

# CUCKFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

The Queen's Hall, High Street, Cuckfield, RH17 5EL



## Community Buildings Committee meeting 23 June 2020

### CB009 Proposal to Reopen the Halls to Staff and Hirers

#### 1. Introduction

This report outlines the brief history of the closure of both halls to hirers and office staff, and the measures which will be required to be put into place before the halls can safely be reopened for staff use, for the office to be reopened to the public and for hirers to start using the halls again.

#### 2. Background

Due to the escalating severity of COVID-19 across the UK, on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 the UK Government took the decision to place the entire country in lockdown. Strict social distancing measures were introduced meaning people could not be within 2 metres of one another, and other than for essential reasons were instructed to Stay at Home. On this date, both the Queen's Hall and Cuckfield Village Hall were closed, and office staff switched to working from home.

All office equipment required to work at home successfully was removed from the office and set up at each person's house, and office phones have been diverted to each staff member's personal phone to enable calls to be answered as normal. The Parish Council has been running without any material impact to the day to day business, other than the office is not open to members of the public to visit, and the halls are closed to hirers.

The strict lockdown remained in place for many weeks until the announcement on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020 advising that a programme to lift restrictions was to be introduced.

There are 5 tests which must be met before the Government will consider lifting current restrictions:

Test 1: Can the NHS cope?

Test 2: A 'sustained and consistent' fall in the daily death rate.

Test 3: Rate of infection decreasing to 'manageable levels'.

Test 4: Ensure supplies of PPE and Tests can meet future demand.

Test 5: Avoiding a second peak that would risk overwhelming the NHS.

The steps to ease lockdown restrictions in England are as follows:

Step 1: 13 <sup>th</sup> May	Work from home if you can – but if you can't, you may be able to return to your workplace
	Unlimited exercise outdoors
	Meet a friend outdoors – but stay 2m apart
Step 2: Target 1 <sup>st</sup> June	Phased return for nursery and some primary – Reception, Years 1 and 6
	Secondary pupils in Years 10 and 12 may be able to meet teachers
	Phased reopening of non-essential shops
	Sport may begin behind closed doors
Step 3: Target 4 <sup>th</sup> July	Some pubs and restaurants, also hairdressers and beauty salons may reopen
	Leisure facilities, like cinemas, and places of worship, could reopen
	The Parish Council Office would sit in this category

The alert levels being used by the government are detailed below, and at the time of writing this report the UK was deemed to be at Level 4 as the virus was still being transmitted widely and many social distancing measures would not be relaxed.

All decisions will be made by the Government, whose advice the Parish Council will follow in all instances. The Parish Council has a duty of care to all employees to ensure

their safety at all times.

## Coronavirus alert levels

UK at level 4

Stage of outbreak		Measures in place
Risk of healthcare services being overwhelmed	5	Lockdown begins
Transmission is high or rising exponentially	4	Social distancing continues
Virus is in general circulation	3	Gradual relaxation of restrictions
Number of cases and transmission is low	2	Minimal social distancing, enhanced tracing
Covid-19 no longer present in UK	1	Routine international monitoring

Source : UK government

BBC

In writing this report I have referred extensively to the Government issued guidelines contained in the document Working Safely during Coronavirus – Offices and Contact Centres (link below). I have also met with other Town and Parish Clerks to understand their approach to allowing staff and hirers to return to offices and halls whilst ensuring all appropriate safety measures have been implemented.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres?fbclid=IwAR0PzXcX5TJx5B6JVXHoVLUI5cnUmXVPS4Suv0CXQF4sPCFtZU4vTZ3pyYI>

### 3. Risk Assessment

The first task is to complete a risk assessment of both halls from the perspective of both staff and hirers. The basis of this is that all users of the halls will need to adhere to the ongoing need to maintain social distancing of 2 metres, as per Government advice.

The Working Safely during Coronavirus – Offices and Contact Centres report states:

Employers have a duty to reduce workplace risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures. Employers must work with any other employers or contractors sharing the workplace so that everybody's health and safety is protected.

In the context of COVID-19 this means working through these steps in order:

1. In every workplace, increasing the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning.
2. Businesses and workplaces should make 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).
3. Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, in relation to a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to operate, and, if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between their staff.

Further mitigating actions include:

- increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning
  - keeping the activity time involved as short as possible
  - using screens or barriers to separate people from each other
  - using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible
  - reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others)
4. Finally, if people must work face-to-face for a sustained period with more than a small group of fixed partners, then you will need to assess whether the activity can safely go ahead. No one is obliged to work in an unsafe work environment.

In your assessment you should have particular regard to whether the people doing the work are especially vulnerable to COVID-19.

#### **4. Staff**

As mentioned previously, Government advice is that everyone should work from home, unless they cannot work from home.

The following staff members have continued to attend their place of work as they are unable to work from home:

Paul Stevens – Operations Officer

Alex Bull – Lead Groundsperson

Matt Stevens – Part Time Grounds Person

Neil Atmore – Village Orderly

In being at work all staff have been given instructions to maintain social distancing.

Staff at the Cemetery have been provided with hand sanitiser and antibacterial wipes in addition to their usual PPE. The Cemetery was closed for a while but has since been reopened. To continue to ensure their safety, staff have been instructed to use barriers to prevent members of the public approaching them whilst they are working, in conjunction with signs to advise people to keep their distance.

Paul has been based at the Queen's Hall with occasional days working at home. This has enabled the hall to remain open for food bank deposits, and several large

maintenance tasks to be progressed such as redecoration of the hall, toilets, and commencement of the damp work. Having only one person based at the hall makes the management of social distancing and daily cleaning easier to control, due to the reduced risk of contamination from others.

Staff working from home are:

Sam Heynes – Clerk

Caroline Hansen – Assistant Clerk

Jane Forester – Admin Assistant

All 3 have set up fully functioning workstations at home using equipment from the office and are able to discharge their normal responsibilities in full. Due to the complete suspension of hall bookings, once all rescheduling and refunds had been processed Jane was able to move onto picking up some small projects and relieving some of the day to day workload of the Operations Officer. The initial daily zoom calls with key staff have been instrumental in maintaining contact with one another, resolving queries and providing support across the team. These calls have now been reduced to 3 times a week.

## **5. Return to Work**

The key objective to be considered when planning for office staff to return to work is to maintain 2m social distancing at all times, including arriving at and leaving work and whilst in work. If social distancing cannot be maintained, other mitigating measures must be implemented if the task is deemed business critical. Mitigating actions include:

- further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning
- keeping the activity time involved as short as possible
- using screens or barriers to separate people from each other
- using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible
- reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others)

Social distancing applies to all parts of a business, not just the place where people spend most of their time, but also entrances and exits, kitchens and similar settings. These are often the most challenging areas to maintain social distancing.

These recommendations apply to hirers of the hall and all people who attend classes, as well as for staff.

### **5.1. Arriving at and leaving work**

Social distancing must be maintained, and handwashing must be completed on arrival. Steps that will be needed are:

- Staggering arrival and departure times.

- Using markings and introducing a one-way flow at entry and exit points.
- Providing handwashing facilities (toilets) or hand sanitiser where not possible at entry and exit points.
- Providing alternatives to touch based security devices such as keypads.

## **5.2. Moving around buildings**

Maintaining social distancing wherever possible while people travel through the workplace:

- Introducing one-way flows through the building.
- Reducing maximum occupancy for the lift and encourage the use of stairs.

## **5.3. Workplaces and workstations**

Maintain social distancing between individuals whilst at their workstations:

- Review office layout and processes to allow people to work further apart from one another.
- Using floor tape to mark areas to help staff keep to a 2m distance.
- Manage occupancy levels to enable social distancing.
- Avoid use of hot desks.

## **5.4. Meetings**

Reduce transmission risk due to face to face meetings and maintain social distancing in meetings:

- Use remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings.
- If a meeting is absolutely necessary, maintain 2m social distancing throughout.
- Do not share pens or other objects.
- Provide hand sanitiser in meeting rooms.
- Hold meetings outdoors whenever possible.

## **5.5. Common areas**

Maintain social distancing in common areas:

- Work collaboratively with other users of the hall (hirers) to ensure consistent use of the common areas in the halls, i.e. entrances, corridors, kitchens, toilets.
- Installing screens to protect staff in the office from visiting members of the public.
- Limit the use of the kitchen facilities.

## **5.6. Accidents, security and other incidents**

It remains important to prioritise safety during an incident, however in the case of an emergency such as a fire or accident, people would not have to stay 2m apart.

Anyone involved in the provision of assistance to others should pay particular attention to sanitation measures immediately afterwards, including hand washing.

## **6. Office Visitors**

The priority will remain to minimise the number of unnecessary visits to offices, by both members of the public and contractors.

Most contractors visit the offices for specific reasons such as maintenance of the lift, fire alarms, or to complete a specifically contracted task such as the recent decorating. Such tasks will have to be done in person, rather than remotely. However we can take steps to ensure only one contractor is on site at any one time, and try and arrange for visit times to be when the fewest members of staff are present (Queen's Hall), or when Preschool is not in session (Cuckfield Village Hall).

Previously members of the public were able to drop into the Queen's Hall whenever they liked between the office opening hours of 10am to 3pm. This should be reviewed, with a reduction in office opening hours and even an appointment system implemented.

- Provide guidance on social distancing and hygiene to visitors before or on arrival at the hall.
- Limit the number of visitors at any one time.
- Limit visitors to a specific time window, and restrict access to required visitors only.
- Review schedules for essential services to ensure attendance is during times when few other people are present.
- Maintain a record of all visitors.
- Provide clear guidelines on social distancing and hygiene to people on arrival, e.g. signage, and in advance provide instruction over the phone, via email and include details on our website.
- Review entry and exit routes for visitors and contractors to minimise contact with other people.
- Consider whether there is any COVID-19 related training required for staff members who are required to act as hosts to visitors.

## **7. Cleaning**

Cleaning requirements of both halls will need to be reconsidered before reopening, and new measures will need to be implemented to ensure all areas are kept clean enough for staff and hirers to feel safe. Currently each hall is only cleaned once a week, this will need to be increased to daily cleans based on a revised specification (to be agreed).

### **7.1. Before reopening**

A full deep clean of both sites will be required before reopening, and installation of hand sanitiser units and signage will be essential to ensure staff and visitor safety.

Legionellas testing will be required as the halls have not been used for many weeks, especially at the Village Hall.

### **7.2. Keeping the workplace clean**

Additional steps will be required to ensure the workplace is kept clean to prevent virus transmission by touching contaminated surfaces:

- Frequent cleaning of work areas and equipment between uses, especially when people will be sharing a space.
- Frequent cleaning of objects and surfaces that are touched regularly such as door handles, keyboards.
- Cleaning workspaces and removing waste and belongings from the work area at the end of the day.
- Limiting or restricting use of high touch items and equipment such as printers.
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### **7.3. Hygiene: handwashing, sanitation facilities and toilets**

To enable everyone to maintain good hygiene throughout the day, the following measures will be required:

- Using signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique and frequency, avoid touching your face, and to cough or sneeze into a tissue or your arm if none available.
- Providing regular reminders and signage to maintain personal hygiene standards.
- Provide hand sanitiser in multiple locations.
- Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean and social distancing is achieved as much as possible.
- Enhanced cleaning for busy areas.
- Implementing daily waste disposal of items left in bins around the buildings.

## **8. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Face Coverings**

PPE protects the user against health and safety risks at work. Staff working outdoors already use items of PPE, and will continue to do so as appropriate.

The use of PPE is not at this time recommended to manage the risk of COVID-19. Government guidance remains that the primary steps taken to manage risk in the workplace is to:

- Work from home where possible.
- Maintain 2m social distancing.

However, the use of a face mask may be used in an enclosed space where social distancing isn't possible. The following guidelines must be followed:

- wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on, and after removing it
- when wearing a face covering, avoid touching your face or face covering, as you could contaminate them with germs from your hands
- change your face covering if it becomes damp or if you've touched it
- continue to wash your hands regularly
- change and wash your face covering daily



- if the material is washable, wash in line with manufacturer's instructions. If it's not washable, dispose of it carefully in your usual waste
- practise social distancing wherever possible

## 9. Staff Management

It is advised that working patterns are changed to reduce the number of contacts each employee has. As the office team is small, the best way to manage this is to limit attendance at the office to one person at any time. Even having people alternate days creates a higher risk due to the levels of cleaning that would be required i.e. doors, desks, printers.

It is not recommended to hot desk, so investment in additional desk equipment will be required to maintain safety for all staff:

- Jane Forester  
Laptop  
Docking station x 2  
Power Pack x 2  
VDU  
Keyboard and mouse (?)
- Caroline Hansen  
VDU  
Keyboard and mouse  
Docking station  
Power Pack
- Sam Heynes  
VDU  
Keyboard and mouse  
Docking station

## 10. Recommendations

I have summarised below a list of recommendations relating to both staff and hirers, on the basis of this report.

### 10.1. Staff

- 10.1.1. No office staff will return to work at the Queen's Hall until Step 3 is achieved (target date 4<sup>th</sup> July 2020). This date is variable and depends on Government advice.
- 10.1.2. Only one member of office staff will work from the Queen's Hall on any given day. A schedule will be drawn up and published.
- 10.1.3. As hot desking is not recommended, all workstations will need to be recreated at the office to mirror those now in place at home, in order to maximise efficiency. A cost estimate for this is attached in appendix x.
- 10.1.4. The Parish Office will be open on an appointment only basis, in order that hygiene requirements can be communicated clearly to all visitors in advance of their attending the office, and so we can control the number of people in attendance at any one time.
- 10.1.5. A log of visitors will be kept, in order to track and trace all people should anyone become infected with the virus.

- 10.1.6. A floor standing plastic screen will be purchased and used to separate visitors to the office from the staff member present.
- 10.1.7. The key pad on the office door will not be used, instead the yale lock will be reinstalled with keys issued only to all core personnel.
- 10.1.8. Antibacterial wipes will be provided to all staff, as well as disposable tissues, disposable gloves and face masks (to be used according to guidelines).
- 10.1.9. Use of the kitchen will be limited to staff only during working hours, with awareness communicated to ensure cleaning of all kitchen items is completed before and after use i.e. kettle, fridge, microwave. Further to this, all staff to use their own personal cups etc.
- 10.1.10. Install a lock on the kitchen door to prevent usage by anyone other than staff or prearranged hirers.
- 10.1.11. The use of Zoom will continue to enable staff meetings to take place on a regular basis. This maintains communication, and provides support for all staff members ensuring they are not feeling isolated.

## 10.2. **Hirers**

- 10.2.1. All hirers will be contacted to establish whether they have a return date mind.
- 10.2.2. All hirers will be advised that they will be responsible for ensuring social distancing within their classes.
- 10.2.3. The kitchen will not be open to hirers other than weddings, due to the need for cleaning between hires.
- 10.2.4. All hirers will be made aware of the new processes for access to and exit from the hall, and movements around the hall during their hire period, including use of the toilets.
- 10.2.5. A review of all regular classes will be necessary to establish whether it will be possible to clean the hall between classes. Hirers will be made aware of their responsibilities in this regard.

Sam Heynes  
Parish Clerk  
20 May 2020