



Market Weighton Town Council

Pandemic Planning Health and Safety Policy 2020

Version	1.1
Adopted	
Review	



Pandemic Planning Health and Safety Policy

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 imposes a statutory duty on employers to ensure, insofar as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of their employees whilst at work. This duty also extends to others who may be affected by the activities of Market Weighton Town Council (MWTC).

Aims and Commitments:

MWTC will:

- Provide a safe and healthy working environment and will not compromise the health and safety of any individual whilst having direct control of Pandemic circumstances.
- Provide the necessary training, advice and resources to all staff and Councillors to allow for the safe performance of day to day operations whilst operating in a Pandemic Scenario
- Comply, as far as reasonably practicable, with relevant health and safety legislation and Government body advices regarding Pandemics

Pandemic Planning (including COVID-19 / Coronavirus)

Introduction:

Viral Pandemics, including COVID-19 and other strains of Influenza, are highly infectious viral illnesses that have the capacity to spread very rapidly. A pandemic occurs when a new viral infection strain emerges and spreads, because people have no natural resistance to it. The scale, severity and impact of a viral pandemic are difficult to predict. What is known is that pandemics affect entire countries with up to 80% of the population developing the illness. Past pandemics have spread globally in two, and sometimes three, waves over a period of months.

Any viral pandemic, as confirmed by the World Health Organization, has the potential to seriously affect MWTC's operations, its employees, Councillors and their families. With such a high percentage of the population potentially affected, absenteeism could disrupt public transportation systems, utility services, health provision and services, communications and services provided by our suppliers. It is also anticipated that schools would be closed to prevent the spread of infection.



A viral pandemic may therefore affect our staffing in four principal ways:

- Staff or Councillors may themselves become infected, which is likely to lead to an unprecedented level of sickness absence
- Staff or Councillors may have fears of being infected whilst on council premises and of passing on infection to their families and friends
- Stress levels will be higher than normal because of pressures on staffing
- Staff or Councillors with caring responsibilities may be adversely affected by local measures, such as closure of schools. As a result, staff and Councillors may have to stay at home to care for dependent children. In other cases, staff and Councillors may be caring for partners and other dependants, such as older relatives

Viral Pandemics have the potential to affect all businesses and employers in a region, including those providing essential services on which we rely.

MWTC will use the World Health Organization, Public Health England and Government pandemic alert phases to trigger organisational actions once evidence emerges of increased human-to-human transmission.

Our focus will be on:-

- Raising staff and Councillor awareness of the threat of a pandemic
- Producing action plans when needed that are specific to each of the Council's locations (Town Hall, parks, cemetery, etc.)
- Maintaining health and hygiene measures and standards

Planning for a Pandemic:

When it starts to become obvious that local facilities and services are not functioning satisfactorily, decisions will be made at Council level to enable a response.

The planned response will be to:

- Maintain awareness of national and local developments and advices given
- Undertake awareness training across the Council
- Brief staff on control measures
- Ensure external stakeholders are involved/made aware, e.g. suppliers, insurers, etc.



Pandemic Response:

The Council will seek to reduce the overall and specific risks to staff & Councillors by taking appropriate infection control actions.

MWTC will distribute information regarding monitoring transmission interventions, infection control and communications.

Pandemic Recovery:

Unlike other disaster contingency planning, recovery interventions in the case of a pandemic need to take into account the likelihood of follow-on waves which may place the Council in a critical response phase for many weeks, possibly months.

Because of the ever-changing conditions that apply to a Pandemic scenario, guidelines and safe working procedures will be constantly reviewed to allow for flexibility and adaptability.

Guidelines and Safe Working Procedures in response to a Pandemic Transmission Interventions – Infection Control:

MWTC will seek to reduce the overall risks to staff and Councillors by taking appropriate infection control actions. It is absolutely essential that the following control measures are instigated at the earliest opportunity. Basic health protection advice will be issued to all staff.

- Avoid close contact at work and outside (face-to-face/large gatherings)
- Stay at home when unwell
- Cover mouth and nose when sneezing / coughing
- Immediately bin any tissues used when sneezing / coughing
- Clean hands thoroughly immediately - with hot water and soap for a minimum of 20 seconds / if unavailable use hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth
- When necessary stop visitors to the building
- Stop staff visiting sites of known or possible infection
- Increase site cleaning. This **must** include **all** - door handles / door push panels / telephones / hand-rails / light switches / other communal areas and items / printers and photocopiers
- Have sufficient quantities of alcohol based hand-gel / sanitising wipes / alcohol based cleaning agents
- Instigate a site contingency plan - should staff be required to stay at home to look after children because of school closures or relatives and others who succumb to infection*

*This should be instigated immediately family members and close friends of staff become infected, whether the staff member succumbs personally, remains at work, or not. These steps may be too late, however, where incubation / carriers of the virus are already be on site. Initially policies for Time Off for Dependents or Holiday should be used for time off.



Implications for other H&S & HR Policies:

The Pandemic Policy and associated arrangements will only be invoked during a Pandemic outbreak and, at that time, will override existing policies with Council approval.

The policy is developed in the context of a duty to provide our users with a level of service, whilst maintaining the health, safety and welfare of our staff. The impact of a pandemic may be significant and consequently there may be a time when existing working arrangements will be insufficient and new arrangements covering some areas will have to be invoked, for example:

- Flexible working / alteration to work patterns
- Redeployment
- Overtime and unsocial hours
- Additional staffing provision
- Sickness / absence
- Annual leave – cancellation / refusal
- Compassionate leave
- Carers / dependents leave
- Study leave – cancellation / suspension
- Support to Staff
- Staff who refuse to attend work
- Staff at high risk
- Pay arrangements

Instructions on these will be sent out individually by the Personnel Committee.

At no time will any health & safety procedures be suspended. Staff at work will be expected to continue to abide by all Council rules, regulations and working procedures at all times.

It may be necessary to suspend any work in HR that is not required by law. It is anticipated that any disciplinary investigations and hearings will be suspended until after the end of the recovery period of the pandemic. However, the powers of suspension will be retained in the event of serious disciplinary events taking place.

Across all services there will be a need to ensure that appropriately trained staff are available in the relevant location(s) to ensure continuity of service. It is hoped that staff and Councillors will work together to ensure service continues for residents.

Because of the ever changing conditions that apply to a Pandemic scenario, this Policy, Guidelines and Safe Working Procedures will be constantly reviewed to allow for flexibility and adaptability.



COVID-19 Symptoms:

The most significant symptoms are the sudden onset of:

- fever
- cough or shortness of breath
- tightness of the chest

Other symptoms may include:

- headache
- tiredness
- chills
- aching muscles
- sore throat
- runny nose
- sneezing
- loss of appetite

Infectious period: Most people may be infectious soon after they develop symptoms and will continue to spread the virus for up to fourteen days (adults). People become less infectious as symptoms subside, and are considered no longer infectious once symptoms are gone.

If you develop symptoms while not at work:

- Stay at home (self-isolate) and do not go to work until you are fully recovered
- Contact the National Health Service advice line (telephone 111) for advice and an initial assessment of symptoms in the first instance
- Inform the Town Clerk or Mayor that you are ill and unable to work.