

17th October 2022

Dear Councillor

You are summoned to a meeting of the:

**Extra Ordinary HR Committee
on Monday 24th October 2022 at 6pm
To be held at Warminster Civic Centre**

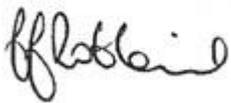
Membership:

Cllr Allensby (West)	Cllr Keeble (West) Vice Chairman
Cllr Cooper (Broadway)	Cllr Robbins (East) Chairman
Cllr Fryer (Broadway)	

Members of the public are warmly welcome to attend meetings of the Council and its committees, unless excluded owing to the confidential nature of the business.

Copied to all other members for information.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Chris Robbins

Mayor of Warminster

1. **Apologies for Absence**

To receive and accept apologies, including reason for absence, from those unable to attend.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

To receive any declarations of interest under Warminster Town Council's (WTC) Code of Conduct issued in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

3. **Chairman's Announcements**

To note any announcements made by the chairman.

4. **Questions**

To receive questions from members of the committee submitted to the clerk in advance of the meeting.

Standing Orders will be suspended to allow for public participation.

5. **Public Participation**

To enable members of the public to address the committee with a written submission, an allowance of three minutes per person regarding any item on the agenda and to receive any petitions and deputations. The chairperson may read any statements submitted in advance.

Standing Orders will be reinstated following public participation.

6. **Covid 19 Policy**

In April 2022 Members recommended a Covid19 Policy that was adopted by Full Council in May 2022. It was agreed that the policy would be reviewed by the HR Committee after 6 months.

The purpose of the policy was to make clear how the town council would be protecting its staff and users of council services. The procedures in place are there to prevent the spread of Covid and how staff will need to comply with this. **(See attached).**

Officers are now recommending that Covid 19 should be treated in the same way as any other illness.

Members to resolve to make a recommendation to Full Council to either continue or discontinue the Covid 19 Policy.

7. **Communications**

The members to decide on items requiring a press release and nominate a spokesperson if required.

Confidential session pursuant to Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies Admission to Meetings) Act 1960; the Council, by resolution, may exclude the public from a meeting (whether during the whole or part of the proceedings) whenever publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons stated in the resolution and arising from the nature of that business or of the proceedings.

8. **Staffing Matters**

To receive the Clerk's reports covering ongoing HR issues. **(See attached).** **(Confidential papers attached for committee members only).**

Members to note or resolve accordingly.

Minutes from this meeting will be available to all members of the public either from our web site www.warminster-tc.gov.uk or by contacting us at Warminster Civic Centre.

Next scheduled meeting: Monday 6th February 2023.

Report on Covid Policy – HR Committee 24/10/2022

The Council has operated the Covid 19 Policy since April 2022. Although numbers of infections fluctuate, due to the success of the vaccination programme and improvements in treatments it is far less feared than previously and the severity of the illness is dramatically lower than it was. That said, some people are more vulnerable and some may suffer from long-covid.

Covid 19 Policy is balance of competing factor.

Employers need to put together some form of policy, guidelines or protocols and communicate these clearly to their staff to prevent the confusion and challenges

- In simplistic terms in England at least there are no legal restrictions around COVID, and it should be treated exactly the same as any other illness.
- Again, simplistically, all the requirements for testing, both for individuals and organisations have gone although those employers in the care or health sector may want to consider keeping something in place.
- Government advice continues to be that those who demonstrate the symptom of COVID should still consider staying away from work but then this is the same advice as for any other illness such as flu
- Employees who feel they have COVID should follow their existing Company absence procedures, and this should be handled by their employers in exactly the same way as for any employees with non-COVID illness.
- From March 24th SSP will only be payable from day 4 (as opposed to under the temporary measure when it was available from day 1)
- Inevitably, and as with any other illness, some employees will use COVID as a reason for not coming to work and this should be treated the same as other employees citing illness as a reason for not coming to work. There are no special circumstances or requirements due to it being COVID related

If for whatever reason you still feel you need to have masks at work, or even require some form of testing then in the absence of any legal basis for having this in place you would need to give thought as to on what grounds you would justify this and then communicate this very clearly to your staff explaining why they were still needed but you should expect some employees to challenge this.

The Governments current advice on **What to do if you have a positive COVID-19 test result is:**

You can reduce the risk to other people by taking the following steps

- Avoid contact with anyone you know who is at higher risk of becoming severely unwell if they are infected with COVID-19, especially those whose immune system means they are at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19, despite vaccination

- Limit close contact with other people outside your household, especially in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces
- Wear a well-fitting face covering made with multiple layers or a surgical face mask if you do need to have close contact with other people, or you are in a crowded place
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use hand sanitiser
- If you develop symptoms of a respiratory infection try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people and follow the guidance for people with symptoms
- If you are a contact of someone with COVID-19 but do not live with them or did not stay in their household overnight, you are at lower risk of becoming infected, stay at home and avoid contact with other people

Duty of Care

The Council is in something of a dilemma in that Councils have a duty of care towards all their staff and liability under common law arising out of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

The problem with COVID-19 is that people can be infectious for up to 10 days.

From an employer point of view, it is better for one person to be off work isolating than for them to be into work where they infect others, leading to staff shortages and preventable illness.

Officers are now recommending that Covid 19 should be treated in the same way as any other illness.

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1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 Statement

In light of the recent changes towards living with Covid and changes in the law and government guidance Warminster Town Council has written this policy to make clear to all employees, councillors and volunteers how the town council will be protecting its staff and users of council services and the procedures in place to prevent the spread of Covid and how staff will need to comply with this.

Our statement of general policy is:

- To promote physical distancing between staff members
- To promote physical distancing between customers and staff members
- To promote physical distancing between groups of customers
- To make arrangements to provide physical distancing in welfare areas
- To make arrangements to provide facilities for hand hygiene
- To promote responsible respiratory etiquette
- To make arrangements for the hygienic cleaning of contact surfaces
- To make arrangements and provide facilities for segregating anyone who shows symptoms of Covid-19 while on the premises
- To make arrangements for the hygienic cleaning and disinfection of surface if anyone shows symptoms of Covid-19 while on the premises.

1.2 The legal position

Councils have a duty of care towards all their staff and liability under common law arising out of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

2. Process for Dealing with a member of staff who presents with Covid symptoms

2.1 At the workplace

If a member of staff begins to exhibit symptoms of Covid they will be asked to remove themselves from any areas where they may infect other staff members. They will be provided with a lateral flow test to test for covid. Should the test be positive the member of staff will be asked to self-isolate at home in line with government advice. Their work area will then be thoroughly disinfected.

The staff member will continue to be paid as if they were attending work and this period will not be recorded as a sickness absence.

2.2 Positive covid test outside the workplace

If a member of staff tests positive for covid outside of working hours, they must inform their line manager at the first opportunity. They must not attend the workplace and will be asked to self-isolate at home in line with government advice. The staff member will continue to be paid as if they were attending work and this period will not be recorded as a sickness absence

3. Useful Contacts

ACAS www.acas.org.uk Tel: 0845 7 47 47 47

Local Government Ombudsman for England www.lgo.org.uk Tel: 0300 061 0614

Equality and Human Rights Commission www.equalityhumanrights.com

SLCC www.slcc.co.uk

Direct Gov website: www.GOV.uk

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