



COLNEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

Highfield Park Office
Highfield Park Visitor Centre
Hill End Lane
St Albans AL4 0RA

Village Office
83 High Street
Colney Heath
Hertfordshire AL4 0NS

Tel: 01727 825314 Email: clerk@colneyheathparishcouncil.gov.uk

COVID19 RISK ASSESSMENT

This Risk assessment has been conducted specifically for Colney Heath Parish Council with reference to its staff, Councillors, and activities including public events. The Parish Council accepts no liability whatsoever should any other person or body choose to utilise the information contained herein for their own purposes. You are strongly advised to consult Government websites for advice on Coronavirus and conduct your own risk assessment pertinent for your own needs

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. The Council as an employer and provider of public services has a duty to reduce workplace risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures. Employers must work with all other employers, employees and contractors sharing the workplace so the health and safety of everyone is protected. The Council must also seek to ensure that members of the public are able to engage in any Council activities and services in a similar manner.
- 1.2. In the context of COVID-19 this means working through these steps in order:
 - Increasing the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning.
 - Making every reasonable effort to enable working from home as a first option.
 - Where working from home is not possible, workplaces should make every reasonable effort to comply with the social distancing guidelines set out by the government (keeping people 2m apart wherever possible).
 - Where social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, in relation to an activity, the Council should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the Council to operate, and, if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between their staff, contractors and members of the public.
- 1.3. People at moderate risk from coronavirus have been defined by the Government to include people who:
 - are 70 or older
 - are pregnant
 - are a transplant recipient
 - a lung condition such as asthma, COPD, emphysema or bronchitis
 - heart disease such as heart failure
 - diabetes
 - chronic kidney disease
 - liver disease such as hepatitis



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- have a condition affecting the brain or nerves such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis or cerebral palsy)
 - have a condition that means they have a high risk of getting infections
 - taking medicine that can affect the immune system (such as low doses of steroids)
 - have a BMI of 40 or above or are considered medically to be obese
- 1.4. Data has recently emerged to suggest that BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic), people over 70 and people with diabetes or dementia are more likely to develop severe possibly fatal symptoms of the disease.
- 1.5. All staff or Councillors who either fall into one of the above categories or have household members that do should advise the Proper Officer when being asked to carry out official duties.
- 1.6. The Council approved this Risk Assessment at its meeting 25th June 2020 after discussion and recommendation from the HR Committee held on 11th June 2020. This information will be reviewed regularly and inline with Central Government announcements.

2.0 Additional Sources of Information

- 2.1. The Parish Council will be acting on updated information and guidance available from the following sources to which all Councillors, staff and members of the public will be signposted.
- 2.2. Information sourced from the following:
- a) [Coronavirus – UK Government Response](#)
 - b) **General information to the public from UK Government**
[Stay alert and safe: social distancing guidance for everyone](#)
[Stay alert: what you can and cannot do](#)
[How to stay safe outside your home](#)
 - c) **Information for Employers, Employees and Businesses**
[How to make your workplace secure](#)
[Construction and other outdoor work](#)
[Offices and contact centres](#)
[Vehicles](#)
 - d) **Information from NHS**
[NHS Overview, symptoms and advice](#)
 - e) **Government Action Plan**
[Our plan to rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy](#)
 - f) [Independent SAGE Report](#)



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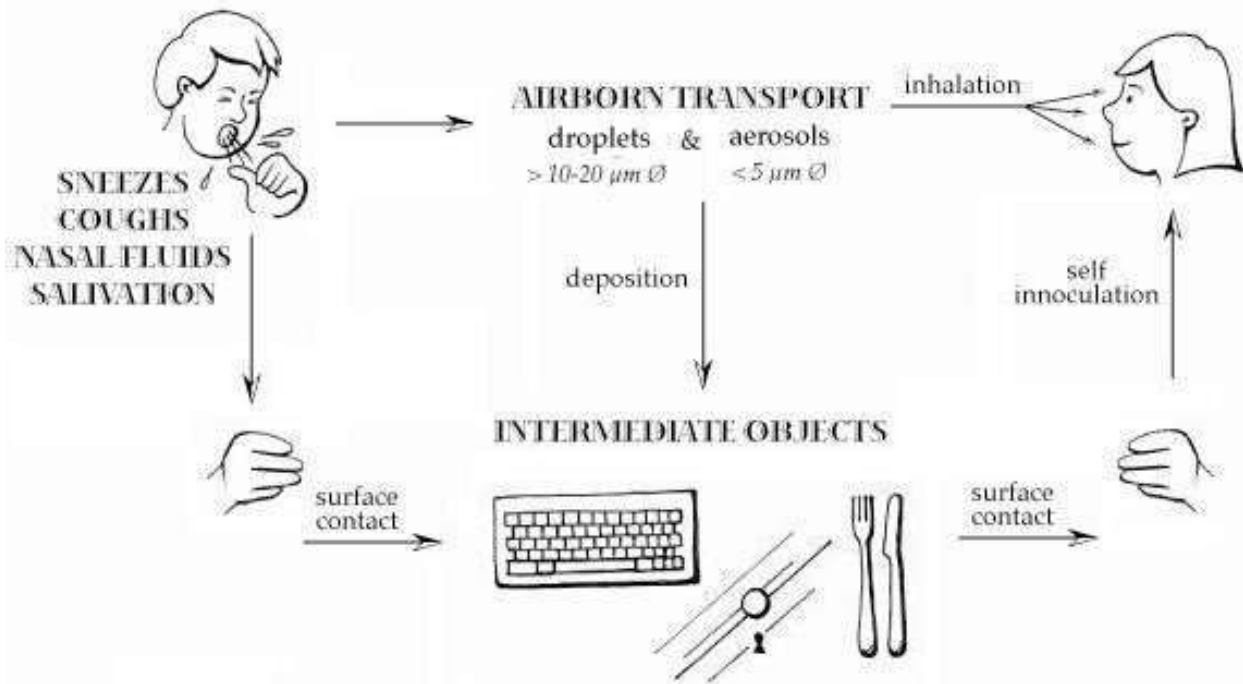
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3.0 Key facts underpinning the risk assessment

3.1. There has been no change to the main transmission routes which remain as follows:



The key to managing the risk of contracting the virus remains to limit the opportunities for spread/transmission by the various routes.

- 3.2. Unlike flu, there is a much longer incubation period, and people start shedding the virus at a much earlier stages before any symptoms are showing (pre-symptomatic phase) Although studies in China show the incubation period can range from 0-27 days. WHO have determined a quarantine/isolation period of 14 days to be appropriate. Most people start showing signs between 5-11 days post infection. Recent data from the Independent SAGE report suggests that in fact shedding may only occur 2-3 before symptoms show. The longer duration reported from China may be attributable to the fact that it is now known that people can be infected, shed virus but develop no symptoms whatsoever (asymptomatic shedding). Nevertheless, the independent SAGE report recommends that anyone with possible symptoms or who has been in direct contact with someone with COVID self isolates for 14 days (as per WHO) rather than the current 7 days advised in the UK.
- 3.3. There is no change to the Data available that the virus can survive in the air for at least 3 hours, on cardboard for 24 hours and on hard surfaces (e.g. stainless steel, melamine etc) for up to 72 hours, possibly longer. In respect of infection by close contact, advice is to limit contact to no more than 15 minutes and to stand more than 2m distance.



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- 3.4. The key risk of exposure in respect of the Council's activities is therefore still from pre-symptomatic/asymptomatic 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. Unless sufficient PPE, reliable testing regimes to monitor pandemic progressions, and diligent track and trace of infection clusters are in place to support the easing of lockdown restrictions, then infection rates and transmission within the community will start to increase again. It is noted that there is still no requirement of self-isolation for those coming into the country through various airports. The Independent SAGE report provides information and advice based upon published science to the Government on how best to approach easing out of lockdown and expresses concerns at the current approach in view of the current lack of testing/track and trace etc.
- 3.6. Even though the UK is clearly starting on the downwards slope of the curve, currently there is still a level of new infections/deaths that suggest the virus is still being transmitted via the community as well as care homes/hospitals.
- 3.7. There appears to be an assumption that like flu, the infection rate will be low in the summer because the virus prefers cold temperatures and increased humidity. There is no data to support that coronavirus behaves in a similar way to flu in respect of why flu is prevalent during the winter months.
- 3.8. There is a real possibility that a second wave could develop starting in September/October in a similar fashion as the 1918 pandemic flu epidemic. This could be much more substantial in respect of infection and death rates than the first wave and means that lockdown measures will need to be re-introduced.
- 3.9. There is still no data as to whether antibodies confer immunity to re-infection or for how long. A vaccine is still months away.
- 3.10. The Parish Council cannot determine or control what people do away from the workplace. With the easing of lockdown restrictions and the possibility of children returning to school then the risk of a member of staff (or Councillor/member of the public) bringing the infection into the work environment or a Council meeting from their household is now going to increase compared to what it has been recently during lockdown.
- 3.11. It should be emphasised that the use of surgical masks or face coverings does not protect the wearer, although it may help to reduce the risk of infecting another person.



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4.0 Reducing the Risk of Infection

4.1. The methods adopted by the Council to minimise the risk of infection are as follows:

- a) Staff/Councillors/Members of the Public must always maintain social distancing – keeping >2m apart from each other.
- b) Staff working in the office should do so singly and if two need to attend the office at the same time then social distancing and the use of gloves and masks must be observed. For any period of working over 15 minutes then this must take place in separate rooms.
- c) If it is necessary to have a 1:2:1 meeting then a venue should be booked as neither of the offices are able to have a table and chairs set up at least 4m apart which is what is recommended.
- d) Protocols for thorough daily surface decontamination of Council office and meeting premises to be prepared as a member of staff is entering/departing. In the event someone with suspected COVID has occupied an air space, then 72 hours should be left before permitting another person to enter.
- e) Use of hand sanitiser and alcohol wipes, to be carried by any members of staff performing site visits and available at all Council premises especially if hand washing facilities with hot water, disposable hand towels and appropriate antibacterial handwash cannot be supplied.
- f) Regular reminders both in the form of emails to staff and councillors and signs in all offices and meeting venues in respect of basic hygiene ref: sneezes/coughs, being alert to touching face and regular washing of hands for 20 seconds will be implemented.
- g) Use of gloves for any transactions between two parties, processing cash, opening post, or when needing to touch high touch-point areas (e.g. doors/gates/play equipment). These can be supplied to staff and councillors by the Parish Clerk.
- h) Use of alcohol wipes or 70% alcohol to decontaminate hard surfaces (when disinfectant which needs minimum contact times cannot be used and left on the surface before rinsing)
- i) Once children return to school then affected staff and Councillors will need to be reassessed in respect of additional risk, their current duties and any additional PPE/precautions that may be required by colleagues in light of pre-existing conditions.