

Appendix 2

UPLYME PARISH COUNCIL BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

Last Updated: 23rd March 2020

COVID-19

Approved: Full Council

Date: 23rd March 2020

INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Business Continuity Plan has been prepared for Uplyme Parish Council with reference to its Officers, Councillors, volunteers, services and activities.

1.2 Uplyme Parish Council actively seeks to protect the Officers, Councillors and volunteers working for and on behalf of the Council and its activities.

1.3 This document sets out the general principles and approach that the Council will follow and undertake in relation to COVID-19.

SCOPE OF THIS PLAN

2.1 The main areas of concern for Uplyme Parish Council in relation to COVID-19 are:

Ensuring the health and safety of all Council Officers, Councillors, volunteers and members of the public participating in Council activities;

Maintaining effective and lawful decision-making processes;

The continuing operation of essential services and contractual obligations.

BACKGROUND - COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

3.1 A pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan, China was first reported to the World Health Organisation (WHO) on 31st December 2019. It was later classified as a new disease: COVID-19. The outbreak was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30th January 2020.

3.2 The Coronavirus disease was confirmed to have spread to the United Kingdom (UK) on 31st January 2020. On 11th March 2020, the WHO categorised the outbreak as a pandemic and then subsequently stated on 14th March 2020 that Europe is now the centre of the pandemic. As of the 12th March 2020, the UK has classified the risk as high.

3.3 On 3rd March 2020, the government published its Coronavirus Action Plan and subsequently, The Health Protection (Coronavirus Regulations) 2020 have been put into place to reduce the risk of further human-to-human transmission in the UK by keeping individuals in isolation where public health professionals believe there is a reasonable risk an individual may have the virus.

3.4 On Monday 16th March 2020 the Government issued new more stringent isolation guidance as follows:

Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new continuous cough;

If you live alone and have a high temperature or a new and continuous cough you should self isolate for seven days;

If you live in a household with others and have a high temperature or a new and continuous cough, both you and all others in your household should stay isolated together for 14 days;

Everyone, including if you are not displaying symptoms yourself and live in a household where no one is displaying symptoms should stop all unnecessary contact with others and all unnecessary travel;
Avoid non-essential use of public transport, varying your travel times to avoid rush hour, when possible;
Work from home, where possible. Your employer should support you to do this;
Avoid venues such as pubs, clubs, theatres and restaurants;
Pay particular attention to the advice if you are over 70, pregnant and have underlying health problems and to significantly limit face-to-face interaction with friends and family if possible;
People in at-risk groups will be asked within days to stay home for 12 weeks.

3.5 The virus is now spreading quickly in the community and the Government will be making self isolation measures mandatory to protect the over 70's and other 'at risk' groups from being infected, whilst controlling the rate of infection in low risk groups who have mild symptoms but on recovery be available for work and no further danger to infecting the 'at risk' groups (developing herd immunity).

MEASURES

4.1 A significant proportion of Officers and Councillors are either in 'at risk' groups themselves or have close family members they either live with or care for, that are.

4.2 The Parish Council cannot control what people do in their personal time and how they choose to respect (or not) the guidance being issued, or indeed, take additional steps to limit their exposure however, the Parish Council's measures should reflect the Government strategy and prioritise the shielding of all 'at risk' groups.

4.3 PARISH CONTINUITY

4.3.1 There is no Parish Council office in the Parish. Whilst access to the Village Hall is by a key system, this is managed separately as an organisation, this is a public building and Officers do have contact with members of the public. The Village Hall staff do have close family members who are in the 'at risk' groups.

4.3.2 All Parish members have the appropriate equipment to work from home. All calls to the Parish Council members can be forwarded to the Parish Clerk's mobile telephone. Information will be placed on the Council's website, social media and notice boards where appropriate.

4.3.3 The Parish Clerk will be responsible for the overall control of assets, services and functions. In the absence of the Parish Clerk, this will be undertaken by an elected bona fide Councillor.

4.3.4 In accordance with Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegation, the Council shall function under the Parish Clerk's delegated powers.

4.3.5 The Parish Clerk shall authorise payments in accordance with Financial Regulations and provide financial information/accounts control sheets to all members and committees (where possible) and operate within the Council's agreed budget. The Clerk's delegated authority spend will be increased to **£2000** per month to cover all eventualities with consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chair.

4.3.6 The Parish Clerk will take emergency action/spending as indicated in Standing Orders/Scheme of Delegation and report this to the Chairman of the Council and the Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee and report back actions taken in due course to the relevant committee/Full Council meeting when possible.

4.3.7 The Parish Clerk will hold the normal expense card (personal) for expenses and payments and record as normal any spend for authorisation to the main Parish Council account. This will be held in a secure lo-

cation. Came and Company insurance will be informed and advised that this is acceptable as other issues for the Parish Council.

4.3.8 The Parish Council shall operate PAYE, pension, and salary payments as normal using the HMRC software.

4.3.9 The Parish Clerk will provide regular updates and reports on activities and decisions to the Council, as is practicable to do so in the circumstances.

RECOMMENDATION

**To allow all Councillors and the Clerk to work from home from Monday 23rd March and the use of electronic communication. This will allow preparations to be made beforehand.
Continue to be under continuous review.**

SALARIES, WAGES, SICK LEAVE AND ANNUAL LEAVE

5.1 The National Joint Council has issued guidance on the response by Employers to paid absence from work owing to coronavirus in accordance with the Green Book terms and conditions. Staff will continue to receive their salaries/wages subject to their contract and Green Book for:

Self-isolation

Illness

Working from home

Reference also to ACAS Guide 'Coronavirus: Advice for Employers and Employees'.

5.2 SELF ISOLATION

5.2.1 Currently, NHS advice states that anyone displaying coronavirus symptoms should stay at home for 7 days. If you live with other people, they should stay at home for 14 days from the day the first person got symptoms. Use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service if you cannot feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home, your condition gets worse or your symptoms do not get better after 7 days. Only call 111 if you cannot get help online. Any period of self-isolation will be treated as absence with full pay but not as sickness absence.

5.2.2 Employees who are actually ill will be treated as off sick with associated sick pay in the usual manner as per their contract. However, employees cannot just unilaterally decide to self isolate without providing the Parish Council with reasonable justification in order to qualify for full pay.

5.2.3 It is important that all staff and Councillors inform the Town Clerk if they are ordered to self-isolate or feel ill.

5.2.4 Any annual leave booked over any period of self-isolation, illness or working from home will carry over in accordance with Green Book and ACAS guidance.

MEETINGS

6.1 All Parish Council's meetings, committee meetings, sub-committees will be suspended where it has become necessary to not meet in person.

6.2 Councillors are asked to continue to carry out their duties from home as far as practicable.

6.3 The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) is engaging with the Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments (SAAA) about audit and with the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) as a matter of urgency on a range of issues. These include:

Councils being able to use their discretion on deadlines for Freedom of Information requests;
The deadline for local government financial audits to be extended to 30th September 2020;
Bringing forward legislation to remove the requirement for Annual Council meetings to take place in person;
Bringing forward legislation to allow Council Committee meetings to be held virtually for a temporary period.

6.4 FULL COUNCIL & COMMITTEE MEETINGS

6.4.1 The Parish Council has the following meetings scheduled for March, April and June 2020:

Full Council – 8th April 2020 – 13th May 2020 – 10th June
Planning Committee – 25th March 2020 – 22nd April 2020 – 27th May – 24th June 2020
Finance & General Purposes Committee - TBC

RECOMMENDATION

To cancel all of the above meetings and deal with any urgent issues by delegation to the Parish Clerk, Chairman of the Council and the relevant Chairman of the Planning Committee.

Full Council: Communication and meetings to be held by electronic means online or by phone via the Clerk until further advice by the Government and Public Health. Public are advised to submit any comments by electronic means or by post to the Clerk or relevant Councillors.

Planning: Communication and meetings to be held by electronic means online or by phone via the Clerk until further advice by the Government and Public Health. The public are advised as normal to submit their comments and decisions to the East Devon District Council planning department.

6.5 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – 13th May 2020

6.5.1 The Annual Parish Meeting is not a Council meeting, but is a meeting of local government electors registered for the area for which it is held. It must be held between 1st March and 1st June. (Local Government Act 1972, Sch 12, para 14 (1), (4).

RECOMMENDATION

To reschedule this meeting to a later date if possible before the 1st June 2020.

6.6 ANNUAL MEETING – 13TH MAY 2020

6.6.1 The Parish Council must hold an Annual Meeting every year which, because this is not an election year, must be held in May. (Local Government Act 1972 Sch 12 para 7 (1) (2).

6.6.2 There is only one statutory item of business and that is the election of the Chairman. However, normally the Annual Meeting also elects Committees etc as stated in Standing Orders. Standing Orders also states that the Chairman, Vice Chairman and those of Committees hold office until the next Annual Meeting, so until that meeting occurs, then the current positions remain.

RECOMMENDATION

To proceed on the agreed date and wait for further Government/NALC advice.

6.7 Other statutory requirements applicable to the Parish Council/Parish Sector may be suspended by the Government in an emergency situation.

EVENTS/ACTIVITIES

7.1 The Government is now discouraging social gatherings including visits to pubs, clubs, restaurants, halls etc. The Parish Council's planned events have been assessed as follows:

Parish Council and Village Hall bookings have been cancelled as advised by the Government and Public Health.

RECOMMENDATION

As above, however, Government advice to be followed.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

8.1 The Parish Council will be acting on information and guidance available from the following sources to which all Officers, Councillors 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/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

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>

Getting Workplace Ready

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=359a81e7_6

NALC Advice (as at 17th March 2020)

https://www.nalc.gov.uk/coronavirus?utm_source=Members&utm_campaign=e9eb3bfbe8-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_06_08_03_15_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_206970988f-e9eb3bfbe8-351646253&mc_cid=e9eb3bfbe8&mc_eid=f2e2181307

ACAS ADVICE

<https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>

This Business Continuity Plan may be subject to change without notice in the light of Government advice.