

Cockermouth Town Council

Risk Assessment regarding conducting small marriages and civil partnerships in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall in Cockermouth

The Government recently announced that small weddings and civil partnerships can be conducted from 4 July 2020. They subsequently produced guidance to assist people planning to get married or form a civil partnership in England. This guidance is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships>

The guidance sets out how this can be done in a manner that is safe and in line with social distancing guidelines in order to minimise the risk of exposure to infection for all individuals attending the marriage or civil partnership, including those who work at the venue.

Venue managers have discretion over when they consider it safe to open and the officiant must be content that it is safe to proceed.

Cumbria County Council has sent a list of venue requirements for its officiants. These are in addition to those required by the licence.

The guidance includes a requirement to “carry out an appropriate COVID-19 risk assessment”. It is made very clear that “Failure to complete a risk assessment which takes account of COVID-19, or completing a risk assessment but failing to put in place sufficient measures to manage the risk of COVID-19, could constitute a breach of health and safety law”.

On that basis, this Risk Assessment takes each of the Key Principles as set out in the guidance and assesses whether or not practical arrangements can be put in place conduct small marriages and civil partnerships safely and in accordance with the guidance/officiant.

Key Principle	Government Guidance/officiant requests	Assessment	Conclusion
General Maintenance Issues following Lockdown	Ensure equipment is safe to use and that risks from	Town Clerk inspected the premises on 3/7/2020.	No issues identified.

	damaged or defective equipment are addressed before opening.		Daily inspections will continue as standard and issues identified will be actioned.
Car Parking	CCC require two car park spaces close to the venue as registrars will travel separately	Member of staff on duty to check car park prior to each wedding to ensure 2 spaces are available. Area to be coned off.	All these measures will be adopted.
Social Distancing	<p>Put in place measures to support social distancing of 2m.</p> <p>Examples given include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signposting • Signage • Changing layouts • Reducing numbers • Improving ventilation • Avoiding property belonging to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage signposting visitors to the current stay alert and social distancing guidance • Change room layout of pre-wedding interview room so it includes only 1 desk and 1 chair 2m apart • People from different households should maintain social distancing between one another. • Table and one chair required for writing and signing • Mark seating locations with floor tape to assist with 2m social distancing requested by CCC • Mark 2m distance with floor tape position of registrar/couple/guests 	All these measures will be adopted.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aisle to be widened to 3m to allow bride to be walked down the aisle• Mark position of photographer with floor tape 2m away from registrar• Limit number of users at any one time to 15 people. <p>From 28th September in England all weddings, civil partnership ceremonies and any associated receptions will be restricted to 15 people.</p> <p>It has been clarified that this maximum number includes <i>all</i> those attending, including the couple, witnesses and guests. However anyone working, for example officiants, photographers, security, staff employed by the venue, third-party suppliers or catering staff are not included.</p> <p>Guests must be seated in their household/bubbles</p>	
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Face Coverings	<p>From the 8th August 2020 it will be mandatory for all guests attending a ceremony in a registration office or approved venue to wear a face covering (unless exempt for medical reasons). Face coverings WILL NOT have to be worn by the bride, groom, civil partners or registration staff, although the officer who is conducting your ceremony may choose to do so).</p> <p>If any guests are exempt we are asking them to make this known to the Officer conducting the ceremony so we are aware, any person who is not wearing a mask who is not exempt will be refused</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage signposting guests to wear a face covering before entering the building • If a guest is exempt for a medical reason they must inform the officer conducting the ceremony • Hirers to be informed of the new legislation regarding face coverings from 8th August 2020 • Staff to wear face coverings. 	All these measures will be adopted.

	<p>entry as this is a mandatory requirement.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/guidance/31-july-announcement</p>		
Cleaning and Hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any pre-requisite washing/ablution rituals should not be done at the venue but carried out prior to arrival • Hand sanitising station to be placed at Main entrance. • Washing/toilet facilities at the venue should be used in line with social distancing guidelines and hygiene measures applied. • Shared items required for the solemnisation of the marriage or the formation of a civil partnership e.g. ring should be handled by as few people as possible. • Single use service sheets if used should be removed by the hirer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hirers to be told no washing/ablution rituals at venue • Signage to be placed in Toilet • Additional cleaning products to be placed in toilet • Frequency of toilet cleaning to be increased • Hand Sanitiser/wipes to be located on table for writing/signing and pre-wedding interview room • Groom to be told to keep ring • Bride to be told to keep ring • Single use service sheets 	<p>Amend booking/form hire agreement.</p> <p>Discuss in detail with Hirer(s) prior to wedding.</p>

<p>Guidance for vulnerable or symptomatic individuals – focus on protecting people who are clinically vulnerable or more likely to develop severe illness</p>	<p>All guests or those involved in the ceremony should stay at home and self-isolate if they have a new continuous cough or a high temperature or loss or change to sense of smell or taste. This is to minimise the risk of spreading COVID 19 to friends, the wider community and the vulnerable</p>	<p>Information to be issued hirer upon booking</p>	<p>Amend Booking Form/hire agreement. Discuss in detail with Hirer(s)</p>
<p>Young People and children</p>	<p>Parents or guardians should ensure children maintain social distancing and frequently wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with running water and soap and dry them thoroughly or use hand sanitiser</p>	<p>Particular attention should be paid to cleaning frequently touched surfaces by children and those that are at child height</p>	<p>Cleaner to be informed of requirement. Amend Booking Form/hire agreement. Discuss in detail with Hirer(s)</p>
<p>Singing, chanting and the use of musical instruments</p>	<p>People should avoid singing, shouting, raising voices and or playing music at a volume that makes normal conversation difficult or that may encourage shouting. This is because of the potential for increased transmission from aerosol and droplets</p>	<p>Only one individual should be permitted to sing or chant and the use of plexi-glass screen should be considered to protect guests as this will further prevent transmission and the screen can be easily cleaned. Hirer to be informed that they can only play musical instruments that are not blown into.</p>	<p>Amend Booking Form/hire agreement. Discuss in detail with Hirer(s)</p>

<p>If someone becomes unwell at the venue</p>	<p>If anyone becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID – 19 at the venue they should go home and be advised to follow the stay at home guidance. If they need clinical advice, they should go online to NHS 111. In an emergency call 999 if they are seriously ill. Do not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital</p> <p>Other people who may have been in contact with a person who has become unwell should wash their hands thoroughly after the interaction</p> <p>They do not need to take any other specific action unless they develop symptoms themselves or are advised to do so by NHS Test and Trace.</p>	<p>Inform staff and hirer of advice prior to wedding.</p>	<p>Staff to be informed of procedure.</p> <p>Amend Booking Form/hire agreement. Discuss in detail with Hirer(s)</p>
<p>Keeping Staff Safe</p>	<p>Consider the risks staff may be exposed to and how these can be mitigated. Staff roles may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greeting bride/groom/guests • Marshalling • Playing of music 	<p>Appropriate PPE will be worn by any member of staff. Appropriate hand washing/sanitising will be observed.</p>	<p>Staff to be always issued with appropriate PPE and be reminded to observe appropriate hand washing/sanitising.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure visitors comply with safety measures • Regular cleaning 		
Contractor	<p>Consider risks contractor may be exposed to and how they can be mitigated. Contractor roles may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • damaged or defective equipment 	Contractor to carry out their own risk assessment	Town Clerk to examine and keep a copy of risk assessment provided.
Test and Trace	Venue Manager to keep an accurate record of visitors for 21 days to assist with NHS Test and Trace	We will work with all relevant bodies to make the process for recording visitors' complaint with data protection legislation.	<p>An accurate record of visitors will be requested from the Bride/Groom prior to the wedding/civil partnership. This information will be confidentially shredded after 21 days.</p> <p>Contact A Bailey, CCC for contact details of registrars on duty.</p>

Conclusions

I believe that if Cockermouth Town Council put in place the measures suggested above, we can manage the risk of exposure to COVID-19 and conduct small marriages and civic partnerships in accordance with the legislation and requests of Officiant.

This risk assessment will be reviewed and retained following any future alteration to governmental regulations.

Risk Assessments undertaken by Clerk & RFO Mrs Sheila Brown. Approved by a majority response from all councillors via email.

3 July 2020

Revised 23rd September 2020

Revised 16 October 2020