

HIGH CONSEQUENCE INFECTIOUS DISEASE POLICY

Adopted by Full Council Minute 215/19/20

27th April 2020

Next review: April 2022

1. Introduction

1.1. Charlton Kings Parish Council (CKPC) actively seeks to protect the councillors, staff and volunteers working for and on behalf of the council and its activities and members of the public using its facilities. As such, and following any current Public Health England (PHE) and government guidelines, the following policy applies to any High Consequence Infectious Disease (HCID) as defined by PHE.

1.2. This policy sets out the general principles and approach that the Parish Council will follow in respect of an HCID outbreak in the United Kingdom with an imminent or actual threat of infection in Charlton Kings.

2. Scope of the policy

2.1. The main areas of concern for CKPC with respect to HCIDs are:

- Remaining an effective council
- Health and Safety of councillors, staff, contractors, volunteers and members of the public.

3. Activation of the policy

3.1. This policy is considered to be activated, when:

- There is an active outbreak of a HCID in the United Kingdom with an imminent threat of infection in Charlton Kings **and**
- At least 3 councillors have requested its activation to the Chair, and subsequently notified the Clerk **or** the Chair plus 2 councillors have requested its activation to the Clerk, or its activation is resolved in a Full Council meeting of CKPC.

OR

- The government of the United Kingdom suspends all public meetings.

4. Deactivation of the policy

4.1. This policy is considered to be deactivated, when:

- The imminent threat of infection in Charlton Kings has passed **and**
- A minimum of 4 councillors have requested public meetings be recommenced **and**
- The government of the United Kingdom has reinstated all public meetings.

5. Definition of High Consequence Infectious Disease

5.1. A HCID is defined as

- acute infectious disease
- typically has a high case-fatality rate

- may not have effective prophylaxis or treatment
- often difficult to recognise and detect rapidly
- ability to spread in the community and within healthcare settings
- requires an enhanced individual, population and system response to ensure it is managed effectively, efficiently and safely

5.2. The current list of HCIDs as defined on www.gov.uk (11/03/2020)

Contact HCID	Airborne HCID
Argentine haemorrhagic fever (Junin virus)	Andes virus infection (hantavirus)
Bolivian haemorrhagic fever (Machupo virus)	Avian influenza A H7N9 and H5N1
Crimean Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF)	Avian influenza A H5N6 and H7N7
Ebola virus disease (EVD)	Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS)
Lassa fever	Monkeypox
Lujo virus disease	Nipah virus infection
Marburg virus disease (MVD)	Pneumonic plague (Yersinia pestis)
Severe fever with thrombocytopenia syndrome (SFTS)	Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)*
	Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

At any such time as a new disease is classified as a HCID, it shall be treated as if it were in the list above and this policy shall apply.

6. Matters relating to staff – The Clerk

- 6.1. The Parish Office and Stanton Suite may be closed to the public at the discretion of the Clerk, in liaison with the Chair and/or Vice-Chair, with immediate effect in the event of an outbreak of a HCID. The decision to close the office and facilities is not dependent on activation of the HCID policy.
- 6.2. Parish Office staff will be expected and supported to work, as far as is practicable, either from the Parish Office or from home during periods when the premises are closed to the public.
- 6.3. In the event of a HCID outbreak the National Joint Council for local government services (NJC) will issue guidance for employers which the council will follow. A summary of the most recent guidance during the COVID-19 outbreak of 2020 is detailed below
 - 6.3.1. Employees who are sick or unfit for work need to focus on their recovery.
 - 6.3.2. As per Part 2 Para 10.9 of the ‘Green Book’, if an employee is fit for work but decides, or is instructed, to self-isolate, their absence should not be recorded as sickness absence. We would expect all options for home or remote working to be explored with the employee. As they are ‘well’ at this stage they should stay on normal full pay for the duration of the self-isolation period until such time as they are confirmed to have contracted any such HCID, at which point they transfer to sickness absence leave and the usual provisions of the sickness scheme will apply.

- 6.3.3. In circumstances where an employee decides to self-isolate without instruction from the authorities it is not unreasonable for the employer to ask for some evidence such as an email from a holiday operator that shows the dates of the holiday, the resort location and flight details. However, it will probably not be possible in all cases for an employee to produce any evidence, so employers will need to use their discretion when trying to establish the facts behind the employee's decision to self-isolate
- 6.3.4. If an employee is caring for someone who has or may have had a high consequence infectious disease, this period of absence should also be regarded as self-isolation. Given the employee may then have been in direct contact with the virus we would expect only working from home arrangements to be then considered for the duration of the incubation period. Employers should keep in touch to support employees.
- 6.3.5. Following any school closures, employers should be fully supportive of employees with childcare responsibilities and consider flexible working arrangements, including adapting working patterns to care for children or dependants or taking time off, whether this is special leave, annual leave or flexible working.

7. Public Meetings

- 7.1. It is currently a requirement of the Local Government Act 1972, that council business shall be conducted at public meetings of the council and any committees.
- 7.2. Councillors and other volunteers can choose to not attend public meetings. As an officer of the council, the Clerk cannot choose to not attend meetings.
- 7.3. Due to the nature of local government and considering the Councillors and members of public whom attend meetings, there is high percentage of attendees whom would be considered "high risk" with respect to all of the HCIDs listed in Section 5.2. As such, to protect the health of all attendees, public meetings are suspended during the active period of this policy.
- 7.4. If at any time there is a government decision to allow Parish Councils to conduct remote or virtual Full Council and Committee meetings, then CKPC would endeavour to do this as far as reasonably practicable.

8. Delegated Authority

- 8.1. To allow the council to operate on a minimum requirement basis, the following items are delegated to the Clerk for the duration of the activation of this policy.
 - 8.1.1. Planning applications - The Chair of the Planning Committee will circulate a summary response to all members of the Planning Committee for comment prior to submission by the Clerk, or another member of Parish Office staff, to Cheltenham Borough Council.
 - 8.1.2. Finance
 - 8.1.2.1. all invoices to be authorised by the budget holder in line with the Financial Regulations;
 - 8.1.2.2. all payments of authorised invoices to be approved by two signatories in line with Financial Regulations;
 - 8.1.2.3. all payments will be formally ratified at the next Full Council meeting.
 - 8.1.2.4. Where this policy is activated over the end of the financial year, the Clerk/RFO will prepare the end of year accounts in accordance with normal procedures and circulate to all of the councillors. On the acceptance of a minimum of 4 councillors, they will be signed by the RFO, Clerk and Chairman as applicable for submission to the external and internal auditors. The accounts will be formally accepted by resolution at the next Full Council meeting.

8.1.3. Urgent decisions. Decisions that would normally require consideration at a Full Council meeting will be deferred, if possible, until the next Full Council meeting. If there are exceptional circumstances that require an immediate decision, the process will be as follows:

8.1.3.1. The Clerk will confer with the Chair and/or the Vice-Chair and circulate a paper to all councillors setting out the recommended decision together with the rationale and any supporting information considered appropriate. Councillors will be asked for comment and due weight will be given to their views. The decision will be formally ratified at the next Full Council meeting. *NB: Guidance issued by the Society of Local Council Clerks on this point as at 19th March 2020, is included as Note A at the end of this policy.*

8.1.4. Responses to other communications. The Clerk will circulate at the earliest opportunity, any communication from any 3rd Parties which would normally be presented at a meeting for consideration by the council. The clerk will circulate the summary response to the full council prior to responding to the 3rd Party.

8.1.5. In accordance with LGA 1972, where this policy is activated during a meeting of the council the meeting will be adjourned. Using the delegated authority as detailed in 8.1.1 to 8.1.3, the Clerk will endeavour to close out as much of the remaining agenda, the results of which will be reported to the council after the adjournment when the rest of the agenda is considered.

Note A – Statement by Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) as at 19th March 2020 regarding decisions

Local authorities are required to hold meetings to make decisions. The Local Government Act 1972 requires members to be physically present in order for a meeting to take place. This applies to councils in all tiers. (NB: It is possible that this requirement may be removed in the light of COVID-19 emergency situation but, to date, this has not happened.)

The lawful way to do this is that a decision, that would otherwise have been on the agenda for a committee or Council, is now made by an officer. To ensure that this remains inclusive of elected members, the officer is advised in their decision-making to seek the views of members of the committee/Council. This could be by email, SKYPE, telephone (not the best as there is no permanent record).

The officer cannot in law fetter (constrain) their discretion entirely, but that does not mean that they cannot give almost overwhelming weight to the views of members responding remotely to a report and officers' advice, or even after seeing written submissions by members of the public in lieu of public access.

In some councils it may be desirable to formalise which members are to be consulted e.g Chairman & Vice Chairman. This does not in the SLCC's view create a committee of 2 members and does not therefore need to meet.