Risk Assessment for COVID-19 Workplace Arrangements

Workplace:	**CIVIC OFFICES, HOME GARDENS, DARTFORD**

Assessed By: Sarah Martin, Strategic Director (Internal Services)	**Approved By:**		**Date:**

The Council has a legal duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of its employees and anyone else who may be affected by its business. This includes conducting regular risk assessments in consultation with staff to identify COVID-19-related risk and appropriate measures to control that risk, and reviewing them on an ongoing basis. Employees also have legal responsibilities to take reasonable care for their own and others' health and safety and to cooperate with the Council to help it meet its duties.

The 'COVID-19 secure' government guidelines currently highlight five key steps:
- work from home, if employees can;
- carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment, in consultation with employees and/or trade unions;
- maintain a two metre social distancing wherever possible;
- where people cannot be two metres apart, manage transmission risk; and
- reinforce cleaning processes.

From 5th November 2020 to 2nd December 2020 inclusive, the Government have introduced further national restrictions which stipulate that employees must work from home if they are effectively able to do so.

The Council has referred to the latest guidance in carrying out this risk assessment and implementing relevant measures.

This risk assessment provides a medium to long-term view on reopening measures, given that public health professionals are warning that COVID-19 is likely to be a risk for many months to come. This includes making every reasonable effort to enable working from home as a first option for the foreseeable future and only allowing staff back in the workplace where that is not possible.

HAZARD: COVID-19

RISK: Transmission & spread of COVID-19

CONSEQUENCE: Infection, illness and death **RISK RATING PRIOR TO CONTROL MEASURES: HIGH**

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RISK RATING POST IMPLEMENTATION OF CONTROL MEASURES: MEDIUM

Objective	Hazard and how it might cause harm	Persons at risk	Existing Control Measures and any Limitations	Recommendations
That everyone should work from home, unless they cannot work from home. • From 5th November 2020 – 2nd December 2020, everyone must work from home, unless they cannot work from home.	Risk of transmission between staff, resulting in infection from Covid-19	All staff	All staff that can work from home are currently doing so. The Council has reviewed and continues to review its legal responsibilities for ensuring a safe place of work at home and that working time requirements are met, to ensure that employees continuing to work remotely are able to function effectively, including practical and mental health support. Staff working from home are encouraged to adhere to the Government's 'face, space, hands' measures. More guidance on the measures is available on the Government website: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-campaign-to-prevent-spread-of-coronavirus-indoors-this-winter These should be read in conjunction with the government guidance on national restrictions: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november	**During National Restrictions:** Clinically vulnerable people must work from home where they are able to do so. If they are not able to work from home in their current roles they can work onsite following a full personal risk assessment and confirmation that their working environment is COVID-19 secure, Clinically extremely vulnerable people must work from home where they are able to do so. If they are not able to work from home in their current roles, they will be placed on medical suspension for the duration of the national restrictions **Following National Restrictions** (subject to up-dated government guidance)

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				Staff working from home have been set up with remote access to the systems they need in order to carry out their role. Staff have been allowed to take their ergonomic office chair or other equipment if needed in order to be able to work safely from home. At midnight on 28 September 2020, The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self Isolation) (England) Regulations 2020 came into force. A copy of the Regulations can be found here. Under Regulation 8, there is an obligation on the individual who is aware of their requirement to self-isolate, to notify their employer of this requirement and the start and end date of the isolation period. Any individual who breaches self-isolation will, normally, commit a criminal offence. Details of when, and for how long, a member of staff is required to self isolate are available via the following link: When Should I Self-Isolate? If a member a staff displays Covid 19 symptoms (fever and/or persistent new cough and/or a new loss or change to sense of smell or taste), they must inform their manager of the situation and book a test via the government website: www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-test	Clinically vulnerable people should work from home where they are able to do so. If they are not able to work from home in their current roles they can work onsite following a full personal risk assessment and confirmation that their working environment is COVID-19 secure, Clinically extremely vulnerable people should work from home where they are able to do so. If they are not able to work from home in their current roles they can work onsite following a full personal risk assessment and confirmation that their working environment is COVID-19 secure, Ensure all staff are treated equally, taking into account-protected characteristics. Communicate services offered to assist with mental health issues that may arise from the pandemic. Refer to 'Temporary Changes to HR Policies and Procedures' for details on childcare and annual leave

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			Once a test is booked, they must inform their manager of the date of the test and any results. If the results are negative, the staff member can return to work. If they are positive they must follow the latest government guidance: [COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection - GOV.UK](#)	
			Managers must record all Covid-19 related absences on iTrent. The Human Resources department will report on these absences to the relevant officers.	
To protect the health and wellbeing of staff working from home	Staff working from home may develop mental health issues or physical impairments	Staff	Staff working from home have access to either a work or personal device with IT connection to office systems. Managers are maintaining regular communication with staff via video conferencing or teleconferencing. All staff have access to the Employee Assistance Programme if they require assistance with dealing with mental health issues. Information is available via Human Resources, managers or on the intranet.	Arrangements should be made for any member of staff who use a specific chair at work for it to be collected or delivered to the staff's home address. Staff should be provided with the correct IT access to effectively work from home. Regular contact with staff working from home via video and tele conference to check on their mental health.

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			All staff have access to Mental Health First Aiders who are available by telephone should they feel overwhelmed and require assistance with dealing with mental health issues. Mental health and wellbeing calls are undertaken by the Mental Health First Aiders to staff on an opt-out basis. Managers encourage safe home working where possible.	Regular reminders to staff of mental health support services.
To ensure that those staff who are required to work at the Civic Centre have a safe environment and are able to maintain social distancing	Risk of transmission between staff, resulting in infection from Covid-19 Risk of infection from use of public transport	Staff	Working in the office should only be undertaken to ensure essential services are maintained or if tasks are unable to be performed working from home. For those staff who cannot work from home, they must adhere to social distancing guidance, regular hand washing and other risk averse measures implemented by the Council. All staff have been reminded of their responsibilities in regards to personal hygiene, including: • Washing hands for at least 20 seconds frequently throughout the day • Catch it, bin it, kill it • Covering mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing • Using hand sanitiser where available	Recommendations from the 'Working safely during COVID-19 in offices and contact centres' guidance are to be implemented: Only those staff who are unable to work from home or are part of a pre-arranged rota system to be working at the Civic Centre. The amount of staff working at the Civic Centre is to be kept to a minimum. Undertake 'Record of Returning to the Workplace' for all staff prior to asking them to return to site. Rotas/shifts should be fixed, so staff work with the same colleagues to avoid mixing with different people.

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			• Avoid touching face as much as possible Posters are displayed around the building reminding staff of their personal hygiene responsibilities. Anti-bacterial wipes have been provided to all teams and staff are encouraged to use them to wipe down their workstations. Staff have been mandated to wear a mask or face covering when walking around the building or in the communal areas. Staff are using the CSU door to both enter and leave the building. Limiting or avoiding use of public transport or staggering commuting times. Limiting in person meetings - now performed through various conferencing platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Where meeting rooms are used, social distancing is adhered to. Interviews are conducted virtually.	A 2m social distance should be maintained wherever possible. If social distancing is not possible, consideration should be given to whether the task is business critical or if it can be stopped. Introduce a separate entrance and exit for staff to encourage social distancing – staff to enter via the CSU and to leave via the back door. Park Rangers, CSU and Environmental Enforcement Officers to be relocated to C or D floor. Provide additional hand sanitising stations at both the entrance and exit to the building and in all lobbies. A single direction system is to be introduced for access to the various floors to minimise the number of staff in the lifts and stairways – only one person is to be allowed in the lift at a time with the lifts being used to go up and the stairs to be used to go down wherever possible. New access system will be card operated so removes the risk of contamination from the door release buttons. Staff occupancy levels within teams should be managed where possible to

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				enable social distancing. Workstations should be kept 2m apart. Where this is not possible, staff should work side-by-side or facing away from each other rather than face to face. No hot desking is to be allowed other than for CCTV. For CCTV, full wipe down of equipment is to be done between each shift. There is to be no overlap of shifts. A clear desk policy is to be followed by all staff in the office. Provide cleaning materials for staff to be able to clean workstations after use. Encourage staff to only bring what they need with them to work, and to store any personal items safely under desks. Photocopiers are to be moved back from the double doors so as not to create a pinchpoint. Wipes are to be provided so that it can be cleaned after use. A lock is to put on the toilet blocks so that access is restricted to one person at a time. The hand driers will be turned off and paper towels will be provided.

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| | | | | Kitchens are to be used by only one person at a time (except staff room). The staffroom is to be available for use of the kitchen area only and chairs and tables to be removed. This is to be limited to two staff at a time. Clear signage to be provided around restricted use. Staff are to be encouraged to use the kitchens on each floor rather than going to the staff room if possible. Staggered lunch breaks will reduce the number of staff wanting to use the kitchen at any one time.

Meeting rooms can be used as breakout areas. Additional cleaning will be done for these rooms.

Hand sanitiser is to be provided in common areas.

Increase the number of bins in the office to dispose of wipes and tissues.

Staff should not use fans if possible, but if they are used they are to be put on the lowest setting. Windows should be opened to encourage the circulation of fresh air.

The air conditioning units are serviced regularly. Those for IT and CCTV are |
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				required to protect the equipment. Other air conditioning units will be turned off. Whilst the water supply has remained in use during the lockdown period, the showerheads should be cleaned to minimise the risk of legionella. The shower rooms will be added to the daily cleaning regime and also will be included as part of the weekly deep-clean. Subject to any exemptions that may apply, staff are to wear face masks/face coverings when moving around the offices and in the communal areas or when another member of staff comes to their desk and social distancing is not possible. This also applies to cleaners and tenants. Display clear signage and posters encouraging hygiene as advertised by Public Health England. Provide regular hygiene and social distancing reminders via email to all staff. Staff to be encouraged not to use public transport to get to work. Cycling is to be encouraged.

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				Engage staff and Unison in all aspects of returning to work. Make sure communications are clear, consistent and regular. Develop communications and training materials for staff prior to asking them to return to site. FAQs and instructions for staff.
To minimise contact with visitors to the Civic Centre	Risk of transmission between staff and members of the public at the Civic Offices, leading to infection from Covid-19	Staff Councillors General Public Visitors Contractors	The Civic Centre is currently closed to the public. Most transactions can be done online or by phone. Limiting employee and visitor numbers in the workplace.	An appointment only service is currently on offer. Once the Civic Centre is re-opened, the cash kiosk will also be available for use. A visitor app is used to record details of visitors for 21 days, to meet the requirements of Test and Trace. The NHS test & trace app is also clearly displayed Access to the building will be limited to 4 members of the public at any one time. Access will only be granted to customers with either an appointment, dropping off evidence, making a payment, or customers invited for an interview. Customers will physically distance by queuing in front of the building where floor spacing markers will be installed. Once inside the building, they will be

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| | | | | directed to either an interview room; the planning desk if wanting to leave their evidence for scanning; to the far right waiting area when waiting to be called for an appointment; to the kiosk to make a payment.

Direction signage will be displayed to reinforce social distancing. A staff member will be present to manage/direct customer flow.

The use of seating in the reception area will be restricted to enforce social distancing.

The public toilet in reception will be unlocked and will be cleaned regularly. Clean signage around social distancing and hygiene will be displayed by the toilet.

Self-sealed envelopes will be provided for any evidence documents provided by the public and these will be left in a clearly marked area in reception.

Anti-bac wipes will be provided for the kiosk before and after use.

Public areas of the building will be regularly cleaned and hand sanitisers will |
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				be provided and customers enforced to use before entering the building. The reception desk, face to face counters and interview rooms will be fitted with perplex guard screens to minimise contact between staff and the public.
To minimise the number of unnecessary visits to the workplace	Risk of transmission between staff, Councillors, visitors and contractors, leading to infection of Covid-19	Staff Councillors Contractors	Very few members are now coming into the Civic Centre with the majority of contact being by phone or email. Any contractors are expected to follow Government safety advice around COVID-19 and ensure social distancing is adhered to. Councillors and/or contractors that attend the Civic Centre are asked to adhere to the same social distancing and personal hygiene standards as staff: • Washing your hands for at least 20 seconds when you enter the building and frequently throughout the day • Catch it, bin it, kill it • Covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing • Using hand sanitiser where available • Avoid touching your face as much as possible • Adhere to the 2 metre social distancing guidance set out by the Government	Visits from members, contractors and external visitors should be limited as far as possible. A visitor app is used to meet the requirements of Test and Trace. The NHS app is also to be clearly displayed. Contractors and visitors should be contacted before they visit the Civic centre to ensure they are not displaying signs of COVID-19. If they are, then they are to be asked to reschedule their visit and follow the Government advice on self-isolation. Provide clear guidance to visitors, councillors and contractors. Use video and tele conferencing to reduce the need for physical meetings. If physical meetings are necessary then participants should maintain social

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			Where possible, meetings with external companies/contacts are being conducted via Microsoft Teams or other virtual conferencing platforms. Committee meetings being undertaken remotely.	distancing and only absolutely minimum number of participants should attend. Visitors, councillors and contractors should wear masks when walking around the communal areas of the building. The capacity of each meeting room is to be reduced to ensure social distancing can be maintained. Larger meeting rooms to be filled from the furthest point to reduce people having to pass one another. Clear signage is to be displayed within all meeting rooms on social distancing and hand sanitiser to be provided and on the door to specify the maximum occupancy of the room. Determine if schedules for essential services and contractor visits can be revised to reduce interaction and overlap between people, for example carrying out services at night.
To ensure staff visiting other sites maintain	Risk of transmission between staff and	Staff Public	Only limited site visits are being undertaken. When they are, staff are making contact beforehand to make sure no one on the site or at the home have symptoms of Covid-19.	If social distancing cannot be adhered to, assess if the visit really needs to go ahead.

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social distancing and hygiene practices	customers when conducting site visits or carrying out enforcement activity		If symptoms are displayed, the staff member will rearrange the visit after the customer has isolated for 14 days. Visiting staff have been advised to avoid visits if possible, conducting meeting using Microsoft Teams or other virtual conferencing platforms.	If a site visit is deemed essential then: • staff should ask if there are facilities on site for them to be able to wash their hands upon arrival and leaving. • Staff should wear the appropriate PPE for the site visit. • 2 metre social distancing should be maintained where possible. • Staff should have no contact with another person on the site visit, for example do not shake hands. • The usual service lone working and site visit risk assessments and policies should be followed. • Conduct a dynamic risk assessment of the site visit continually, and if the risk of infection increases stop the visit, leave and continue by other means (video conference, pictures etc.). • There should be no unannounced site or home visits where possible, although it is recognised that for some services there will be occasional unannounced site visits.

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				Officers conducting site visits should use their own vehicles to get to the site and not car share where possible. Ask if internal doors on sites can be left open to minimise contact. Use a fixed pairing system if more than one staff needs to attend. Also for reoccurring visits. Hold meetings outside or in well-ventilated rooms whilst adhering to social distancing where possible. Communicate with those responsible for the site/house to explain our current policies and procedures for Covid-19. Ensure staff have adequate supplies of hand sanitising products to be used before and after visits. Site visits should only be carried out if appropriate PPE is available. Facemasks and gloves are to be provided to the visiting officers. Face shields are to be provided to the CEOs and any other staff where service specific RA requires. Used PPE to be disposed of in bin by entrance to Civic Centre. Bins will also be

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				allocated for disposal of used PPE in the lift lobbies. Minimise contact during payments and document exchange by using electronic methods.
To reduce transmission from contact within work vehicles	Risk of transmission from sharing fleet vehicles	Staff	Where Council vehicles are being used, only one person is permitted in the vehicle at a time where practicable. If the vehicle must be shared, personal hygiene is adhered to, such as using sanitising hand gel and covering mouths and noses when coughing or sneezing.	Minimise non-essential travel. Maintain pairing or grouping if more than 2 people are required. In these cases drivers and passengers must wear facemasks. Increase the cleaning of vehicles and encourage hand washing. Weather permitting, open windows on shared vehicles. All of the vehicle should be cleaned at the end of a shift or if a different person is going to use the vehicle. Remind staff to wash their hands before entering the vehicle and once exiting the vehicle. Make sure drivers and passengers have access to hand sanitiser items throughout their shift.

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To maintain social distancing and hygiene practices while using common areas	Communal staff areas at the Civic Centre such as kitchens, toilets and lobby areas ,could harbour sources of infection	Staff Councillors Visitors Public Contractors	Staff are being asked to adhere to social distancing throughout the Council building. Gel and foam hand sanitiser are available to use in lobbies and communal areas. Communal areas are being regularly cleaned. There is currently a minimal amount of staff in the office, making the risk of infection rate in communal areas lower.	Restrict the use of communal areas such as the kitchens and toilets. Access to be limited to one person at a time. Staff room is only to be used as a kitchen and chairs and tables to be removed. Clear messages to be displayed in the staff room about social distancing. Lift occupancy is to be reduced to one person. Lifts are to be used to ascend the floors and stairs to descend where possible. Hand sanitiser stations to be on all floor lobbies. Staff are to wear face masks when moving around the offices or when another member of staff comes to their desk and social distancing is not possible. This also applies to cleaners and tenants. The current enhanced cleaning regime for the toilets is to be continued. Supply paper towels in the toilets.
To keep meeting rooms clean to reduce the risk of transmission	Sources of infection in meetings rooms such as glasses,	Staff Councillors Visitors	Physical meetings are being avoided where practicable to do so. Most business is being undertaken remotely using virtual conferencing platforms.	Use video and tele conferencing to reduce the need for physical meetings. Limit the occupancy of each meeting room, maximum occupancy to be stated on meeting room door.

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	cups, tables/desks and chairs		Meeting rooms are being cleaned regularly. If a physical meeting is required, social distancing and hygiene measures are being adhered to: • Washing of hands for at least 20 seconds before entering the meeting room • Catch it, bin it, kill it • Covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing • Using hand sanitiser where available • Avoiding touching your face as much as possible • Adhering to the 2-metre social distancing guidance set out by the Government by not sitting next to colleagues or visitors.	Larger meeting rooms are to be filled from the furthest point first. Anti-bac wipes to be available in meeting rooms for wiping down of any equipment used. Install hand-sanitising stations in meeting rooms. Remove glasses and cups from meeting rooms and ask staff to use their own glasses and mugs. Advise Support Services if a meeting room has been used so it can be cleaned.
To ensure other organisations working in the building adhere to social distancing and hygiene measures	Other organisations in the building not adhering to social distancing and infection prevention could risk spread of the infection	Staff Public Contractors Visitors Civic Centre tenants (Police and MP)	The MP is currently not working from the Civic Centre. Councillors are currently not attending meetings and/or visiting officers at the Civic Centre – business is conducted remotely. The Police (as tenants) are aware of the need to maintain social distancing and regular hand washing/use of hand sanitiser etc.	The Police, Councillors and MP's office should be informed of and adhere the Council's Covid-19 risk measures, including the wearing of masks in the communal areas of the building

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To keep the workplace clean and prevent transmission by touching contaminated surfaces	General office facilities becoming contaminated due to poor hygiene from staff, visitors and contractors could lead to higher infection rates of Covid-19	Staff Councillors Visitors Contractors Civic Centre tenants	Support Services conduct regular checks of communal areas to clean and disinfect surfaces. Door handles, light switches and other objects that are regularly touched throughout the day are regularly cleaned. The offices are being cleaned daily by the cleaners and the cleaning regime has been enhanced. A cleaning supervisor is being temporarily employed and the Pacific Services cleaner is being used to provide a day time clean of the kitchens and toilets. An electro static treatment is being undertaken in the common areas on a weekly basis. Hand soap and sanitising gel is made available at sink areas, toilets and exits/entrances to the building. Anti-bac wipes are available within all service areas. Additional antibacterial or disinfectant sprays are available from Support Services upon request. Hand sanitising dispensers are checked regularly for stock, however staff should report any issues to the Support Services	The enhanced cleaning regime, including the temporary supervisor, cleaning of conveniences during the day and the weekly electro static treatment will continue. A clear desk policy is to be enforced. All workstations should be cleaned at the end of shifts, by staff using the desk. Additional anti-bac wipes will be made available to staff to keep workstations clean. Provide signage reminders of personal hygiene and regular reminders via email. Provide additional hand sanitisers around the building. Cleaners are to wear face masks whilst working.

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			Staff are made aware of their responsibilities to reduce the risk of infection.	
To maintain social distancing and avoid surface transmission when goods enter and leave the site	Risk of infection from Covid-19 from deliveries by couriers bringing deliveries into the office	Staff Councillors Public Visitors Civic Centre tenants		Deliveries will be via the fire door in reception.

Goods and merchandise coming onto site should be surface cleaned.

Restrict the amount of staff dealing with the delivery and moving of items.

Provide clear signage and markings for social distancing.

Order large quantities to reduce the need for deliveries.

Encourage delivery drivers to stay in their vehicles where practicable. |
| To prioritise safety during incidents | Whether to apply social distancing measures during health and safety procedures such as emergency exits and first aid | Staff Councillors Visitors Contractors Civic Centre tenants | Currently, social distancing is not a legal requirement. Social distancing does not supersede health and safety legislation. Therefore, in an emergency evacuation only, social distancing does not need to be adhered to, as it may not be possible or practical to ensure safe exiting of the building or to fully evacuate in the appropriate timeframes. | The fire evacuation procedures are to be updated to try and minimise congestion and 'bottle necking' as staff exit the building. Assembly points to be re-considered in the light of social distance requirements

One member of each team is to be assigned responsibility for ensuring all |

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				staff within that team safely exit the building. They should familiarise themselves with the revised fire evacuation procedure. All staff are to take personal responsibility too for safely evacuating the building. If COVID-19 symptoms are being displayed by staff within the Civic Centre, a dedicated interview room should be used for the patient, or if not available, the Occupational Health Room on E floor should be used. If the patient is well enough, they should contact 111 from this room. If they are not well enough, then 999 should be called straight away to attend.

I have read, understand and will comply with the controls specified in this assessment and any additional controls as required.

NAME	Signature	Date

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