Great Tey Parish Council

High Consequence Infectious Disease (HCID) Policy

1. Introduction:

1.1. Great Tey Parish Council is committed to protecting the well-being of its Councillors, Volunteers, Staff, and the general public by adhering to current Public Health England (PHE), UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), and government guidelines. This policy outlines how Great Tey Parish Council will respond to outbreaks of High Consequence Infectious Diseases (HCID), as defined by the UKHSA or the World Health Organization (WHO).

1.2. This policy sets out the general principles and approaches Great Tey Parish Council will follow in response to an HCID outbreak in the UK with a potential threat to the parish of Great Tey.

2. Scope of the Policy:

2.1. The primary areas of concern for Great Tey Parish Council during an HCID outbreak include:

- Remaining an effective Council, ensuring essential services continue.
- Ensuring the safety and health of Councillors, Staff, Volunteers, Contractors, and the public.

3. Activation of the Policy:

3.1. The policy will be activated when:

- There is an active outbreak of an HCID in the UK, with a significant threat of infection in the Village of Great Tey.
- A minimum of three Councillors request activation of the policy through the Chair, and the Clerk is notified.
- The Chair and two Councillors request activation, or its activation is formally resolved at a Great Tey Parish Council meeting.
- Government legislation suspends public meetings, such as under the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations 2020 or similar future emergency regulations.

4. Deactivation of the Policy:

4.1. The policy will be deactivated when:

- The threat of infection in the parish area has passed.
- At least four Councillors request the resumption of public meetings.
- Government guidance or legislation reinstates public meetings.

5. Definition of High Consequence Infectious Disease (HCID):

5.1. A High Consequence Infectious Disease is defined as an acute infectious disease that typically:

- Has a high case-fatality rate.
- Lacks effective prophylaxis or treatment.
- Is difficult to detect and manage.
- Has the potential to spread rapidly within the community and healthcare settings.

- Requires a coordinated system-wide response to manage effectively.

5.2. Current HCIDs as defined by the UKHSA include:

- Argentine haemorrhagic fever
- Ebola virus disease (EVD)
- Lassa fever
- Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS)
- Monkeypox
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)
- Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

Any new diseases classified as an HCID will be added to the list and this policy will apply accordingly.

6. Matters Related to Staff – The Clerk:

6.1. Great Tey Parish Council has no formal offices, and its only employee, the Clerk, works from home. Public access to the Clerk will be by appointment only, and during any HCID outbreak, no appointments will be allowed.

6.2. During an HCID outbreak, remote working and virtual communication will be encouraged. Public locations, including the village hall, used for Parish Council meetings will be handled according to Section 7.

6.3. Great Tey Parish Council will follow National Joint Council (NJC) guidelines for local government employees during an HCID outbreak. Key provisions include:

- Employees who are ill must prioritize recovery and follow sick leave procedures.
- Employees instructed to self-isolate but who remain well should work from home where possible and continue to receive full pay during the isolation period, as per Part 2 Para 10.9 of the Green Book.
- Flexible working arrangements should be considered for employees with childcare responsibilities, including working from home or taking special leave.

7. Public Meetings:

7.1. According to the Local Government Act 1972, council business should be conducted at public meetings.

7.2. Councillors and Volunteers may choose not to attend public meetings during an HCID outbreak. The Clerk, as an officer, must attend meetings if required.

7.3. Given the significant proportion of high-risk attendees (due to age or health conditions), public meetings will be suspended during the activation of this policy, and Great Tey Parish Council will seek alternative methods to conduct its business, such as virtual meetings under the provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 or future legislative frameworks.

8. Delegated Authority:

8.1. To ensure Great Tey Parish Council continues to function, the following matters will be delegated to the Clerk during the policy activation period:

8.1.1. **Planning Applications:**

- The Clerk will consult with a minimum of four Councillors and circulate a summary response for comment before submission to the relevant authority.

8.1.2. **Finance:**

- Recurring payments (e.g., salaries, utility costs) will be processed by the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) as scheduled.
- Non-recurring payments will require approval from a minimum of two Councillors before payment.
- All payments will be formally ratified at the next full council meeting.

8.1.3. **End of Year Accounts:**

- If the policy remains active at the financial year-end, the RFO will prepare the end-of-year accounts, circulate them to all Councillors, and upon acceptance by at least four Councillors, submit them to the internal and external auditors. These will be formally approved at the next council meeting.

8.1.4. **Other Communications:**

- The Clerk will manage communications with third parties and circulate responses to Councillors for review.

8.1.5. **Adjourned Meetings:**

- If the policy is activated during a meeting, the meeting will be adjourned. The Clerk will handle remaining agenda items and report results back to the Council.

9. Review of Policy:

- This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if significant changes occur, such as legislative amendments or changes in the Council's operational activities.
- Any updates to the policy will be communicated to all staff, volunteers, and Councillors.