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21.04 Full Council Background Paper

Agenda items 8ii: *Planning & Environment – Highways England*

The meeting is due to be joined by representatives of Highways England and Balfour Beatty ahead of the Secretary of States expected decision on the proposed Development Consent Order (DCO).

Agenda item 10iii: *Leisure & Facilities – Office relocation*

At time of writing, contracts for the exchange of the lease at Rio House are being prepared. More information may be available by the time of the meeting.

Agenda item 10iv: *Leisure & Facilities – Waste infrastructure & collections*

Cllrs Ayears, Cornell, and Moxon have each asked for an Agenda item to cover the increase in litter on The Green and what measures can be taken to remedy the situation. Initial enquiries have been made to Guildford Borough Council regarding the provision of extra bins and/or collections:

The subject of bins is one that is on our priority list, both from a collection point of view, and also from the increased usage. Guildford Borough Council is undergoing some serious fundamental changes and we are now having to evaluate our statutory duties against other non-statutory duties we have historically provided. One of these service provisions is the supply and emptying of litter bins/dog waste bins on land which Guildford Borough Council has no responsibility for.

We are of course happy to act as a contractor for any organisation or Parish who want to enter into an agreement for bin emptying, providing we can accommodate it within existing resources. We will be carrying out a survey of all bins we currently empty in Ripley, including the Green and surrounding area, and identify those that we believe are on private land. From this data we can formulate a pricing structure for the bins that we are asked to empty, based on location and frequency. From a Borough point of view, we are targeting our own areas with a view to reducing the number of dog bins and where necessary replacing them with litter/dog waste dual use bins. These containers are much safer and have less impact of the operative who empty's them.

I will ask the area Supervisor to make contact and start a dialogue so you can see what service we can reasonably offer and our proposed costings. Once you are in possession of this information, you can let the local councillors know and see what they think. I absolutely expect some resistance as bins seem to be the hot topic at the moment, but we are honestly in a place now where reality has impacted quite hard.

Further correspondence from Waste Services:

Please find pricing structure below. This would be the new pricing structure for GBC to empty any bins on parish land.

Emptying

£300, plus vat per bin emptied once a week.

Each additional empty per week – additional £300 plus vat per year per bin

Additional bins at location of less than 3 minutes' walk/drive away from the first bin will be at £100, plus vat, per year, for each bin, per weekly empty.

Worked Examples:

11 litter bins, in close proximity emptied once per week:

Bin 1 £300 plus vat per year

Bins 2 – 11 (10 bins at £100 plus vat each) £1000 plus vat per year

Total - £1300 plus vat per year.

11 litter bins, in close proximity emptied twice per week:

Bin 1 £600 plus vat per year

Bins 2 – 11 (10 bins at £200 plus vat each) £2000 plus vat per year

Total - £2600 plus vat per year.

Bin Installation

Standard Bin – fee of £250 plus vat – Ownership of the bin passes to the buyer – they will be responsible for repair or replacement costs.

There are currently 14 bins on The Green, which would cost £1,600 p/a to empty once a week or £11,200 p/a for daily visits, although some are directly adjacent to one another. There could therefore be an opportunity to reduce the number of bins by increasing the container capacity, which could also mean that fewer collections would be needed per week. Also to bear in mind is the seasonal fluctuation in visitor numbers, which makes The Green busier at certain times of the year.

Agenda item 11ii: Communication & Liaison – Future meetings

The letter from Luke Hall MP regarding the end of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 is attached to this Background Paper at Appendix i. The news that the Regulations are not to be extended has been with disappointment, and a link to the following article on the *Local Government Lawyer* website was posted on the SLCC Clerks' Forum:

Government to support legal action over ability of councils to hold remote meetings

- **April 8, 2021**

The Local Government Secretary, Robert Jenrick, has said the Government will support the High Court claim being brought by Lawyers in Local Government, the Association of Democratic Services Officers and Hertfordshire County Council over the ability of councils in England to hold remote meetings.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government confirmed that, in papers provided to the Court to support the claim, the Government recognised that there was “a case to be heard”

that the Local Government Act 1972 should be interpreted as allowing for virtual meetings “as the legislation was passed at a time when virtual meetings could not have been envisaged”.

The case will be heard by the High Court on 21 April.

Jenrick said: “Councils have done a fantastic job over the last year and remote meetings are just one innovation of many. We recognise remote or virtual meetings by councils, have widened access to local democracy and we will be keen to lock in the good work councils have undertaken during the pandemic to embrace technology. However, appropriate safeguards must be in place to ensure transparency, scrutiny and probity are maintained.

“In the event the action is not successful, the temporary provisions in the Coronavirus Act regulations will come to an end after May 6, and so councils should continue to prepare for that eventuality. Guidance has been issued to help councils to meet safely and securely. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is conducting a call for evidence on the use of remote meetings and we would encourage councillors and members of the public to participate, so that we can better evidence the next steps.”

The MHCLG added that it was essential that councils “can be held to account by their residents, and to ensure that any future arrangements regarding remote meetings continue to strengthen both scrutiny and transparency”.

Last month the Local Government Association described as “extremely disappointing” the Government’s decision not to extend the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, which expire on 7 May 2021.

Ministers have said such an extension would require primary legislation and the impact this would have on the Government’s legislative programme.

The LGA and the National Association of Local Councils are backing the claim brought by LLG, ADSO and Hertfordshire CC.

It is extremely important that the council takes decisions on the upcoming meetings of the council. The guidance available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings> (attached to this Background Paper at Appendix ii) states:

Holding your annual meeting before 7 May

Although a greater number of local authorities will be subject to elections in 2021 due to the postponement of the 2020 elections, those authorities who are not subject to elections could hold a virtual annual meeting before 7 May so that the meeting is held while the current regulations still apply.

Also:

Continuing to provide remote access to the public

Local authorities have legal obligations to ensure that members of the public have access to most of their meetings. For physical meetings, the government would actively encourage local authorities to continue to provide remote access until at least 21 June, at which point it is anticipated that all restrictions on indoor gatherings will have been lifted in line with the Roadmap. However, it is for individual local authorities to satisfy themselves that they have met the requirements for public access.

The most cautious course of action would be to bring the parish council’s Annual Meeting forward to Thursday 6th May, and to not hold a meeting in June (Ripley Parish Council Standing Order 1.4 states: The Council shall meet at least times in each year). This would have the effect of there being no opportunities to carry out council business, however. The Annual Meeting will cover just the council’s Policies, procedures, subscriptions, and Committee membership, as per Chapter 7 of Ripley Parish Council’s Standing Orders.

Alternatively, a spacious local venue could be found where members could be seated at separate tables. The council's zoom account has been renewed and the meeting could (in theory) be livestreamed to any members of the public wishing to join. Extra safety measures as laid out in Appendix ii will be needed.

Agenda item 11iii: *Communication & Liaison – Standing Orders*

In anticipation of the end of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, Ripley Parish Council Standing Order 18.1 has been updated to allow Committees to continue to meet remotely. Schedule 12, Part II of The Local Government Act 1972 stipulates the rules governing parish council meetings, and which was addressed for the previous year by the Regulations, however these rules do not expressly also relate to Committees.



APPENDIX i

Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Council Leaders
Principal Councils in England

Luke Hall MP

Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

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2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

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www.gov.uk/mhclg

25 March 2021

Dear Colleague,

LOCAL AUTHORITY MEETINGS

It is just over a year to the day since the Prime Minister asked us all to stay at home, and local authorities across England have risen magnificently to the challenges of this period. There has been a dramatic shift in your day-to-day operations, alongside new difficulties and demands, and I commend the efforts of all councillors and officers in supporting your communities and ensuring vital business continues during these unprecedented times.

As you will be aware, The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 do not apply to meetings on or after 7 May 2021.

Extending the regulations to meetings beyond May 7 would require primary legislation. The Government has considered the case for legislation very carefully, including the significant impact it would have on the Government's legislative programme which is already under severe pressure in these unprecedented times. We are also mindful of the excellent progress that has been made on our vaccination programme and the announcement of the Government's roadmap for lifting Covid-19 restrictions. Given this context, the Government has concluded that it is not possible to bring forward emergency legislation on this issue at this time.

As outlined in the Government's Spring 2021 Covid-19 Response, our aim is for everyone aged 50 and over and people with underlying health conditions to have been offered a first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine by 15 April, and a second dose by mid-July. While local authorities have been able to hold meetings in person at any time during the pandemic with appropriate measures in place, the successful rollout of the vaccine and the reduction in cases of Covid-19 should result in a significant reduction in risk for local authority members meeting in person from May 7, as reflected in the Government's plan to ease Covid-19 restrictions over the coming months.

I recognise there may be concerns about holding face-to-face meetings. Ultimately it is for local authorities to apply the Covid-19 guidance to ensure meetings take place safely, but we have updated our guidance on the safe use of council buildings to highlight ways in which you can, if necessary, minimise the risk of face-to-face meetings, and we will work with

sector representative bodies to ensure that local authorities understand the guidance and are aware of the full range of options available to them.

You can find the updated guidance here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings.

These options would include use of your existing powers to delegate decision making to key individuals such as the Head of Paid Service, as these could be used these to minimise the number of meetings you need to hold if deemed necessary. Additionally, some of you will be able to rely on single member decision making without the need for cabinet meetings if your constitution allows.

While I appreciate that a greater number of authorities will be subject to elections this year due to the postponement of the 2020 elections, those councils who are not subject to elections could also consider conducting their annual meetings prior to 7 May, and therefore do so remotely while the express provision in current regulations apply. As you will know, councils who are subject to elections are statutorily required to hold their annual meeting within 21 days of the elections. The Government's roadmap proposes that organised indoor meetings (e.g. performances, conferences) are permitted from 17 May, subject to Covid secure guidelines and capacity rules. On this basis, councils should consider the extent to which their annual meetings (and any other meetings) can operate on the same basis as other local institutions in their area, taking into account their individual circumstances and requirements.

If your council is concerned about holding physical meetings you may want to consider resuming these after 17 May, at which point it is anticipated that a much greater range of indoor activity can resume in line with the Roadmap, such as allowing up to 1,000 people to attend performances or sporting events in indoor venues, or up to half-capacity (whichever is lower).

Finally, while you do have a legal obligation to ensure that the members of the public can access most of your meetings, I would encourage you to continue to provide remote access to minimise the need for the public to attend meetings physically until at least 21 June, at which point it is anticipated that all restrictions on indoor gatherings will have been lifted in line with the Roadmap. However, it is for individual local authorities to satisfy themselves that they have met the requirements for public access.

I am grateful for the efforts that local authorities have made to allow remote meetings in their area and recognise that there has been a considerable investment of time, training and technology to enable these meetings to take place, and I am aware that some authorities, though by no means all, have made calls for the Government to make express provision for remote meetings beyond the scope of the pandemic. I am today launching a call for evidence on the use of current arrangements and to gather views on the question of whether there should be permanent arrangements and if so, for which meetings. There are many issues to consider and opinions on the detailed questions vary considerably. This will establish a clearer evidence base of opinion and enable all the areas to be considered before further decisions are made. The Government will consider all responses carefully before deciding to how to proceed on this issue.

I am copying this letter to the Mayor of London, the chairs of the Local Government Association and the National Association of Local Councils, as well as the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in respect of other authorities covered by the current meetings regulations, including fire and rescue authorities, police and crime panels, national park authorities, the Broads Authority, and conservation boards.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Luke Hall', is positioned below the closing 'Yours sincerely,'.

LUKE HALL MP

Cc. Rt Hon Priti Patel MP, Home Secretary
Rt. Hon. George Eustice MP, Environment Secretary
Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London
Cllr. James Jamieson, LGA Chairman
Cllr. Sue Baxter, NALC Chairman

1. Home (<https://www.gov.uk/>)
2. Coronavirus (COVID-19) (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-taxon>)
3. COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of council buildings
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings>)
 - Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-and-local-government>)

Guidance

COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of council buildings

Updated 25 March 2021

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Please note: This guidance is of a general nature and should be treated as a guide. In the event of any conflict between any applicable legislation (including the health and safety legislation) and this guidance, the applicable legislation shall prevail.

1. Introduction

On 4 January the Prime Minister announced a National Lockdown (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home>) for all of England. There is different advice for Scotland (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/>), Wales (<https://gov.wales/covid-19-alert-levels>) and Northern Ireland (<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-regulations-guidance-what-restrictions-mean-you>).

This information is for those managing council buildings. It signposts to relevant guidance on a range of different activities that can take place in these spaces, in line with measures to tackle COVID-19.

Each council will need to apply relevant guidance locally depending on circumstances, including its size and type of activities, how it is organised, operated, managed and regulated. This guidance applies to all users of council buildings including visitors and councillors.

Many council buildings are also workplaces and should therefore be aware of their responsibilities as employers (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>). To help contain the virus, everyone who can work effectively from home must do so. Where people cannot do so (for instance people who work in critical national infrastructure, construction or manufacturing) they should continue to travel to work/attend their workplace. This is essential to keeping the country operating and supporting vital sectors and employers.

To help decide which actions to take, a COVID-19 risk assessment should be completed by each operator of a council building, civic building, town hall or organiser of a civic event. This will be in addition to any risk assessment which is already in place. See guidance on completing a risk assessment (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/risk-assessment-template-and-examples.htm>).

Public sector employees working in essential services, including education settings, should continue to go into work. The risk of transmission can be substantially reduced if COVID-secure guidelines are followed closely. Extra consideration should be given to those people at higher risk.

2. Core principles for safely reopening council buildings

Council buildings are used for a range of purposes, and relevant guidance on specific activities is signposted below (section 3).

Ultimately, those using these spaces are responsible for ensuring their activity is conducted safely and within relevant guidelines. However, there are general principles that managers of council buildings should consider.

Any opening plans must be consistent with:

- Core public health guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>) regarding health, hygiene, and social distancing (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing#other-businesses-and-venues>)
- Safe workplace guidelines (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>), to ensure employees are safe to return to work
- Any local lockdown areas or restrictions (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home>)

To help decide which actions to take prior to opening the building for permitted activity, a **COVID-19 risk assessment should be completed**. This will be in addition to any risk assessment which is already in place for the community facility. See guidance on completing a risk assessment (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/risk-assessment-template-and-examples.htm>).

In addition, 2 metres, or 1 metre with risk mitigation (where 2 metres is not viable), are acceptable for distances for people to be from each other. You should consider and set out the mitigations you will introduce in your risk assessment.

Face coverings

You must wear a face covering by law in some public places unless you have a face covering exemption because of your age, health or another condition.

You are also strongly encouraged to wear a face covering in other enclosed public spaces where social distancing may be difficult and where you come into contact with people you do not normally meet.

From 23 September, there will be additional venues and areas where it will be mandatory to wear a face covering, unless you have an exemption. Please see the latest guidance on face coverings (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>).

From 24 September, staff in retail and hospitality settings will be required to wear a face covering and all businesses must remind customers to wear a face covering where mandated, e.g by displaying posters.

Further information on social contact rules, social distancing and the exemptions that exist (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing>).

Test and Trace

An overview of NHS Test and Trace, including what happens if you test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or have had close contact with someone who has tested positive, can be found in the NHS Test and Trace guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works>). We will be mandating that organisations in designated sectors must:

- ask at least one member of every party of customers or visitors to provide their name and contact details
- keep a record of all staff working on their premises and shift times on a given day and their contact details
- keep these records of customers, visitors and staff for 21 days and provide data to NHS Test and Trace if requested
- display an official NHS QR code poster from 24 September 2020, so that customers and visitors can 'check in' using this option as an alternative to providing their contact details
- adhere to General Data Protection Regulations

Any designated venue that is found not to be compliant with these regulations will be subject to financial penalties. It is vital that relevant venues comply with these regulations to help keep people safe, and to keep businesses open.

Designated venues will need to keep records of customers, visitors and staff for a period of 21 days and make them available when requested by NHS Test and Trace or local public health officials to help contain clusters or outbreaks.

You can find out more about these requirements: Maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/maintaining-records-of-staff-customers-and-visitors-to-support-nhs-test-and-trace>)

Enforcement

Where the enforcing authority, such as the HSE or the local authority, identifies employers and building managers who are not taking action to comply with the relevant public health legislation and guidance to control public health risks, they are empowered to take a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks. For example, this would cover employers not taking appropriate action to ensure social distancing, where possible.

Under health and safety legislation, failure to complete a COVID-19 risk assessment would constitute a breach, as would having a risk assessment with insufficient measures. The actions the enforcing authority can take include the provision of specific advice to employers and building managers to support them to achieve the required standard, through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements. Serious breaches and failure to comply with enforcement notices can constitute a criminal offence, with large fines and even imprisonment for up to 2 years.

Employers are expected to respond to any advice or notices issued by enforcing authorities rapidly and are required to do so within any timescales imposed by the enforcing authority. The vast majority of employers are responsible and will join with the UK's fight against COVID-19 by working with the government and their sector bodies to protect their workers and the public. However, inspectors are carrying out compliance checks nationwide to ensure that employers are taking the necessary steps.

Waste disposal in non-healthcare settings

The key points of the waste disposal guidance are:

- People should dispose of face coverings and PPE in a 'black bag' waste bin or litter bin. People should not put face coverings or PPE in a recycling bin or drop them as litter.
- People who are self-isolating, and members of their household, should double bag face coverings and items of PPE to be disposed of, and store them for 72 hours before putting them in a 'black bag' waste bin.
- Businesses should provide extra bins for staff and customers to throw away face coverings and PPE, and should ensure that staff and customers do not use a recycling bin.

Please see the guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-disposing-of-waste>) for further details.

3. Council buildings: signposting to relevant guidance

Those managing council buildings, and those planning civic events, should take account of the relevant guidance below. This guidance signposts to the guidance available to support operators to safely manage council buildings during the pandemic.

3a: Office space

To help contain the virus, everyone who can work effectively from home must do so. Where people cannot do so (for instance people who work in critical national infrastructure, construction or manufacturing) they should continue to travel to work/attend their workplace. This is essential to keeping the country operating and supporting vital sectors and employers. Public sector employees working in essential services, including education settings, should continue to go into work. The risk of transmission can be substantially reduced if COVID-secure guidelines are followed closely. Extra consideration should be given to those people at higher risk.

Guidance has been published on how to work safely.

- Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19): 5 steps to working safely
(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/5-steps-to-working-safely>)
- Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19): Offices and contact centres
(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>)

3b: Reception

Information on how to manage your customers, visitors and contractors to your place of work can be found in the guidance on working safely in office and contact centres.

- Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19): Offices and contact centres
(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>)
- Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19): Close contact services
(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/close-contact-services>)

3c: Meetings

- Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19): Offices and contact centres
(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>)

The principles set out in the 'Safer workplaces' guidance apply but are not limited to:

- meetings of civic, political or community groups (e.g. parish council meeting, ward meeting of political party; charity board of trustees)
- MP or councillor surgery/drop-in sessions
- public meetings and local consultations (e.g. planning)

Under regulations made under section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020

(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/392/contents>) local authorities in England have express powers to hold public meetings virtually by using video or telephone conferencing technology, but these regulations will not apply to meetings on or after May 7.

This guidance is designed to assist local authorities who hold face-to-face meetings once these regulations come to an end.

This includes all relevant authorities listed below:

- a county council
- a district council
- a London borough council
- the Common Council of the City of London
- the Greater London Authority
- the Council of the Isles of Scilly
- a parish council
- a joint board continued in being by virtue of section 263(1) of the 1972 Act
- a port health authority constituted under section 2 of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984
- an authority established under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1985
- a joint authority established under Part 4 of the Local Government Act 1985
- a joint committee constituted to be a local planning authority under section 29 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
- a combined authority established under section 103 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009
- a fire and rescue authority constituted by a scheme under section 2 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 or a scheme to which section 4 of that Act applies, or created by an order under section 4A of that Act
- a National Park authority established under section 63 of the Environment Act 1995

- the Broads Authority established by section 1 of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988
- a conservation board established under section 86 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
- a Mayoral development corporation established under section 198 of the Localism Act 2011
- an urban development corporation established under section 135 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980
- a parish meeting constituted under section 13 of the Local Government Act 1972
- Transport for London
- Police and crime panels

Where local authority meetings take place in person the principles set out in the government's working safely guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>) should be followed.

Ultimately it is for local authorities to carry out their own risk assessments and follow the working safely guidance to ensure physical meetings take place safely, but the government will work with sector representative bodies to ensure that local authorities understand the guidance and are aware of the full range of options available to them.

If deemed necessary, these options could include:

- Use of your existing powers to delegate decision making to key individuals such as the Head of Paid Service to minimise the number of meetings you need to hold.
- Relying on single-member decision making where your constitution allows.

When considering whether either of these options may be necessary, you should always consider the democratic implications of your decision to ensure that local residents are appropriately represented and that all local authority decisions have appropriate scrutiny. Additionally, you should note that certain decisions cannot be delegated and require a decision by full council or a statutory committee; for example, confirming the appointment of a Chief Executive and certain licensing decisions.

Holding your annual meeting before 7 May

Although a greater number of local authorities will be subject to elections in 2021 due to the postponement of the 2020 elections, those authorities who are not subject to elections could hold a virtual annual meeting before 7 May so that the meeting is held while the current regulations still apply.

Holding your annual meeting after 17 May

Local authorities who are subject to elections are legally required to hold their annual meeting within 21 days of the election, which this year will take place on 6 May. If holding a physical annual meeting, local authorities should consider holding it (and any other physical meetings) after 17

May, at which point it is anticipated that a much greater range of indoor activity can resume in line with the Roadmap (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021-summary#step-3---not-before-17-may>) set out by the government on 22 February.

This includes activities which are likely to have comparable health risks to local authority meetings, for example allowing up to 1,000 people to attend performances or sporting events in indoor venues, or up to half-capacity (whichever is lower). It is important to note that this date is subject to each of the Four Tests (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021-summary#roadmap-out-of-lockdown>) being met.

Continuing to provide remote access to the public

Local authorities have legal obligations to ensure that members of the public have access to most of their meetings. For physical meetings, the government would actively encourage local authorities to continue to provide remote access until at least 21 June, at which point it is anticipated that all restrictions on indoor gatherings will have been lifted in line with the Roadmap. However, it is for individual local authorities to satisfy themselves that they have met the requirements for public access.

Working safely

As a local authority, you have a legal responsibility to protect officers, elected members and others from risk to their health and safety, including from the risks of COVID-19.

COVID-19 is a hazard in the workplace and, as such, should be managed in the same way as other workplace hazards. This includes completing a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks of COVID-19 in the workplace and identifying control measures to manage that risk.

Where elected members, officers and others attend physical meetings, you must maintain social distancing wherever possible.

Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full in relation to a particular meeting, local authorities should consider whether that meeting can be redesigned to maintain a 2m distance or 1m with risk mitigations where 2m is not viable.

Mitigating actions include:

- further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning
- keeping the meeting time 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

Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, even through redesigning a particular meeting, local authorities should consider whether that meeting needs to continue for the local authority to operate, and if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between members and others.

Social distancing applies to all parts of a local authority building, not just the place where elected members are meeting, but also entrances and exits, break rooms, canteens and similar settings. These are often the most challenging areas to maintain social distancing and elected members and officers should be specifically reminded.

Local authorities that require additional space for essential meetings can hire function and event space at permitted venues. Local authorities should not hire function or event space for non-essential purposes. Read further information on hiring function and event space (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/the-visitor-economy>).

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Meetings where local authorities deem that in-person attendance is not required should continue to be held virtually.
2. Only absolutely necessary participants should physically attend meetings and should maintain social distancing (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable).
3. Avoiding transmission during meetings, for example avoiding sharing pens, documents and other objects.
4. Providing hand sanitiser in meeting rooms.
5. Holding meetings in well-ventilated rooms whenever possible.
6. For areas where regular meetings take place, using floor signage to help people maintain social distancing.

3d: Common areas

Council buildings and town halls often rely on shared facilities for workers and occupants to access, including canteens and lifts. Guidance on moving around buildings and common areas can be found in below.

- Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19): Offices and contact centres
(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>)
- Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19): Close contact services
(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/close-contact-services>)

3e: Toilets

Public toilets, portable toilets and toilets inside premises should be kept open and carefully managed to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- Using signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency and to avoid touching your face, and to cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into your arm if a tissue is not available.

- Consider the use of social distancing marking in areas where queues normally form, and the adoption of a limited entry approach, with one in, one out (whilst avoiding the creation of additional bottlenecks).
- To enable good hand hygiene consider making hand sanitiser available on entry to toilets where safe and practical, and ensure suitable handwashing facilities including running water and liquid soap and suitable options for drying (either paper towels or hand driers) are available.
- Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets, with increased frequency of cleaning in line with usage. Use normal cleaning products, paying attention to frequently hand touched surfaces, and consider use of disposable cloths or paper roll to clean all hard surfaces.
- Keep the facilities well ventilated, for example by fixing doors open where appropriate.
- Special care should be taken for cleaning of portable toilets and larger toilet blocks.
- Putting up a visible cleaning schedule can keep it up to date and visible.
- Providing more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection.

3f: Main hall/council chamber

For events and activities taking place inside council rooms or facilities please see the guidance for community facilities (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities>).

- COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities>)

3g: Travel

Before opening council buildings, operators should think about how manage pedestrian space, pedestrian movement, queues and traffic.

Car parks are permitted to be open where needed and councils should consider practical measures such as changing the car park layout to help people socially distance. Decisions to reopen car parks are to be made locally.

Guidance on social distancing relevant to transport, parking and the public realm can be found below. Face coverings are now mandatory on public transport (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-safe-outside-your-home/staying-safe-outside-your-home#face-coverings>).

Please be mindful that the wearing of a face covering may inhibit communication with people who rely on lip reading, facial expressions and clear sound.

- Coronavirus (COVID-19): safer public places - urban centres and green spaces
(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safer-public-places-urban-centres-and-green-spaces-covid-19/4-management-of-urban-centres>)
- Coronavirus (COVID-19): safer travel guidance for passengers
(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>)
- Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19): Close contact services
(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/close-contact-services>)

3h: Other uses

Community facilities

Community facilities such as community centres and village halls are used for a wide range of local activities and services – from childcare provision to hosting social and recreational clubs.

- COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities>)

Places of worship

- COVID-19: guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic>)

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