

## **POLICY: RESPONSE TO COVID-19 / CORONAVIRUS**

### **1) Statutory Responsibilities**

a) Many aspects of parish council business are discretionary and can be deferred if necessary. There are however several things that must be done by law and that have a statutory deadline. Examples are:

Holding the Annual Parish/Town Meeting on a date between 1 March and 1 June inclusive.  
Holding the annual meeting of the council on a day in May (for the majority of councils for whom it is a year of ordinary elections, the meeting must be held between 11 May and 25 May).

Approving for signature the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) before 1 July.

Should the Government advise or mandate that local authority meetings should not take place, it is expected that the Government will deal with the associated consequences, such as the statutory timeframes.

Guidance will be taken from The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) via Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils (NCALC)

b) Parish and town councils have various powers in the arena of public health but are not the responsible body (that lies with the county council). Powers that could be used directly or indirectly in response to a big public health crisis include for example Section 198 of the Public Health Act 1936, which provides that "...if required by the Minister [parish councils] shall, provide (a) a mortuary for the reception of dead bodies before interment and (b) a post-mortem room for the reception of dead bodies

### **2) Schemes of Delegation**

a) Many (but not all) council functions can be delegated to a committee or to an officer. H & T P Councils will consider a motion at each meeting to provide for delegation to an officer any decision that must be made if the council is incapacitated and unable to hold a meeting.

b) Any delegation needs to be clear, specific and time-limited. There should also be a requirement to publish any decisions taken under the delegated authority as soon as possible. A suggested form of words would be *"In response to the Covid-19 outbreak in the UK and in the event that it is not possible to convene a meeting of the council in a reasonable time, the Clerk (or if incapacitated, the Chairman or Vice Chairman) shall have delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of the council where such decision cannot reasonably be deferred and must be made in order to comply with a commercial or statutory deadline. The delegation does not extend to matters expressly reserved to the council in legislation or in its Standing Orders or Financial Regulations. Any decisions made under this delegation must be*

*recorded in writing and must be published in accordance with the relevant regulations. This delegated authority ceases upon the first meeting of the council after the council meeting at which the delegation was put in place"*

### **3) Guidance on the Local Response to Covid-19 / Coronavirus**

- a) The Council will take account of relevant guidance issued by the Northamptonshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and NHS / Public Health England in determining any action or response to support Parishioners.
- b) Appendix A 'Local Actions in Response to Covid-19 / Coronavirus' indicates issues that may be relevant and will be updated / amended as necessary

### **4) Communication**

- a) The Parish Council has a community leadership role and will maintain a cautious but realistic and practical stance. The Council should try not to contribute towards public panic by, for example, cancelling council meetings without good reason.
- b) The Parish Council will endeavour to play a key role in disseminating timely, accurate and responsible advice to Parishioners via noticeboards, web sites and social media channels.



A. G. Crisp  
Chairman  
18/03/2020

## **Appendix A ‘Local Actions in Response to Covid-19 / Coronavirus’**

### **1) Self-isolation:**

Parishioners who are required, or elect, to self – isolate will be encouraged to contact the Community Support Team ‘We are Hopewell’ to advise of any needs that arise.

- a) Medical - collection / supply of prescriptions (subject to procedures for collection by third parties)
- b) Food / Dietary / Household Consumables – to ensure adequate nutrition and cleanliness can be maintained (if retailers ‘Home Delivery Service’ cannot be accessed)
- c) Pets / Animal Welfare – Feeding and exercise of animals
- d) Any issues affecting General Welfare – Maintenance and repairs / Domestic Products / Recreational interests.

### **2) Voluntary Support:**

- a) The Council will seek the assistance of willing and able Parishioners to respond to any requirements of other Parishioners to ensure adequate support is provided and efforts are not unnecessarily duplicated.

The existing framework of Hollowell Hens / Hollowell News Facebook and NHW will be encouraged to assist with this response.

### **3) Contact with Isolated Parishioners**

- a) Where it is necessary for visits to be made to the homes of ‘Isolated Parishioners’ due regard will be given to the advice from Public Health England to avoid contact and heightened risk of spreading the disease.