

## Shrewsbury Town Council

### COVID-19 Policy

#### Introduction

Shrewsbury Town 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 Shrewsbury Town 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 Town Council will ensure that adequate stocks of soap and hand sanitiser solutions are available in the workplace.

#### Business Travel and Attending Work

On 23 March 2020, the government announced more stringent measures on travel and social distancing. With regards to work, the guidance stated that individuals could travel to and from work, but only where this work absolutely could not be done from home.

This guidance was updated on 11 May 2020, to the extent that is applicable to the workplace, that those who cannot work from home should be encouraged to come into work if it is safe to do so, so long as the workplace was not one of the listed businesses restricted from remaining open at this time. On 20 April 2020, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) was opened, which enabled employers to furlough some employees and claim 80% of an employee's salary, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month.

Currently, our organisation is not listed as one that has been ordered to close. As a result, we will remain open, but employees should work from home wherever possible. If it is not possible to work from home, you are permitted to attend work at this current time. However, other government measures, such as the social distancing rules, should be observed at all times. The government has issued updated sector-specific guidance on how to make workplaces safe in the current pandemic, which we will be following. [We have also conducted a risk assessment in respect of the workplace, which can be viewed [insert details]. If you have any specific concerns about attending work at this time, please contact your line manager immediately. We will of course keep this under review and update our advice on receipt of any further clarification or guidance from the government.

**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 occupational 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, high temperature, and/or loss of sense of taste/smell. If you have any of 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.

If you are self-isolating because you have these symptoms, 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 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 because you live with someone who is showing COVID-19 symptoms but are not ill, this absence can count as sick leave and our normal sickness absence procedure will apply, unless you are able to work from home during this period. During any absence, you will be entitled to occupational sick pay [delete as applicable] in line with the usual qualifying criteria. As an alternative, we can consider whether it is possible for you to work from home.

If you are shielding in accordance with the government's guidance and you have a letter from a medical practitioner advising that you are very vulnerable, then this absence can count as sick leave and our normal sickness absence procedure will apply, unless you are able to work from home. During any absence, you will be entitled to occupational company sick pay in line with the usual qualifying criteria.

If you are contacted as part of the government's test and trace scheme and instructed to self-isolate, this absence can count as sick leave and our normal sickness absence procedure will apply, unless you are able to work from home. During any absence, you will be entitled to occupational company sick pay in line with the usual qualifying criteria.

If you are required to quarantine after travelling abroad or 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, the self-isolation will be a period of unpaid leave given you are not ready, willing or able to work, 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), we will consider each scenario on a case by case basis.

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 certain services of the council are no longer able to operate, even with employees working from home. If we are forced to close part or all of our operations temporarily, it may be necessary to place you on furlough and claim under the CJRS, 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.

### **Review of Policy**

Date	Confirmed By	Comment
6 October 2020	Original Adoption F&GP	Policy Established