



HIGH CONSEQUENCE INFECTIOUS DISEASE POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Crowthorne Parish Council actively seeks to protect the Councillors, Volunteers and Staff working for and on behalf of the council and its activities. 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 a HCID outbreak in the United Kingdom with an imminent threat of infection in the Parish of Crowthorne.
- 1.3. This document seeks to extend the delegation of Council decisions to the Clerk, or as otherwise stated below, of Council decisions during any period of restricted activity declared by the Government in respect of the COVID 19 virus (or any other such HCID as may arise). Such delegation to enable the Council to comply with statutory or commercial deadlines and to fulfil its responsibilities to its residents .
- 1.4. Where possible, and unless otherwise stated below, the Clerk will act in conjunction with the Executive Group (Chairman, Vice and Finance Champion) concerning any decision/actions taken on behalf of Council. Where any or all of the Executive Groups are unable to input into decision making, another/other Councillor/s will be contacted so that no less than 3 Councillors are involved in decision making. Where the Clerk cannot contact the Executive Group or a total of 3 Councillors, the Clerk or , in the Clerk's absence, the Finance Officer, are authorised to take any action necessary to ensure that the Council complies with statutory or commercial deadlines and to fulfil its responsibilities to its residents .
- 1.5. It is recognised that with any outbreak of HCID central Government, Public Health England, the NHS and Bracknell Forest Council may enact urgent advice or legislation which will supersede and override the content of this policy.

2. Scope of the policy

- 2.1. The main areas of concern for Crowthorne parish council with respect to HCIDs are:
 - Remaining an effective council
 - Safety & Health of Councillors, Contractors, Staff, Volunteers and Members of 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 the Parish of Crowthorne

and

- At least 3 councillors have requested its activation to the Chairman, and subsequently notified the clerk, or the Chairman plus 2 councillors have requested its activation to the Clerk, **or** its activation is resolved in a meeting of the Crowthorne Parish Council.

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 the Parish of Crowthorne 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

Contact HCID	Airborne HCID
Marburg virus disease (MVD)	Pneumonic plague (<i>Yersinia pestis</i>)
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 – Council staff and Council facilities

- 6.1. Crowthorne Parish Council's offices and administrative functions are based at The Morgan Centre, Wellington Road, Crowthorne RG45 7LD. The public are normally able to visit the Parish Office from 9am-2pm Monday-Friday. During any active outbreak of a HCID in the UK, no visits by the public to the Parish Office are permitted to reduce staff potential exposure to infection.
- 6.2. Crowthorne Parish Council's other facilities (Morgan Centre, Parish Hall and Morgan Recreation Ground toilets) will remain open to the public and hirers unless a decision is made by the Clerk to close them. The Clerk will make any such decision to close facilities to the public in line with advice from Government, Bracknell Forest Council and Public Health England and will, where time permits, discuss any potential closure decisions with the other administrative and caretaking staff and at least one Councillor. Where an urgent decision must be made the Clerk is authorised to close Parish Council facilities without any consultation. Reasonable efforts will be made by administrative staff to inform hirers of the closure of the facilities.
- 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 (*for example if returning from an area where there is a known outbreak of HCID or is quarantined on holiday*) 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 coronavirus, 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 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.

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**, after consultation with a minimum of 4 councillors, a summary response will be circulated to all councillors for comment prior to submission to Bracknell Forest Council by the Clerk or Assistant Clerk.
 - 8.1.2. **Finance** – all payments to be authorised in the following order:-
 - i. Where possible, in line with CPC Financial Regulations with approvals by email rather than wet signature, or
 - ii. Approval by the Clerk **and** either the Chairman, Vice Chairman or Finance Champion by email, or
 - iii. Approval by the Finance Officer **and** either the Chairman, Vice Chairman or Finance Champion by email.

- 8.1.2.1. All payments will be formally authorised by the full council at the next full council meeting.
- 8.1.2.2. Where possible, the payment listing for the month will be publicised on the Crowthorne Parish Council website, noting that the payments have been authorised in line with this policy and stating that the payments will be formally authorised by full Council at its next meeting.
- 8.1.2.3. Where this policy is activated over the end of the financial year, the RFO or Finance Officer will prepare the end of year accounts in accordance with normal procedures which will be scrutinised by CPC's appointed Internal Auditor following which they will be circulated to all of the councillors. On the acceptance of a minimum of 4 councillors (a quorum), they will be signed by the RFO, Clerk and Chairman as applicable. The accounts will be accepted by resolution at the next full council meeting.
- 8.1.2.4. The Annual Governance Accountability Return (AGAR) will be prepared to meet communicated deadlines. The AGAR, including the accounting statements will be circulated to all of the councillors. On the acceptance of a minimum of 4 councillors (a quorum), the AGAR will be signed by the RFO, Clerk and Chairman as applicable and submitted to the External Auditors.
- 8.1.2.5. The Clerk or Finance Officer may determine that a higher than usual balance is kept in CPC's current account to offset direct debit payment of invoices received by post rather than email.

8.1.3. 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 recommended summary response to the full council prior to responding to the 3rd Party.

8.1.4. 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.

9. Operational matters

9.1 Council Officers are authorised to remove such IT equipment, files, banking records, paperwork and other stationery and equipment as is reasonably required to enable them to work from home on Council business. Officers are to use their best endeavours to ensure Council property and records are kept safe, secure and confidential.

9.2 Council Officers are to be authorised to purchase such equipment and consumables as may be reasonably required to fulfil their duties from home e.g. printer cartridges, postage stamps, paper, phone call charges, additional home utility costs, stationery etc. and reclaim any such expenditure through expenses via the Council.

10. Review of the policy

This policy was approved by the Parish Council at its meeting on 20 March 2020 and will be reviewed annually.

Signed: 

Cllr RH Wade
Chairman – Crowthorne Parish Council

Dated:.....20/03/2020.....