanitation, but also adopting procedures for surface decontamination of “multi-use touch points” such as door handles, keypads etc.
- 3.2. There is no natural immunity/vaccine for this virus. Therefore it is likely a high proportion of people will become infected during the peak of the outbreak (current estimates are 80% of the UK population) which will include Council staff/Councillors. Business continuity planning is key to maintaining Council services and corporate decision-making capabilities.
- 3.3. The groups at most risk of severe complications/death are those over 60 or with underlying medical conditions. This has implications when assessing the risk to the public, councillors and staff. East Hunsbury has a high proportion of older residents and we run activities specifically for this group. A significant proportion of Councillors are over the age of 60 and/or have underlying medical conditions, and both councillors and staff look after others who are at risk.
- 3.4. The key risk of exposure is from staff, Councillors or members of the public having contracted the virus and subsequently attending Council activities and thereby transmitting the virus to others.
- 3.5. The Parish Council cannot control what people do outside of the workplace or council activities.
- 3.6. Although the Dept of Health and Social Care, Public Health England and the NHS are leading on the UK response to the outbreak, the Parish Council nevertheless has a duty of care to staff,



Councillors and members of the public to conduct its own risk assessments at local level specific for its activities and take steps accordingly.

3.7. Any actions that the Parish Council take should be consistent and applied to all aspects of Council activity. The ability to do this relies on following the advice being issued by the Government.

4. RISKS AND ACTION

Given the latest advice issued by the Government we have cancelled all events and activities run by the parish council for the foreseeable future. The Library have also cancelled all events including The Big Sing and craft sessions. The Great British Spring Clean has been postponed, and it is likely that other national events will also be postponed.

Over the coming days members of the Seniors Club will be informed of the need to cancel and we have spent today getting in touch with those who were due to attend the Get Active session.

Because events have been cancelled the risk to volunteers is reduced.

4.1. People at risk

4.1.1. Staff

The Clerk and the Community Projects Officer are based in offices in Hunsbury Library which is a naturally high-risk area because it is open to the public.

NCC have provided their own advice to Library staff, and they have implemented a cleaning regime for touch screens and other high contact areas. Parish Council staff based at the Library have access to hand washing facilities and are encouraged to use them on a regular basis.

It is likely that the Library will be closed to the public at some point in the future. In this scenario staff would still be able to work in the office as the contact with members of the public will be limited.

The Maintenance Officer is at a lower risk as he generally works outdoors – any work inside Blacky More Community Centre is carried out when building is unoccupied. Main risks are from approaches by members of the public, and direct contact with play equipment etc recently touched by members of the public. Also contamination when visiting suppliers (B&Q, Screwfix etc). There is access to hand washing facilities at Blacky More.

A requirement of the Keyholder's role is to meet individuals who have hired the Community Centre. The risk from members of the public is low as an interaction is limited to short time periods, however there is a risk of transmission from hard surfaces.

Blacky More Community Centre is cleaned on a regular basis by our contracted cleaning firm. They have confirmed that during this time they will take extra measures to clean areas that come into human contact (e.g. door handles, taps etc.)

Staff who are have symptoms of a new continuous cough and a fever are required to self-isolate. There is no requirement to call 111 and people experiencing these symptoms will not be tested. The onus is on the individual to self-isolate.



ACTIONS

- ***All staff will be required to inform the Clerk if they have any underlying health conditions that the Council should be aware of.***
- ***Staff based at the office will be provided with anti-bacterial wipes to clean surface areas on a regular basis (including laptops, telephones, door handles etc.)***
- ***All staff will be informed that they should maintain a sensible distance from members of the public when working, and precautions should be taken to avoid touching others.***
- ***Staff working outside will be asked to wear gloves.***
- ***Office based staff have the ability to be able to work from home if necessary. Staff will not be required to work if they are self-isolating because they are unwell.***
- ***If staff develop symptoms that require them to self-isolate they will be entitled to full sick pay. The Parish Council have the right to ask a member of staff to self-isolate if they believe them to be a risk.***
- ***If the Clerk is required to self-isolate it is possible to work from home. If the Clerk is taken unwell essential work to meet statutory requirements will be delegated to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman (the Clerk will make information available to assist in this).***
- ***Staff will be required to work from home where possible.***
- ***Staff based at Blacky More Community Centre will be asked to work in a way which limits exposure to others. If this is not possible reduced hours will be implemented.***

4.1.2.Councillors

There is a risk to Councillors from staff, from each other, and from members of the public when attending council events and meetings. A number of our councillors fall into a high-risk category or are looking after others who are at higher risk.

The current Government advice is to stop non-essential contact. Where council meetings are required to take place the Clerk will organise these so that they are quorate and deal with essential business only, thereby reducing the risk of contact with others.

ACTIONS

- ***Councillors should follow the advice regarding self-isolation and should not attend meetings if they are feeling unwell.***
- ***Surfaces will be wiped down with anti-bacterial wipes before and after council meetings.***
- ***Members will be asked to wash their hands when arriving and departing council meetings.***
- ***Seating at council meetings will be arranged so that members are sitting a sensible distance apart.***



- ***Councillors who are attending events on behalf of the Parish Council should not attend if they do not feel comfortable in doing so.***
- ***Non-essential meetings will be cancelled.***
- ***The Clerk will aim to reduce attendance at essential meetings by relying on meetings being quorate only (4 members in attendance).***

4.1.3. Volunteers

The Parish Council have a large group of volunteers who undertake various activities for us. Most of this group are over 60 and there is a risk to them from staff, from each other and from members of the public.

All actions in respect of staff and councillors will apply to volunteers. Depending on the activity in which our volunteers are engaged further actions may need to be taken and these will be determined by the Clerk and the Community Projects Officer.

This is no longer a risk as all events have been cancelled. We will be in touch with all volunteers over the next few days to update them.

4.1.4. Members of the public

Public attendance at council meetings is generally low, however consideration should be made for other events that the parish council hold, and this will be dealt with at point 4.2 below. This item deals specifically with council meetings.

ACTIONS

- ***Signs will be placed on the doors to meetings directing members of the public to hand washing facilities.***
- ***Public Health information about self-isolation will be displayed at the entrance to meetings.***
- ***The public bench seating will be arranged with a suitable distance between seats.***
- ***All non-essential meetings will be cancelled.***

4.2. Events organised by the Council and with partners

Members are understandably concerned about the Seniors Club because the attendees are a high-risk group. However, there are other events organised by the parish council and with other partners that are predominantly attended by older people and those in high risk groups. The parish council needs to be consistent in its approach to all of our activities and events, and the easiest way to apply consistency is to adopt a policy of following Government issued guidance.

We rely on volunteers to make some of our events work. Volunteers are beginning to opt out for their own reasons which could make it difficult for some events to go ahead as planned.

The main activities this applies to are:



4.2.1.Seniors Club – NOW CANCELLED

It is likely that the Government will shortly announce measure to confine people over 70 years of age. Our Seniors Club members are already concerned, and we have received an increasing number of messages from members who want to know whether they should attend – we cannot make that decision for them. Up to this point we have advised members to stay away if they are feeling unwell. Being responsible for making the decision about whether to attend themselves creates stress and worry.

The numbers attending our coffee mornings are such that they are in close proximity within the venue for a long period of time.

4.2.2.Get Active – NOW CANCELLED

Get Active will continue as this is a smaller event with a maximum of 25 people attending. The programme is held at Danes Camp, and we are in daily contact with them to review the current situation. On a weekly basis Get Active participants will be advised of any changes. It is likely that Danes Camp may close, in which event all activities held there will be cancelled/postponed.

4.2.3.The Big Sing, Craft sessions and any other joint events – NOW CANCELLED

These sessions are not run by the parish council alone. We anticipate seeing lower numbers in attendance at these events. In conjunction with partners we will review these events on a weekly basis and liaise with the lead co-ordinate as to cancellation.

Where these sessions can go ahead it allows for valuable social interaction at this time (albeit with some measures in place to protect those attending e.g. hand washing requirements, anti-bac wipes etc.)

4.2.4.Youth Clubs

The Youth Clubs are currently running under the advice that has been issued to school and educational settings. It is likely that schools and other children's settings will be required to close in the near future.

4.2.5.Community Litter Picks – NOW CANCELLED

Following advice received from Keep Britain Tidy we are reviewing litter picks to ensure we can meet the requirements to keep people safe. Should we feel that they cannot be delivered in a completely safe manner we will postpone.

4.2.6.One off events – Easter Tea, VE Day, Summer Fete, Remembrance Sunday, Christmas Fair

The Easter Tea is an event specifically for our Seniors and so this will be postponed. However planning for other events will continue and these events will be held if it is safe to do so, and Government restrictions allow it.



There will be a financial implication should we have to cancel the Summer Fete – this is because we have had to pay deposits on marquees, games, and performers. There will be cancellations policies in place to which we will adhere, and any decision to cancel is out of our hands.

ACTIONS

- ***To cancel with immediate effect all Seniors Club coffee mornings.***
- ***School of Life sessions will be cancelled with immediate effect, including Library sessions and sessions within schools.***
- ***Pop up cafes which are planned to enhance other activities will be cancelled.***
- ***Other regular events are run in partnership with other organisations who may make a decision to postpone these activities in any event. If this is the case the Parish Council will support their decision and relay this information to the public.***
- ***It is likely that the Government will announce the closure of schools, colleges and other settings at some point in the future. When this happens we will immediately postpone the Youth Clubs if CYPN have not already done so.***
- ***The Clerk will implement a management plan, where members are advised on a weekly basis by email of any changes or postponements that have been made to our activities because of an update in Government advice. The management plan will be agreed between the Clerk and the Community Projects Officer and affected participants will be informed by email or telephone, and further messages issued via our website and social media.***
- ***Other planned events will be determined by advice issued by the Government regarding gatherings of people. When the advice is that gatherings of people should be postponed action will be taken immediately to postpone/cancel one off events if they have not already been cancelled for other reasons.***

4.3. Council business

At some point council employees may have to work from home, depending on Government advice. For office-based staff working from home is easily achieved and staff are able to keep in touch via mobile telephone and email. Telephone messages to the office can be picked up via email.

The Maintenance Officer could continue to work, on reduced hours if necessary, as there is less risk in being outdoors.

The Keyholder could continue to work where there are bookings, taking necessary precautions as detailed above.

Meetings

It is a legal requirement that all Council and committee meetings must be open to the public. Therefore either the meeting takes place with members of the public attending if they wish, or the meeting is cancelled. All planned Committee meetings are due to take place in space at



Hunsbury Library, and members of the public do not normally attend. The next full Council meeting will be held in May and we do not ordinarily see many members of public in attendance. Councillors should make their own decisions about whether to attend, and the normal rules for being quorate apply.

The Annual Parish Meeting is due to take place on 21st April and the date of this meeting is statutory. At the moment it is intended that this meeting will go ahead, but we could opt to scale back the attendance and invite written submissions from local groups instead.

The same applies to the Annual Meeting which will take place in May and is a statutory requirement. NALC states that:

“Where the law does not provide for a particular scenario (e.g. the holding of the annual council parish or town meeting outside of the statutory timeframe, if the government advises against meetings being held) we would be guided by the government as to what should happen. We will be engaging with government on this and a range of other issues and will keep you updated on any developments.”

It has been announced that local elections will be postponed and held on 6th May 2021. This will have no effect on the ordinary running of the council and all current members will remain in post.

Financial

The Council will have an obligation to keep up with its financial commitments. Members are asked to delegate authority to the Clerk to ensure that ordinary payments are made, and to lessen the impact on the cash flow of contractors and suppliers during a difficult period.

Salary payments are set up as standing orders, and so these will not be affected if staff are required to self-isolate. If it is necessary to catch up on payroll, this can be done in due course.

There is a legal requirement for the Council to complete its Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) forms for the year ending 31 March 2020, and these will be sent out by email during the week commencing 23 March 2020. PKF Littlejohn have advised that it is subject to change depending on the circumstances, and changes may be made to the audit process and/or timetable. Council's may seek a delay if they are unable to meet with their internal auditor, for example.

ACTIONS

- ***To delegate authority to the Clerk to make payments in accordance with the normal running of the business of the Council.***
- ***To follow Government and NALC advice in relation to holding public meetings and the legal timetable of the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.***



- ***To agree that the Clerk shall have delegated authority to make decisions in the event that it is not possible to convene a meeting, and where a decision must be made in order to comply with a commercial or statutory deadline.***

4.4. **Blacky More Community Centre**

The Community Centre has a number of groups that use the centre on a regular basis, including a pre-school who use the centre every day during term time. It is expected that the pre-school will close in line with Government advice at some point in the near future, and it would be expected that many of the other regular activities (mostly children's groups) will follow.

We have spoken with a number of hirers today who want to cancel their bookings for the time being. These include Rainbows, Brownies and a yoga class.

We have bookings on most weekends for parties and private events, and it is expected that some of these will be cancelled.

Again, many private hirers have been in touch to see whether they are able to go ahead with their booking. As Blacky More remains open at this time I have advised that it is their responsibility to make their own decision about whether their event should go ahead.

If the Government does prohibit public gatherings then it would be right that the Council cancels all bookings for the stated period and refunds any booking fee to the hirer.

The loss of income will be borne by the general reserves of the council.

Our cleaning contractor has confirmed that they are focusing on cleaning of high contact areas (light switches, door handles, taps, toilet flushes etc.) Both the Maintenance Officer and Keyholder have been supplied with gloves and anti-bacterial cleaning spray so that they are able to maintain the cleaning of these high contact areas throughout the day and particularly after each group have left the centre.

ACTIONS

- ***To refund booking fees to any hirer who cancels their booking because of the risks associated with public gatherings.***
- ***To refund booking fees to any regular hirer who is required to close in accordance with Government advice.***
- ***To close Blacky More Community Centre entirely should it be deemed that the risk to the public is too great.***

5. **Other considerations**

The situation is fast moving, and changes are happening on a day to day basis.

As a public body it is essential that the information we provide to members of the public is verified and from reputable sources.



Most insurers (including the Council's) are not covering business interruption costs due to Covid-19. This is because at the time the policy was taken Covid-19 was not a recognised notifiable disease on the Government list.

While the parish council is unable to offer any practical help to residents during this period, we should be providing signposting to information and other organisations who could help. Reminding people to look out for the elderly and vulnerable around them and using social media to reach a large audience.

There are a number of organisations operating with the community already who could provide assistance and we can signpost people to those organisations. The Facebook community in East Hunsbury is very active and will come into its own.

The parish council should not commit to providing services which it is not within its remit to do. The response to the current situation, and the measures put in place to look after those most affected by it will come from Northamptonshire County Council.

We will be keeping in touch with our Seniors members, volunteers and other groups and organisations over the coming weeks. Where we are able to implement measures to assist people we will do so. The council has limited staffing resources of its own and has a duty of care to keep them safe during this crisis.