



Berkeley Town Council Risk Assessment Re-opening of Town Hall specifically for Berkeley Town Council Meetings

7th September 2020

Re-assessed 10th May 2021

RETURNING TO PHYSICAL MEETINGS

DELIVERING COVID 19 SECURE COUNCIL MEETINGS

Local councils including parish and town councils and parish meetings must return to holding physical meetings from May 7th, 2021. The recent High Court ruling means that the facility to meet and make decisions using virtual meeting arrangements is no longer lawful.

- Members of the public must be able to attend any physical meeting. A secondary judgement has confirmed that the limiting the public to virtual access is unlawful; they must be able to attend in person.
- Council meetings are defined as work for councillors, clerk and should be organised in accordance with Government guidance and the Covid 19 principles of hands, face, space and fresh air.
- The capacity of your meeting room will limit the number of people able to attend the meeting safely. Provided that you have assessed the capacity of the room and made reasonable adjustments to meet Covid 19 precautions and restrictions, you are able restrict access when the room is 'full'.

Local council meetings should be held in accordance with the four Covid 19 principles:

- How to meet the social distancing requirements entering and leaving the building and during the meeting
- What Person Protective Equipment (PPE) materials should you provide – hand sanitiser, masks, wipes or spray
- How can you limit sharing documents and materials – continuing to use laptops and tables?
- Ensuring proper ventilation – can the windows be open during the meeting and beforehand if the room has been used during the day.

It is essential that you identify the risks at your own venue/s and meetings and take steps to manage them. To help your council hold safe meetings the following tips may be useful. It is not an exhaustive list and you must always consider your own local circumstances and plan for your own local risks.

Venue

- Provide hand sanitiser for use before entering the building and on leaving.
- Keep a record of anyone attending the meeting, asking public to sign in on arrival and keep the list for 21 days. A QR code is also helpful but you should keep your own record.
- Try and provide a one-way system through the building.

- Design the seating in the room to accommodate councillors and the public. It may not be possible to provide tables for members to use during the meeting. Wherever possible people should not sit face to face and must maintain at least two metres or one metre plus with adjustments. Expect the seating plan to be different.
- Display a sign at the entry to the building which clearly states the maximum number of people allowed in the room at any time – and maintain this number.
- Have a phased arrival at the meeting and ensure that everyone moves straight to their seat and do not gather to talk/chat with others.
- Consider when and where masks should be worn. If distance provides, members may remove their masks during a meeting whilst seated. The public can be asked to wear a mask throughout the meeting unless addressing the council.
- Ensure that other rooms, kitchen, toilets etc are closed during the meeting – limit access to the including only the meeting room and access to it.
- Remind members to bring their own drinks but that no eating will be allowed.
- Encourage anyone attending the meeting to take a Lateral Flow Test (LFT) test before attending the meeting.
- Provide information on who should not attend – anyone displaying symptoms, tested positive, returned from abroad in last 14 days etc

Council business

- Virtual meetings have been shorter and more focussed. Try to limit the length of the meeting to less than one hour; returning to the physical format does not mean a return to longer meetings.
- Councillors who declare an interest and must leave the room will need a clear path and should wear a mask when moving about. You may wish to identify an alternative way of withdrawing without walking through the public seating.
- Do not present papers at the meeting or table last minutes documents – all paperwork should be circulated in advance.
- Remind members to bring their own writing materials which must be removed at the end of the meeting.
- Encourage the use of laptops/tablets at meetings which should be wiped down before and after the meeting.
- Agree that members should remain seated throughout the debate and suspend any standing order which requires them to stand when speaking.

Finally develop strong signage and information for use around the meeting venue, on your agendas and website. Give clear information throughout the meeting venue to ensure that the public and members can follow the instructions.

Risk Assessment

This Risk Assessment will continue to evolve as guidance changes. Each hirer will be asked to do their own Risk Assessment (to help everyone feel safer) and may need to be considered case by case. Public buildings have been allowed to open from 4th July 2020. The Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG) Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities has been published which makes clear that ‘each community facility should apply relevant guidance listed here, locally, depending on circumstances including size, type of activities, users and how it is organised, operated, managed and regulated’.

Planning for re-opening

Councillors and any staff need to be aware that the following 5 key points apply:

- Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell: Nobody should attend the premises if they have symptoms or are self-isolating due to symptoms in their household.
- Clean your hands often: Sanitiser or soap and water should be provided at entry and exit points, sanitiser and/or running water, soap and paper towels or hot air driers in toilets and kitchens.
- Respiratory hygiene: Everyone needs to be encouraged to avoid touching their mouth, eyes, and nose. Tissues need to be disposed of into a bin, then hands cleaned.
- Regular cleaning of surfaces that are touched frequently: including door handles, handrails, tabletops, sinks, toilet areas, kitchen surfaces. Ordinary domestic products can be used.
- Maintain social distancing where possible: Social distancing guidelines currently require at least 2 metres (3 steps) to be maintained between individuals and groups of up to 2 households where possible and, where not possible, 1 metre plus other mitigation measures. Bookings can be accepted for events where social distancing can be maintained and contacts below 2m are minimised and transitory. A key part of this risk assessment will be identifying “pinch points” where people cannot maintain social distancing of 2 metres. Transient passing at a closer distance is less of a risk than remaining in a more confined space so, for example, a narrow corridor is less of a risk than a galley style kitchenette or a toilet area with limited circulation space between cubicles, basins and door, where people remain for longer. Where 2m social distancing is not possible 1m plus mitigation measures is acceptable. For areas which present a problem people may need to be asked to arrange a waiting system or adjust signage e.g. engaged/vacant.

NHS Track and Trace: All hirers are asked to assist NHS Track and Trace by keeping a temporary record of who attends for 21 days.

The potential mitigations are in three categories colour coded as follows:

Red – **Actions based on Government advice (i.e. should be considered mandatory)**

Orange – **Actions that are strongly recommended**

Green – **Actions that you might like to consider**

Area or People at Risk	Risk identified	Actions to take to mitigate risk	Insert Date completed and any notes.
<p>Staff, contractors and volunteers – Identify what work activity or situations might cause transmission of the virus and likelihood staff could be exposed</p>	<p>Cleaning surfaces infected by people carrying the virus. Disposing of rubbish containing tissues and cleaning cloths. Deep cleaning premises if someone falls ill with CV-19 on the premises. Occasional Maintenance workers.</p>	<p>Stay at home guidance if unwell at entrance and in Main Hall. Staff/volunteers can be provided with protective overalls and gloves. Contractors provide own. Staff/volunteers advised to wash outer clothes after cleaning duties. Follow PHE guidance and PPE if deep cleaning is required.</p>	<p>Contract cleaners, regular cleaning starting again from 9th Sept.2020</p>
<p>Staff, contractors and volunteers– think about who could be at risk and likelihood staff/volunteers could be exposed.</p>	<p>Staff/volunteers who are either extremely vulnerable or over 70. Staff or volunteers carrying out cleaning, caretaking or some internal maintenance tasks could be exposed if a person carrying the virus has entered the premises or falls ill.</p> <p>Mental stress from handling the new situation.</p>	<p>Staff in the vulnerable category advised not to work for time being. Discuss situation with volunteers over 70 to identify whether provision of protective clothing and cleaning surfaces before they work is sufficient to mitigate their risks, or whether they should cease such work for the time being.</p>	<p>Staff and volunteers will need to be warned immediately if someone is tested positive for COVID-19 who has been on the premises. Details of a person’s medical condition must be kept confidential, unless he/she agrees it can be shared.</p> <p>It is important people know they can raise concerns.</p> <p>Caretaker has returned to work and Risk Assessment completed.</p>

<p>Pavement/external areas</p>	<p>Social distancing is not observed as people congregate before entering premises.</p> <p>People drop tissues.</p>	<p>Mark out 2 metre waiting area outside all potential entrances with tape to encourage care when queueing to enter.</p> <p>Cleaner asked to check area outside doors for rubbish which might be contaminated, e.g. tissues.</p> <p>Wear plastic gloves and remove.</p>	<p>Transitory lapses in social distancing in outside areas are less risky, the main risk is likely to be where people congregate or for vulnerable people.</p> <p>Ordinary litter collection arrangements can remain in place. Provide plastic gloves.</p> <p>Not likely that groups will congregate outside.</p>
<p>Town Council Offices</p>	<p>Town Clerk works alone with visits from Handyman and Police who share the facility.</p> <p>If offices re-open to the public there may be a risk.</p>	<p>Low Risk Area – Hand sanitiser and masks available.</p> <p>Ask all public to stay in the lobby area and wear a mask.</p>	<p>Decide to re-open or leave at contact via email and phone.</p>
<p>Entrance hall/lobby/corridors</p>	<p>Possible “pinch points” and busy areas where risk is social distancing is not observed in a confined area.</p> <p>Door handles, light switches in frequent use (lobby light is on a sensor).</p>	<p>Identify “pinch points” and busy areas. Consider marking out 2 metre spacing in entrance area. Create one- way system (would have to use fire exit) and provide signage.</p> <p>Door handles and light switches to be cleaned regularly.</p> <p>Hand sanitiser to be provided by hall.</p>	<p>Masks must be worn inside.</p> <p>Hand sanitiser needs to be checked daily.</p> <p>Provide more bins, in entrance hall, each meeting room. Empty regularly. Doors can be held open as long as fire doors shut.</p> <p>Lapses in social distancing-some lapses may be difficult to avoid in internal corridors. Government Guidance indicates that this is low risk and it will be for hirers to try and arrange their activities to avoid these risks if possible, particularly for older or vulnerable people.</p> <p>One person in the lobby at a time.</p> <p>One person on the staircase at a</p>

			<p>time, create a waiting area at the bottom.</p> <p>Hand sanitiser stations are available. One-way system not suitable as fire exit only.</p>
Main Hall	<p>Hall is upstairs, so must approach via one set of stairs. Door handles, light switches, window catches, tables, chair backs and arms. Soft furnishings which cannot be readily cleaned between use-chairs.</p> <p>Window blinds.</p> <p>Social distancing to be observed. Careful consideration when using furniture between different users. Adequate time between meetings to clean furniture.</p> <p>Exercise Classes-People bring their own mats so touching the floor is low risk.</p>	<p>Door handles, light switches, window catches, tables, chairs and other equipment used to be cleaned by hirers before use or by hall cleaning staff.</p> <p>Social distancing guidance to be observed by hirers in arranging their activities.</p> <p>Hirers to be encouraged to wash hands regularly.</p>	<p>Only one person at a time on the staircase.</p> <p>Masks must be worn indoors. For exercise classes you can remove your mask if 'it would negatively impact on your ability to exercise'.</p> <p>Chairs are upholstery, have to be used in blocks of 10 and rotated every 72 hours.</p> <p>Consider leaving blinds open so pull cord is not touched by the public.</p> <p>Provide hand sanitiser.</p> <p>Consider setting limits on the number of people permitted to use the hall.</p> <p>Tape off sections 2 m apart for pilates classes.</p>
Upholstered seating	<p>Virus may remain on fabric. Cannot readily be cleaned between use. Frequent cleaning would damage fabric. Metal parts can be cleaned and are more likely to be touched when moving them, ie more frequently.</p>	<p>Clean metal/plastic parts regularly touched. Rotate use of upholstered chairs. Put in groups of 10 and rotate every 72 hours. Ask those moving them to wear plastic gloves.</p>	<p>As above</p>

Small meeting rooms and offices	Social distancing more difficult in smaller areas. Door handles, Light switches, blinds. Tables, chair backs and arms. Floors wooden so can be mopped.	Recommend hirers hire larger meeting spaces and avoid use of small rooms, other than as offices. Surfaces and equipment to be cleaned by hirers before use or by hall cleaner.	Near front door so could leave doors open so nothing needs to be touched when entering room. May be suitable for community help groups such as the Credit Union/CAB. Foodbank are using with their own RA.
Kitchen	Social distancing more difficult. Access via staircase. Door and window handles, Light switches Working surfaces, sinks Cupboard/drawer handles. Fridge/freezer Crockery/cutlery Kettle/hot water boiler Cooker/Microwave	Hirers are asked to control numbers using kitchen so as to ensure social distancing, especially for those over 70. Hirers to clean all areas likely to be used before use, wash, dry and stow crockery and cutlery after use. Hirers to bring own tea towels. Hand sanitiser, soap and paper towel to be provided Consider encouraging hirers to bring their own Food and Drink for the time being.	Only one person on stairs at a time. There are two exits to/from the kitchen. Regular Sanitising. Cleaning materials to be made available in clearly identified location, eg a box on one of the kitchen surfaces, regularly checked and re-stocked as necessary. One person at a time. Pre-prepared food only or no food. Consider closing kitchen if not required or restricting access.
Store cupboards (cleaner etc)	Social distancing not possible Door handles, light switch	Public access unlikely to be required. Cleaner to decide frequency of cleaning.	
Indoor Toilets	Social distancing difficult. Surfaces in frequent use = door handles, light switches, basins, toilet handles, seats etc. Baby changing and vanity surfaces, mirrors.	Hirer to control numbers accessing toilets at one time, with attention to more vulnerable users. Hirer to clean all surfaces etc before public arrive unless staff have precleaned out of hours.	One person in at a time, lock on outer door and engaged/vacant sign. Ensure soap, paper towels, tissues and toilet paper are regularly replenished, and hirer knows where to access for re-

			stocking if needed. Posters to encourage 20 second hand washing. Consider one toilet kept for staff use only. High contact surfaces to be disinfected regularly (provide disinfectant). Hands free sensors. Lights already on sensor. One person at a time.
Boiler Room	Door handle, light switch Social distancing not possible	Public access unlikely. Cleaner/Handymn to decide frequency of cleaning.	
Stage	Social distancing Lighting and sound controls	Hirer to control access and clean as required.	Indoor performances must be in line with performing arts guidance.
Events	Handling cash and tickets Too many people arrive	Organisers arrange online systems and cashless payments as far as possible. For performances seats to be limited, booked in advance, 2 seats between household groups. Cash payments/donations to be handled by one individual wearing gloves.	Indoor performances in line with performing arts guidance.

Considerations/Actions:

Do we re-open Town Council Offices? Only for Town Council meetings at the moment

Each group does their own RA.

Increasing cleaning regime or asking hirers to spend time at the beginning and end of each session.

Sanitising Stations at entrances to all areas.

Floor Markings indicating social distancing, one way system, arrows, mirror on stairs
Measures should be in place to ensure all users follow the guidelines on social distancing (2 m or 1 m with risk mitigation)
Limit the number of users (RA should determine max number)
NHS Track & Trace-all groups are asked to assist by keeping a temporary record of who attends for 21 days
One group arriving at a time or only take one booking at a time
Queue outside at a safe distance
Face coverings are required to be worn inside halls, mandatory from 8th August (unless you are covered under a 'reasonable excuse')
Communicate extra hand washing with posters/signs, in line with Government Guidance
Clear signage to communicate protocols
Steps to protect staff – one toilet kept separate
Indoor performances in line with performing arts guidance.
Each group should be looked at separately
Prepare special hire conditions with new protocols
Providing an area if someone becomes ill