



HEADLEY PARISH COUNCIL

EMERGENCY POWERS POLICY

1. Introduction

1.1 On 25th March 2020 Headley Parish Council agreed and activated a “High Consequence Infectious Disease (HCID) Policy” to provide the necessary powers to continue to operate during the Covid-19 pandemic. The policy was deactivated on 19th August 2020 after the Government introduced the “The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020” which allowed the Council to meet on a remote basis.

1.2 It later transpired that the Government had reclassified Covid-19 on 19th March, and it is no longer classified as a HCID. The policy as previously drafted is therefore no longer appropriate.

1.3 This Emergency Powers Policy has been written to enable the Council to continue to operate in any future emergency situation, ensuring that the transparent nature of the Parish Council remains paramount. The ability to meet will remain in place using virtual technology if face-to-face meetings are not deemed legal. If face-to-face meetings resume, but Councillors or Parishioners are unable to participate due to the need to self-isolate, the Council will ensure that virtual technology is in place to allow this to happen.

2. Scope of the Policy

2.1 This Emergency Powers Policy has been written to enable the Council to continue to operate all our essential functions in any future emergency situation where the Council is unable to undertake meetings on a normal basis for a prolonged period. This includes, but is not limited to, situations arising from disease pandemics, severe natural disasters, foreign hostilities or terrorism.

3. Activation of the Policy

3.1 This policy is considered to be activated, when there is an active (or imminent threat) of an emergency situation and at least 3 councillors have requested its activation, or its activation is resolved in a meeting of Headley Parish Council, or the Government of the United Kingdom have suspended all public meetings.

4. Deactivation of the Policy

4.1 This policy is considered to be deactivated, when the actual or imminent threat has passed and at least 3 councillors have requested public meetings be recommenced, or the Government of the United Kingdom has reinstated all public meetings, and/or made provision for meetings to be undertaken on a virtual basis.

5. Key Provisions of the Policy

5.1 All Parish Council meetings, including the AVM and AGM will be suspended.

5.2 The Chair and Vice Chair of the Council will remain in post for the duration of these Emergency Powers.

5.3 All powers and decision making for the Council will be delegated to the Parish Clerk (note, the law does not permit decisions to be delegated to an individual councillor).

5.4 The Clerk will always attempt to consult with the Chair and Vice Chair before any decisions are made. If the Chair or Vice Chair are incapacitated and/or out of contact, then the Clerk will always attempt to consult with other councillors in lieu.

5.5 The Clerk should review all council activities/services/events and determine which are safe and appropriate to continue and which will be suspended.

5.6 Any essential payments will be paid by the Clerk, as the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), including salaries, printing costs, stationery and IT services etc, along with any essential costs relating to the emergency situation. All payments must be formally authorised by the full council when they are next able to meet.

5.7 In cases of extreme risk to the delivery of Council services, Financial Regulation 3.4 permits the Clerk to authorise revenue expenditure up to £200. When this policy has been activated the Clerk shall be permitted to incur expenditure up to an increased limit of £1,000 for a single transaction.

5.8 All non-essential spending will be frozen unless approved by the majority of councillors using email.

5.9 Where this policy is activated over the end of the financial year, the RFO will prepare the end of year accounts in accordance with normal procedures and attempt to circulate to all councillors. The accounts will be accepted by resolution at the next full council meeting.

5.10 The Clerk should follow all appropriate regulations and guidance issued by the UK Government and/or the Local Authority.

5.11 The provisions in this policy should be taken as overriding any conflicting clauses in the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

5.12 The Clerk should attempt to keep all councillors updated on a regular basis, using telephone, email or virtual meetings as most appropriate.

5.13 Any communication with the press or public shall be the responsibility of the Clerk after due consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair.

6. Matters Relating to Staff – The Clerk

6.1 Headley Parish Council has no official offices and only one employee, the Parish Clerk, who works from home. During any active emergency situation, it may be necessary to restrict any public appointments to visit the Clerk at their home.

6.2 If the Clerk is unable to work due to illness, the Chair will access any email correspondence and action anything urgent in conjunction with the vice-Chair, and if necessary, seek to obtain the services of a locum Clerk.

This policy was approved by the Parish Council by email on March 29th 2021