



Kings Hill Parish Council

Corona Virus Policy

Adopted in current circumstances as per NALC guidelines
24/03/2020

Introduction

Kings Hill Parish Council is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all employees. This policy describes the measures we have put in place to protect you from the risks of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and the duties that fall upon us.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Kings Hill Parish Council.

Infection control

All employees must follow the guidelines promoted by Public Health England, the NHS and the World Health Organisation on infection control whilst at work and in their daily lives. This includes:

- Regularly cleaning your hands using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water;
- When coughing and sneezing, covering your mouth and nose with a flexed elbow or tissue, throwing this tissue away immediately and washing your hands; and
- Avoiding close contact with anyone who has a fever and cough.

Notices promoting infection control best practice will be displayed throughout the workplace. The Kings Hill Parish Council will ensure that adequate stocks of soap and hand sanitiser solutions are available in the workplace.

Personal and business travel

We understand that you may well have travel or holiday plans in the near future that will take you to areas identified as high risk. We would ask you to consider whether travelling to those areas is the best course of action at the moment, not least because you may find it difficult to return home. This would potentially lead to a period of unpaid absence from work. If you do intend to travel to a high-risk area soon, please inform your line manager immediately.

Please keep up to date with the government guidance on high-risk areas and self-isolation.

In addition, the government is also now advising that individuals limit social contact as far as possible. Therefore, we may implement measures in order to reflect this advice,

which may include limiting business travel to that which is essential. If you have any specific concerns in this regard, please speak to your line manager.

If you contract the virus

You should take medical advice as to the length of your absence and the measures required to prevent the spread of the virus. Our normal sickness absence procedures will apply, and you should keep us updated as to your availability to attend work. Our normal procedure requires you to produce a doctor's note after seven days of absence, although we appreciate this may not be possible in the circumstances. During your absence, you will be entitled to SSP/company sick pay in line with the usual qualifying criteria. Again, we will review evidential and sick pay requirements in line with any changes the government may make in this regard.

Self-isolation

The most common symptoms of coronavirus are recent onset of a new continuous cough and/or high temperature. If you have these symptoms, however mild, stay at home and do not leave your house.

If your symptoms worsen during home isolation or are no better after seven days, contact NHS 111 online. If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111. For a medical emergency, dial 999.

This absence will count as sick leave and our normal sickness absence procedure will apply. During any absence, you will be entitled to occupational sick pay or statutory sick pay in line with the usual qualifying criteria. We will be reviewing this regularly in order to take into account any updated guidance from the government.

If you are self-isolating in accordance with the above and are not ill, we can consider as an alternative whether it is possible for you to work from home. If not, we may be able to agree a period of paid annual leave as a further alternative.

If you are self-isolating but not in accordance with advice as above and you are not ill, in the absence of homeworking or annual leave, you will initially be paid in full during your self-isolation but this will be reviewed should the period last longer than 14 days and in any event until such time that you are advised, as above, to self-isolate or fall ill.

Homeworking

Given the current situation, a period of homeworking may be necessary. However, for this to be a possible option, your role must be suitable for homeworking. There are certain roles which can only be carried out from within the work environment, and in those circumstances, homeworking may not be possible.

Each request or requirement for homeworking will be considered on its merits and any final decision in that regard rests with your line manager. If you disagree with any decision to deny you homeworking, please speak to your line manager in the first instance to discuss the reasons.

Emergency dependant leave

If you are unable to attend work due to the need to arrange care for a dependant (for example, if your child's school or nursery is closed), our usual emergency time off for dependent leave policy will apply.

As a reminder, you are permitted unpaid emergency leave to make alternative care arrangements, rather than to actually take care of the dependant. As such, any period of emergency leave is normally fairly short in duration (24 to 48 hours for example), although each instance will be judged on a case-by-case basis.

If care is required beyond that, we may agree with you a period of homeworking – depending on whether that fits in with your role and the needs of the dependant – or a period of annual leave. Alternatively, we may grant unpaid leave for this time off.

Sending you home or requiring you not to attend work

There may be circumstances where it is necessary to send you home from work or request that you do not attend your workplace (for example, if we are concerned that you may have been exposed to the virus). If this is necessary, full pay will be granted for any period of leave or we may agree that you take some annual leave. Please note that if you asked not to come to work on the basis that you are required to self-isolate in accordance with government guidance, as referred to above, and you are unable to work from home, your absence will be treated as sick leave.

If you become unwell during this time or are advised to self-isolate in accordance with the "Self-isolation" section referred to above, you should follow government guidance on the next steps and follow our usual absence reporting procedure. You would then be treated as on sick leave and would be paid in accordance with our absence policy.

Temporary business closure, furlough and lay-off

As the situation develops, it may be that the business is no longer able to operate, even with employees working from home. If we are forced to close part or all of the business temporarily, it may be necessary to lay you off or agree a period of lay-off or short-time working. Please rest assured that we will do all that is possible to avoid this. However, should this become necessary, we will discuss with you further in that regard at the relevant time.

You may have seen the recent announcement from the government regarding the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. This will allow all UK employers to access support to continue paying part of their employees' salary for those employees that would otherwise have been laid off during this crisis.

Government guidance so far is scarce. We know that all UK businesses are eligible to apply. To access the scheme, we would need to designate affected employees as "furloughed workers" and notify you of this change. We can then submit information to HMRC about these employees and we understand that HMRC will reimburse us 80% of your wages up to a cap of £2,500 per month. It is our intention to utilise this scheme if we are forced into a lay-off situation.