

# Hartley Wintney Parish Council – Draft Policy on the Protection of Staff, Volunteers and Beneficiaries during COVID19, and other pandemics

Hartley Wintney Parish Council (HWPC) recognises its responsibility and duty of care to safeguard the welfare of all staff, volunteers and beneficiaries, by a commitment to practise which protects them.

## HWPC recognises that:

- The welfare of staff, volunteers and beneficiaries is paramount.
- All individuals, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation, or identity, have the right to equal protection from potential risk.

## The purpose of the policy is:

- To provide councillors, staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures they should adopt whilst carrying out activities on behalf of HWPC during the COVID19 outbreak and any future pandemics.

This policy applies to councillors and all staff, including paid employees, volunteers or anyone working on behalf of HWPC and will be reviewed annually by the Policy Committee.

## Preventing the spread of COVID19:

- Government advice is to [stay at home](#), and people are currently required not to leave their homes without reasonable excuse by law. This includes working from home if possible.
- If you are going out, you must stay maintain a two-metre distance from people where possible.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser. This is particularly important after taking public transport.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in a bin.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home and work environment.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Government advice is to reduce social interaction between people. The advice includes the [social distancing measures](#) we should **all** be taking.

## Protecting HWPC Employees:

HWPC closed the office to members of the public wef 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020, and from 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 requested all staff to work from home, where possible to do so.

In the event that employees may be required to visit the HWPC offices, we commit to;

- Providing suitable and well stocked handwashing facilities and provide hand sanitiser, tissues and cleaning products around your buildings for staff and volunteers.
- Cleaning regimes: Viruses can live on hard surfaces for up to eight hours. Frequently clean key areas including keyboards and door handles.

HWPC should also ensure that emergency contact details are up to date.

## Events, Meetings and AGMs

Following Government guidance, all HWPC events were cancelled wef 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 until further notice. As Parish Council meetings are required for public attendance, all meetings were postponed with effect from 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and the HWPC Rapid Response Protocol was initiated.

The Coronavirus Bill 2020 provided Local Authorities to be able to hold public meetings remotely, following the following guidelines;

*Meetings will be held remotely, however members must be seen (where possible) and heard by all in attendance, and see (where possible) and hear all other members. The Public must also have remote access and those who wish to address the Council must also be seen and see (where possible) / be heard and hear all members.*

*The press and public who do not wish to address the Council must be able to hear all participants. Public 'attendance' must be during the meeting, it cannot be recorded and displayed otherwise.*

This legislation does not extend to Council AGM's and so authority has been granted for all to remain in their current elected roles until May 2021, or if the Council chooses to hold a AGM at a late date, once current social distancing rules have been lifted.

Supporting employees to work from home;

- Self-care: When working from home it is good to create a space between work and personal time, where possible. This could mean setting working hours, working in a different room, putting your laptop away. Mind has released guidance on COVID19 and [caring for your mental health during self-isolation](#).
- Hardware: Staff will be provided with appropriate equipment, where possible HWPC will avoid employees using personal devices, for security and data protection.
- Software: HWPC will ensure that all employees and Councillors will have access to our Office 365 software.
- Meetings: All employees and Councillors can access Microsoft Teams, which allows video conferencing and audio links. Employees have also been provided with soft phones and equipment.
- Processes: The Executive Clerk will liaise closely with Employees and Councillors to agree appropriate processes and work responsibilities.
- Support: The Executive Clerk will keep in contact with all employees, and regularly speak and meet the Parish Office Staff via Microsoft Teams, to ensure good health and wellbeing. Working remotely will bring challenges and cause disruptions to the daily working routine, and so HWPC offers full support to employees and the need for flexibility.

Employees' rights and sick leave entitlements;

- Since 23 March, the government has advised people to [stay at home](#).
- Since 26 March, people have been legally required not to leave their homes without reasonable excuse.
- People can travel to and from work, but only if they cannot work from home.
- Staff should stay at home for 14 days if someone in their household has [symptoms of covid-19](#).
- If other members of the household develop symptoms during the 14 days, then they must not leave the home for seven days from when these symptoms started.
- Those who display symptoms of COVID19 do not need to call the NHS to go into self-isolation. If these symptoms continue or worsen after seven days, then contact [NHS 111 online](#). Those without access to the internet should call NHS 111.
- Those in self-isolation should also refer to the government's [stay at home guidance](#).
- Employees who are recommended to self-isolate are entitled to sick leave and statutory sick pay, however all employees are entitled to received Company sick pay as in line with the HWPC Sickness and Absence Policy.
- If employees are required to self-isolate due to COVID19 or displaying a high temperature or a new continuous cough then they would qualify for [statutory sick pay](#) subject to meeting eligibility requirements, however all employees are entitled to received Company sick pay as in line with the HWPC Sickness and Absence Policy.
- Employees are entitled to time off to care for a dependent. There is no statutory right to pay for this time off, however employees may be entitled to receive paid leave as in line with the HWPC Sickness and Absence Policy.
- Working Families has coordinated [guidance for working families](#) during COVID19.
- For further advice on employee sick leave and sick pay entitlements please contact the Executive Clerk.

### **Protecting HWPC Beneficiaries:**

Generally, infections can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

Some of our service users or beneficiaries may be more at risk or highly concerned about the virus and this time of uncertainty and self-isolation may be impacting on some of our beneficiaries' mental health including feelings of loneliness and anxiety.

Where possible, HWPC will provide them with clear and updated information on prevention measures, government action and your charity's response and explain how this will impact or benefit your beneficiaries.

### **Supporting members of communities facing discrimination:**

- Some members of some communities are experiencing acts of racism, discrimination and verbal abuse with the outbreak of the virus.
- COVID19 does not discriminate and the containment or spread of the virus is not based on ethnicity.
- HWPC will work hard to ensure that these communities are supported and that these acts of discrimination will not be tolerated.
- Stop Hate UK are providing anyone experiencing or witnessing such discrimination with a confidential [24-hour third-party reporting service](#).

### **Supporting, Working and Protecting HWPC Volunteers:**

HWPC recognise that there are many ways volunteers can support people who need help. Some of the ways volunteers are helping may include:

- helping with shopping and running errands for those who are self-isolating
- driving people to/from health appointments or other essential appointments
- helping to organise food deliveries from food banks and/or supermarkets
- helping to spread awareness about coronavirus scams
- running online wellbeing classes for people
- running online activities for children who are staying home
- online or telephone befriending to those who need to stay indoors.

HWPC are aware of the Hartley Wintney Car Group, the Over-55's Forum and Hart Voluntary Care Group and the essential role and lifeline that these organisations offer to the community.

HWPC will direct volunteers to these groups who may need their help.

### **How Volunteers are affected by the lockdown;**

[Government guidance](#) is that people may leave their home for two specific reasons.

- If they are helping vulnerable people
- If their volunteering cannot be done from home, whether related to the coronavirus response or not

If people are volunteering from home, they can carry on as normal.

- Leaving home to help a vulnerable person can be done through an organisation, or as an individual.
- If volunteers must leave the house, they should spend as little time away from home as possible and follow [government advice on social distancing](#).
- Any volunteer may be stopped by the police and will be expected to explain why they are not at home. HWPC will send volunteers a text or email listing their activities/tasks with the Executive Clerk's name and contact number, so they can show them.
- Gatherings of more than two people, not of the same household, in public are currently banned, so it is important that volunteers understand this before they leave home.

### **Safeguarding for Volunteer Managers:**

At this time, the Volunteer Managers will be Parish Councillors.

Coronavirus means that volunteers will be helping a broad number of people, some of whom may be vulnerable due to age, illness or disability. This includes people who have been asked by their doctor to 'shield' themselves (staying indoors for 12 weeks), those who are self-isolating, or those at a higher risk from the virus.

Before helping, everyone should have a basic understanding of safeguarding and who to report to if there are any concerns.

All Parish Councillors who are supporting or organising volunteers, should understand:

- The risks of your volunteer role or activities
- How the HWPC will manage these risks and be provided with a copy of any risk assessments produced by the Executive Clerk.
- Be aware of the HWPC safeguarding policy and follow the process should a volunteer tell them a vulnerable person is being harmed or is at risk of harm.
- They have a responsibility to verify the identity of people who wish to volunteer, e.g. ask to see a driving licence.
- They have a responsibility to safeguard people from harm or risk of harm.
- If a volunteer is worried about someone, listen to their concerns and take them seriously. Record what you are being told.

### **DBS Checks and Volunteers:**

Only a few roles need a DBS check by law. These are roles involving 'regulated activity'. Regulated activities include transporting, teaching and caring, including personal care to those who are vulnerable due to age, illness or disability.

Many common coronavirus-related volunteer roles are not regulated, and therefore do not require a DBS check or barred list check. These include:

- shopping for people who are voluntarily self-isolating
- picking up prescriptions
- driving (with the exception of transporting patients)
- befriending
- posting mail
- delivering items or dog walking.

If the purpose of the volunteer role is to support someone who is self-isolating or shielding, this does not make this regulated activity.

### **Data Protection**

HWPC GDPR and Data Protection Policy works in conjunction with this Policy, however it is acknowledged;

- Data protection rules will not stop people from helping others during the coronavirus outbreak but should be considered when asking for personal data.
- Personal data is information that relates to an identified or identifiable individual – this could be a volunteer, or someone being helped by a volunteer.

In order to support our volunteers and volunteer managers please read the following guidance notes;

- **Clarity:** Be honest about what your organisation will do or is doing with personal data. Tell volunteers not to ask for or share anyone's personal data or health data, unless there is a specific reason to do so.
- **Sharing:** This is only acceptable for specific reasons. Public safety is one of them. Your organisation may be able to lawfully identify other reasons to slow or prevent the spread of coronavirus. Don't share anyone's personal data on websites or social media platforms.
- **Act lawfully:** Handling personal data is only allowed in certain situations. Common reasons include the person would expect you to be handling their data (legitimate interest), you have the person's consent, or someone's health or safety is at risk. If someone is likely to be surprised you are handling their data, more steps should be taken to tell them what you are doing and why.
- **Security:** Store personal data securely. Try to use password-protected documents or devices. If using paper, lock it away. We have guidance about [how to store personal data](#).
- **Minimise:** Only ask for the data you need. Don't keep it when you no longer need it.
- **Record:** Keep records of decisions your organisation has made about the use of personal data. These could be as simple as bullet pointed notes or a list in a spreadsheet, or in a data protection policy

- Certain sensitive information, including health data, is classed as 'special category data'. This data should only be handled with consent, to safeguard someone at risk or to save someone's life.

### **Recognising and Reporting Scams**

HWPC recognise that there has been an increase in scams and false offers of help during the Coronavirus outbreak.

Common scams include:

- cold calling homes and offering to help those self-isolating with shopping
- fundraising, door to door or online, for donations to develop a COVID19 vaccine
- scam emails offering fake products such as anti-bacterial gels or a cure for coronavirus.

HWPC aim to reduce the impact of these scams by making our volunteers aware of current scams and to remind those they are helping not to give out credit or debit card details, personal identification numbers or passwords.

We will support our volunteers show who they are by providing them with an email or text message with the Executive Clerk's details, and a contact telephone number.

We will request that our volunteers report anything suspicious regarding fraudulent activity to your organisation or the person leading volunteers.

HWPC will report any concerns to Action Fraud [0300 123 2040](tel:03001232040).

For more information to safeguard against scams, [visit the National Trading Standards website](#).

### **Additional Information**

For further information, please contact the Executive Clerk or the Chairman of the Policy Committee.

### **Amendment Record**

Version 1: Initial Issue as Interim Policy – 17<sup>th</sup> April 2020