CLIFTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Clerk: Becx Carter 40 Windebrowe Avenue, Keswick, Cumbria, CA12 4JA. Tel: 077866 78283;
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Serious Infectious Disease Policy

1 INTRODUCTION

This policy applies to circumstances where it is deemed necessary to suspend all meetings – whether physical, virtual or blended – of Clifton Community Council ("the Council"). Such circumstances include an outbreak of any High Consequence Infectious Disease (HCID) as defined by Public Health England (PHE)[1]. However, they are not restricted to HCID outbreaks. For example, Covid-19, which was classified as a HCID in January 2020, was no longer so classified from 19th March 2020. Nevertheless, lock-down restrictions were imposed after that date that precluded physical meetings of the Council and necessitated the activation of this policy. Hence, the title of this document refers to "Serious", rather than "High Consequence", Infectious Diseases and reference is made in the text to "relevant" diseases or outbreaks.

2 AIMS OF THE POLICY

2.1 The policy sets out:

(a) How the Council will continue to operate in the absence of meetings;
(b) The circumstances in which the policy will be activated;
(c) The circumstances in which the policy will be deactivated.

2.2 The policy does not address how the Council would decide to change from one kind of meeting (physical, virtual or blended) to another: it is concerned only with what the Council does in the absence of meetings of any kind.

2.3 The main areas of concern for the Council in such circumstances are:

(a) Remaining an effective council

(b) Safety and health of Councillors, contractors, staff, volunteers and members of the public.

2.4 In all cases, the Council will follow any current guidance from PHE or the UK Government.

3 ACTIVATION OF THE POLICY

This policy is considered to be activated when:

3.1 there is an active outbreak of a relevant disease in the United Kingdom with significant threat of infection in the Parish of Clifton AND

(a) at least 3 Councillors have requested its activation to the Chairman, and subsequently notified the Clerk;
(b) OR the Chairman plus 2 Councillors have requested its activation to the Clerk;
(c) OR its activation is resolved in a meeting of the Council;

3.2 OR the Government of the United Kingdom suspends physical meetings of the Council and it is either not lawful, or not reasonably practical, for the Council to hold virtual meetings.

4 DEACTIVATION OF THE POLICY

4.1 This policy is considered to be deactivated when EITHER:

[1] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/high-consequence-infectious-diseases-hcid

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(a) a minimum of 4 Councillors have requested that meetings be recommenced AND
(b) UK Government has reinstated physical meetings AND
(c) the threat of infection in the Parish of Clifton has passed;

4.2 OR

(a) UK Government has allowed virtual meetings AND
(b) it is reasonably practicable for the Council to implement them.

5 MATTERS RELATING TO STAFF – THE CLERK

5.1 Clifton Community Council has no official offices, as such the only employee, the Clerk, works from home. The public may only visit the Clerk by appointment. While this policy is activated, no appointments will be permitted. The clerk will not come into contact with the public during working hours at their 1st normal place of work.

5.2 Village halls, or any other public location used for Community Council meetings are the 2nd normal place of work for the Clerk.

5.3 In the event of a relevant outbreak the National Joint Council for local government services (NJC) will issue guidance for employers which the council will follow. A summary of the guidance during the COVID-19 outbreak of 2020 is detailed below.

i. *Employees who are sick or unfit for work need to focus on their recovery.*

ii. *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 relevant disease, at which point they transfer to sickness absence leave and the usual provisions of the sickness scheme will apply.*

iii. *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.*

iv. *If an employee is caring for someone who has or may have a relevant disease, this period of absence should also be regarded as self-isolation. Given that the employee may then have been in direct contact with the disease, 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.*

v. *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 dependents or taking time off, whether this is special leave, annual leave or* flexible working.

6 PUBLIC MEETINGS

6.1 It is a requirement of the Local Government Act 1972 (LGA 1972), that council business shall be conducted at public meetings of the council and any committees.

6.2 Councillors and other Volunteers can choose not to attend public meetings. As an officer of the council, the Clerk cannot choose not to attend meetings.

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6.3 Due to the nature of local government and considering the Councillors and Members of the Public who attend meetings, there could be a high percentage of attendees who would be considered "high risk" with respect to relevant diseases. As such, to protect the health of all attendees, physical meetings are suspended during the active period of this policy and the Clerk is granted extended powers of delegation.

7 DELEGATED AUTHORITY

7.1 To allow the council to operate on a minimum requirement basis, certain items are delegated to the Clerk for the duration of the activation of this policy. The Clerk shall circulate to Councilors a monthly report of actions carried out under the provisions of this section. The following items are delegated to the Clerk during the period of activation of this policy.

7.2 Responses to planning applications, in accordance with the Council's document *How we deal with urgent planning applications*.

7.3 Approval of policy documents where they are existing documents due for review and where no substantive change is being proposed. The date for the next review of any document so approved shall be no later than one year from the date of such approval.

7.4 Finance

(a) All standard recurring payments listed as line items on the budget, such as salaries, printing costs, licences and IT services etc., will be paid by the RFO at the appropriate time to prevent any charges for late payment.

(b) Non-recurring payments must be authorised by a minimum of 2 councillors by e-mail prior to payment.

(c) All payments will be formally authorised by the full council at the next full council meeting.

(d) Where this policy is activated over the end of the financial year, the 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 accepted by resolution at the next full council meeting.

7.5 Responses to other communications. The Clerk will circulate, at the earliest opportunity, any communication from any third Parties which would normally be presented at a meeting for consideration by the Council. The clerk will circulate the summary response to all Councillors prior to responding to the third Party.

7.6 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 detailed here, the Clerk will endeavour to close out as much of the remaining agenda as possible. Any such actions shall be listed in the next monthly report to Councillors.

Approved: May 2021
Review: Not later than May 2022