

COVID-19

Welcome back to Town House – A Guide for Returning Employees and Elected Members

Version 1.3

Version date: 19 October 2020

This document is uncontrolled when printed.

Version History

Version	Version Date	Summary of changes
1.0	20 July 2020	First draft
1.1	20 August 2020	Update following consultation/feedback
1.2	28 August 2020	Further update
1.3	19 October 2020	Update following change to Scottish Government regulations on wearing face coverings in the workplace

Contents

1. Introduction	page 4
2. COVID-19	page 6
2.1. Precautions	page 6
2.2. Symptoms	page 6
2.3. Testing	page 7
3. Building operation	page 8
3.1. Opening Times	page 8
3.2. Team working	page 8
3.3. Wearing of Face Coverings	page 8
4. Entering the building	page 10
5. Use of Passenger Lifts	page 11
6. Moving around the building	page 12
6.1. Use of Stairs	page 12
6.2. Accessing the Council Chamber, Members Lounge & Library	page 14
7. Toilets	page 15
8. Workstations	page 17
8.1. Desk in use/not in use	page 17
8.2. Allocation of desks	page 18
8.3. Cleaning of desks	page 18
9. Locker/Cloakroom areas	page 19
10. Kitchen areas	page 20
11. Meeting Rooms	page 21
11.1. Committee rooms	page 21
11.2. Informal meeting spaces	page 23
11.3. Isolation areas	page 23
12. Fire Safety	page 24
13. Breaks	page 25
14. Car Parking	page 25
15. Mail	page 25
16. Visitors	page 25
17. Managers Checklist	page 26
18. Useful links	page 26

1. Introduction

The Scottish Government [route map through and out of the COVID-19 crisis](#) was published on 21 May and provided an indication of the order in which restrictions would be carefully and gradually lifted across four phases. On 28 May, it was confirmed that sufficient progress in suppressing the virus had been sustained to enable the country to move from lockdown to Phase 1. Continued progress in suppression of the virus has been made which has allowed further transition to Phase 2 and, on the 10th July, to Phase 3.

In advance of the expected easing of lockdown, Aberdeen City Council established a Service Reinstatement Working Group, which considers requests from Chief Officers to restart services which had been temporarily stood down during the lockdown phase. As part of the Working Group's considerations, the requesting service's need for access to properties was considered, the group needing to be comfortable that the property was in a suitable condition where continued observing of social distancing and effective hygiene could be demonstrated, to ensure employee safety. In addition to ensure that support services such as Facilities Management were able to provide ongoing service within the property to be used.

This document sets out the work that has been done within your place of work to ensure that the property is compliant, gives some reminders to you about the importance of social distancing, hand hygiene, etc. and what you need to do if you experience COVID-19 symptoms.

Managers and Group Leaders should use this document as an induction tool for all employees/elected members who will return to the office as we work through the phases through and out of lock down. Before going into detail of the changes made within the office and how employees will be expected to work within those changes, the initial pages cover the precautions we all still need to take to minimise our risk of contracting the virus, a reminder of the most common symptoms and information on the Scottish Government's 'Test and Protect' strategy.

Key Messages

- *The building will open initially to support Committee meetings only and access to the Title Deeds Store*
- *Everyone who can do their normal job from home should continue to do so. Committee meetings are considered an essential activity of Council*
- *Buildings users are key to the success of measures put in place*
- *It will be a gradual return of building users to the Town House managed through the Service Reinstatement Gateway Process*
- *Areas in the building will remain closed*
- *Service Managers play a key role in managing staff movement, reducing busy periods and keeping staff movement to the absolute minimum*

- *Group Leaders are asked to play a key role in managing Elected Member movement, reducing busy periods and keeping Elected Members movement to the absolute minimum*
- *Measures put in place will be regularly reviewed, as a minimum in line with Scottish Government review periods*
- *Enhanced cleaning will be provided*
- *Enhanced cleaning includes building users being responsible for desk cleaning and keeping desks clear in line with office working risk assessments*

2. COVID-19

2.1. Precautions

All individual building users should ensure that they carry out the following steps when working within Council Offices:

- *Wash hands regularly with soap and water; or use alcohol hand sanitizer where available before eating and drinking, and after coughing, sneezing and going to the toilet.*
- *Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.*
- *Wherever possible, avoid direct contact with people that have a respiratory illness and avoid using their personal items such as their mobile phone.*
- *Make your own tea, coffee, cold drinks, etc. And do not share cups, glasses, crockery and cutlery with colleagues.*
- *Follow the stay at home guidance if you or someone in your household has symptoms of COVID-19.*
- *Cover the nose and mouth with a disposable tissue when sneezing, coughing, wiping and blowing the nose. Dispose of all used tissues promptly into a waste bin. Then wash your hands or if facilities are not available, use hand sanitiser. If there are no tissues available, cough and sneeze into the crook of the elbow.*
- *Separation distances of a minimum of 2 metres between people should be maintained and direct person to person contact such as shaking hands should be avoided.*

2.2. Symptoms

The most important symptoms of COVID-19 are the recent onset of any of the following:

- *a new continuous cough*
- *a high temperature*
- *a loss of, or change in your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)*

For most people COVID-19 will be a mild illness. However, if you have any of the symptoms above you should not come into the office, should self-isolate at home and must submit yourself for testing.

2.3. **Testing**

Test and Protect is Scotland's approach to implementing the test, trace, isolate, support strategy, it is a public health measure designed to break chains of transmission of COVID-19 in the community. Full details can be found [here](#).

The NHS will test people who have symptoms, trace people who may have become infected by spending time in close contact with someone who tests positive, and then support those close contacts to self-isolate. That means if they have the virus they are less likely to pass it on to others.

Anyone with symptoms must now request a test. Those who test positive for COVID-19 will be contacted by NHS contact tracers who will interview them and get in touch with people they have been in close contact with, to tell them they must self-isolate for 14 days. Test & Protect is now available for all Aberdeen City Council Employees, Elected Members and not just those deemed as critical workers.

*If any ACC employee or Elected Member is informed by a contact tracer that they should isolate, management/Group Leaders should assist them to do so straight away. They may feel well, as the virus could still be incubating when they are asked to isolate. Some people who are asked to isolate may not become unwell, but they **must** stay at home and self-isolate for the full 14 days. Building users can work from home if they are able to and they are not unwell.*

Please remember anyone who has symptoms or a member of the same household, must request a test, please complete this [online form](#).

Please note NHS contact tracers may require someone to self-isolate more than once and even if they have previously tested positive for coronavirus and have recovered.

Further information on self-isolation can be found on Aberdeen City Council's [Self-isolation](#) pages.

Note: *Aberdeen City Council's guidance on COVID-19 is regularly updated and you should keep yourself informed on current guidance which is available [here](#)*

3. **Building Operation**

3.1. **Opening Times**

The building opening times have not changed but the building will only be open on Committee days. Staggered start and finish times for building users will help reduce social interactions between users in corridors, stair ways and within the car parks. To facilitate this your Manager/Group Leader may ask you to arrive and leave within specific time windows as set out below.

- *Start before 8:30am, or*
- *Start after 8:30am*

- *Finish before 5pm, or*
- *Finish after 5pm*

3.2. **Fixed Teams/Partnering/Cohorting**

To further reduce building user interactions and allow effective infection tracking measures such as Fixed Teams, Partnering and Cohorting may be put in place.

3.3. **Wearing of Face Coverings**

On 15 October 2020, Scottish Government announced a further update to regulations which from Monday 19 October 2020, make wearing a face covering mandatory in indoor communal areas and canteens within the workplace. Communal areas have been defined in the regulations as areas where persons mingle or gather, such as –

- *passageways/corridors,*
- *stairs,*
- *lifts,*
- *staff rooms,*
- *training rooms,*
- *changing rooms, or*
- *entrances*

Signage will be installed throughout Town House to advise Elected Members, employees and visitors to the building that they must wear a face covering at all times, except when they are

working at a desk, table or other workspace. An example of the sign advising of this requirement can be seen below:



There are still exemptions from wearing face coverings and you can read what those are within the guidance at the following link:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/pages/face-coverings/#exemptions>

4. Entering the building

Town House Extension

To manage the flow of people into and out of the Town House Extension, we require building users to only use the Queen Street side staff entrance/exit or the underground carpark. the Main Reception glass door will remain locked.

Old Town House

As above building users accessing the Town House from Marischal College direction, will need to use the Queen Street side staff entrance/exit. An alternative entrance will be by means of the Water Door on Union Street, staff entrance on Concert Court and civic revolving doors (only when civic events require this door to be open).

You will also see signage which advises you that you should immediately proceed to a washroom to wash your hands or alternatively, to sanitise your hands using the provided hand sanitiser. Hand sanitiser and white single use paper towel. These are placed at all the entrances mentioned above including the entrance to the building from the underground carpark.

UPON ENTERING THIS BUILDING, WE NEED YOU TO



- Please proceed directly to a toilet and use soap and warm water to wash your hands
- Completely cover your hands in soapy water and wash for 20 seconds
- Alternatively, please use the hand sanitiser provided to sanitise your hands
- Remember to always wash your hands before you eat, after you have used the toilet and after touching lift buttons, docucentre buttons, etc.
- Keep your hands away from your face, eyes, nose and mouth
- Your actions will help to keep you and your colleagues safe.

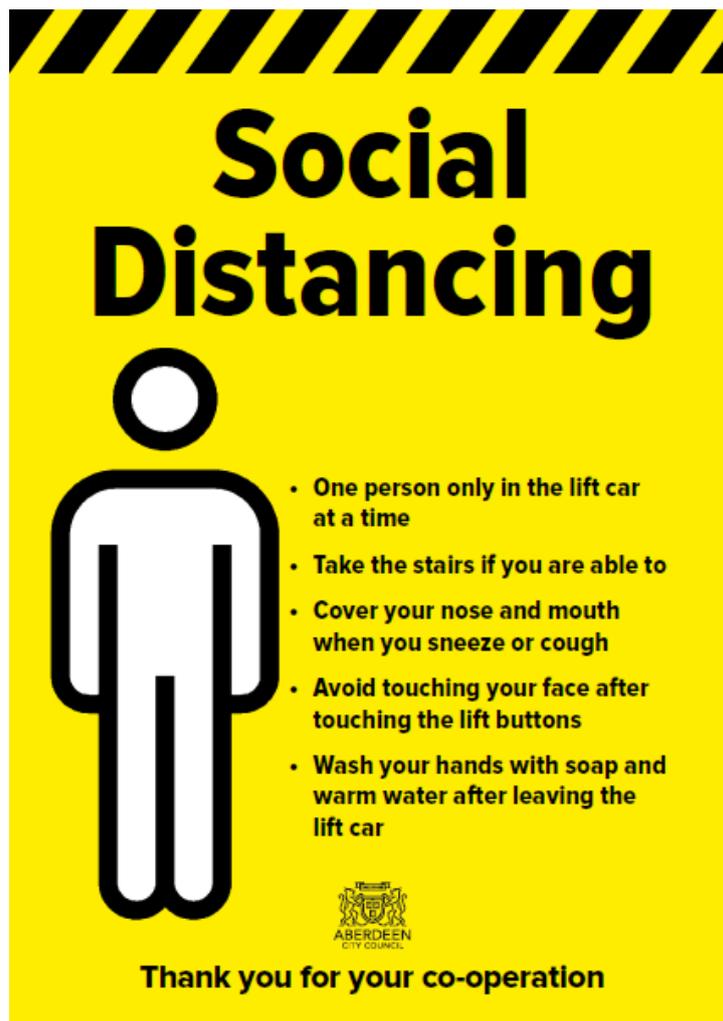
Please note that the Old Town House remains closed, including the toilets and kitchens in those areas. Closed floors within the Old Town House can still be accessed for the collection of mail, files, and equipment. However, the workstations should not be used, and staff should not base themselves there. Where committee meetings are being held in the Town House, staff from

Committees Services and Legal are permitted the use of allocated offices whilst following social distancing measures and good hand washing guidance. The following rooms have been allocated for use:

- *Committee Services – Rooms 1-29 & 1-30*
- *Legal – Rooms 1-1, 1-6, 1-14, 1-15 & the Deeds store.*

5. Use of passenger lifts

Lift cars are a confined space where it is impossible to observe 2 metre social distancing. As such, we have had to restrict the numbers of persons within a lift car at any time to just one. You will see signage on the approach to lifts and within the lift cars advising of this. For those who are able, the preference is that you would avoid using the lift and take the stairs to reach the floor you wish to get to. See next section below.



6. Moving around the building

6.1. Use of Stairs

The three main stairwells within the Town House Extension (stairs 1, 3 and 4 in Figure 1 below) are suitably wide enough to allow colleagues to travel both upwards and downwards. Colleagues are encouraged to adopt a 'keep left' principle. This principle should also be followed whilst travelling through any corridor or other space within the building where no one-way system has been put in place. Stair 2 is, however, much narrower, so a common-sense approach should be followed, allowing someone moving downstairs to complete their movement downstairs before another person begins moving upstairs.

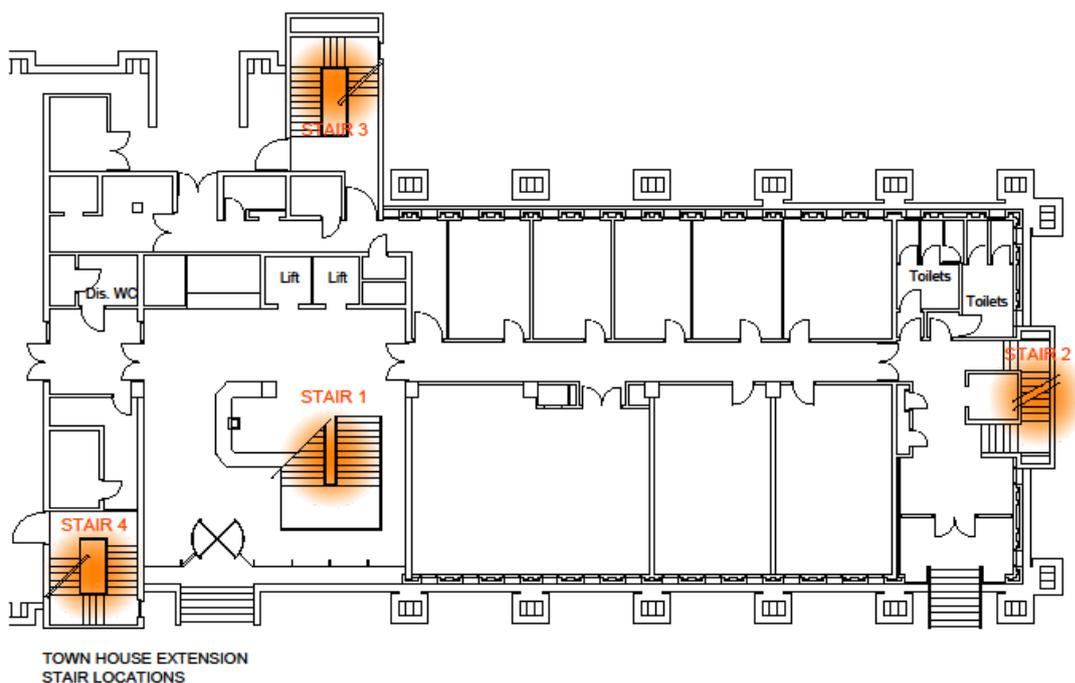


Figure 1: Town House Extension



Figure 2: Old Town House

6.2. Accessing the Council Chamber, Members Lounge & Library

There will be a one-way system on the 2nd Floor of the Town House Extension specifically around the main Council Chamber. From the main stairwell, the only access to the Chamber will be through the main Chamber door. The door which would give you access to the Member’s Lounge & Library will be signed saying there is no entrance. Once inside the Chamber, the door you entered through will be signed as being no exit, and to exit you will have to either leave through the Member’s Lounge or through the door to the left of the entrance door. To further guarantee that colleagues use the correct doors there is a barrier separating the entrance and exit doors in the area outside of the Chamber.

A video walkthrough of the area can be viewed [here](#)

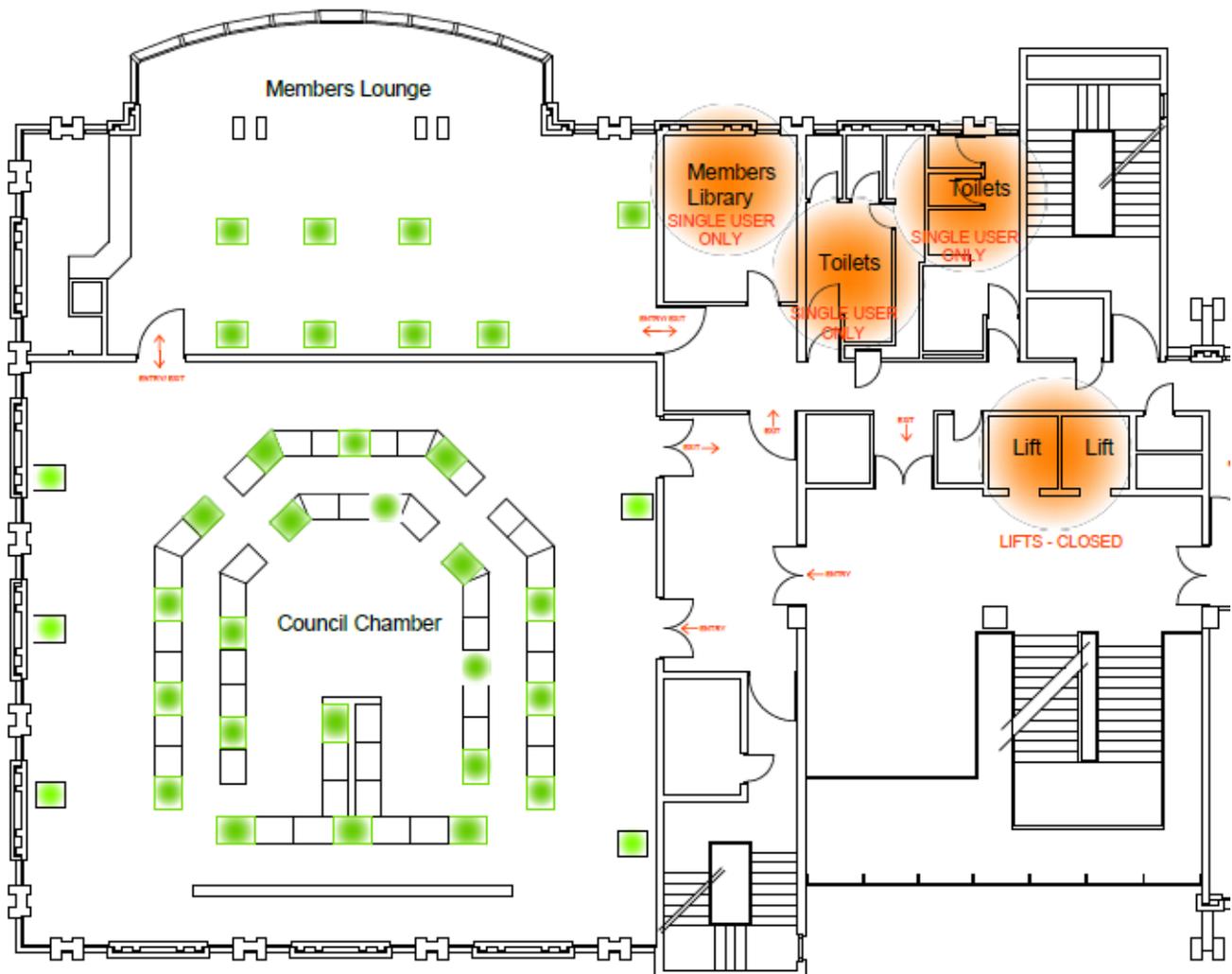


Figure 3: Council Chamber, Members Lounge & Library

7. Toilets

To ensure that social distancing can be observed within the main toilets throughout the building, we are implementing a simple system to ensure that only one person is in each toilet at a time. A cone has been placed outside each toilet door, the cone is to be used as the visual indicator of whether a toilet is vacant or engaged. The cone will sit to the side of the door frame to indicate that the toilet is vacant and available for use, as shown in the figure below.



Before entering the toilet, you should slide the cone using your foot into the middle of the door frame (immediately outside of the toilet door) to indicate the toilet is now engaged.



After using the toilet, you should wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds, following the NHS hand washing technique displayed on posters inside the toilet, dry your hands with single-use paper towel and exit the toilet, pushing the cone back using your foot to the original position to the side of the door frame to indicate the toilet is now available for use by another user.

The accessible toilet at the Town House Extension has always been available for use by only one person, so remains unchanged.

8. Workstations

8.1. Desk in use/not in use

To ensure that social distancing is being observed by all who are working at workstations within the building, each desk has been marked to indicate whether it is available to be used or is not available to be used. Examples of the signs you will see at desks are included below:



DESK IN USE

**TO ENABLE SAFE SOCIAL DISTANCING,
THIS DESK HAS BEEN ALLOCATED FOR USE**



DESK NOT IN USE

**TO ENABLE SAFE SOCIAL DISTANCING,
THIS DESK IS UNAVAILABLE FOR USE**



8.2. Allocation of workstations

Users Returning to Existing Work Areas – Your Cluster/Group Leader will have plans of the desks that are currently available for use and will have considered how to allocate these.

8.3. Cleaning of workstations

Cleaning Services will undertake daily cleaning and disinfection of all surfaces (except IT kit) at workstations where the clear desk policy is being adhered to. In addition to this, we each need to take responsibility to ensure that the desks we are working from and the IT kit (keyboard, mouse, telephone, etc.) which sits upon these desks are disinfected between uses. Disinfectant cleaning spray and paper wipe will be available for users at each kitchen area on the floors which are in use throughout the building to clean desk surfaces and IT kit both before and after each use. Instructions on the safe and effective use of these products will be available with the products.

It is the responsibility of each member of staff and elected member to clean their workstation on arrival and departure. It is good practice to also clean the desk at other times e.g. before eating/drinking. Desks should be cleaned using the following method:-

- *Prior to use ensure surface is clean and dry removing any marks and debris using the cleaning materials provided*
- *Dry off with disposable paper towel if necessary. Dispose of in waste after use*
- *Apply disinfectant, spray evenly to surfaces, allow to air dry*
- *If surfaces dries within 5 minutes, reapply*
- *Perform hand hygiene after completion*

9. Locker/Cloakroom Areas

To ensure that social distancing is being observed within the locker/cloakroom areas throughout the building, we are restricting access to these areas to one person at a time. An example of the sign advising users of this principle can be seen below:



10. Kitchen Areas

To ensure that social distancing is being observed within the kitchen areas throughout the building, we are restricting access to these areas to one person at a time. An example of the sign advising users of this principle can be seen below:



11. Meeting Rooms

11.1. Committee rooms

All committee meetings will be held in the Council Chamber until further notice. Committee Services will advise when this changes to allow the smaller committee rooms to be reopened.

In preparation for reopening, the smaller committee rooms in the building have been set up to support social distancing. Meetings should continue to be held over Microsoft Teams or by other virtual means unless it is absolutely essential to have face to face meetings. If face to face meetings are required, services should have this covered within their service COVID-19 Risk Assessments.

An example of the sign advising users of reduced room capacities can be seen below:



The temporary maximum capacity for each Committee room will be as follows:

Committee Room 2 – Maximum Capacity: 10 plus 1 desk and chair for press

Committee Room 3 – Maximum Capacity: 4

Committee Room 4 – Maximum Capacity: 8

Committee Room 5 – Maximum Capacity: 6 (Note that this room has been temporarily allocated to Elected Members who cannot currently work from the two 5 person Members Offices)

11.2. Informal meeting spaces

Most Informal meeting spaces throughout the building have been removed, had furniture pushed together or been sectioned off with hazard tape to indicate that they are not to be used. Some informal spaces are still accessible, but capacity of these spaces has been reduced to single person use only.

11.3. Isolation Areas

In the event that you or a colleague become unwell with Covid-19 symptoms whilst at work, you/they should:

- go home as soon as you/they notice symptoms and follow the [Stay at Home Guidance](#) and self-isolate for 10 days minimum.*
- You/they should note that any household members will be required to self-isolate for 14 days from this point.*
- Where possible you/they should minimise contact with others i.e. use a private vehicle to go home. If it is not possible to use private transport, then you/they should be advised to return quickly and directly home.*
- If possible, a household member could pick you/them up; the whole household will need to self-isolate for the required period.*
- If you/they have to use public transport, you/they should try to keep away from other people and catch coughs and sneezes in a tissue. If you/they don't have any tissues available, you/they should cough and sneeze into the crook of your/their elbow.*

If you/they are so unwell that you/they require an ambulance you should:

- phone 999 and let the call handler know you are concerned about COVID-19.*
- Whilst you wait for advice or an ambulance to arrive, an area in the main reception of the Town House Extension has been set up as an isolation area for the unwell person to sit and be isolated from others. If another employee has to remain with them then they should wait outside of the cordoned space, remaining a minimum of 2 metres away from the unwell person.*

Once the unwell person has left the premises, the [Cleaning Services Management Team](#) should be contacted to arrange for disinfection of the workstation that the unwell person had been working from and of the isolation area if it had been used.

12. Fire Safety

Facilities Management will have a staff presence in the building between 08:00 and 16:00, Monday to Friday and will manage emergency evacuations as normal. The Emergency Evacuation muster point remains at Arts Centre, the reduced numbers of users working within the building will mean that social distancing can be effectively observed whilst at the muster point.

The weekly fire alarm test will continue to be undertaken at 9:15 each Tuesday morning.

13. Breaks

As with start and finish times, you may be asked to take morning and lunch breaks during specific periods. Lunch breaks will be required to be taken between 12-1pm and 1-2pm. You are encouraged to bring your own lunch to work with you and to eat this at your workstation.

14. Car Parking

Reverse parking should be observed in all parking areas. Exceptions can be made if this makes access/egress difficult for those with a disability. Please be aware of other car park users and maintain social distancing at all times.

15. Mail

Business mail is still being delivered to and collected from the Distribution hub on the Lower Ground floor, South wing of Marischal College. Building Assistants will continue to deliver mail once per day to the mailroom and Members Support within the Town House Extension.

You should not arrange for personal deliveries to be made to Marischal College or Town House.

16. Visitors

For the initial opening of the building, no press or members of the public will be admitted for Committee meetings. Visitors should only be invited to the building if absolutely essential. As Reception is currently closed, there is no staff member available to receive visitors, so building users should make their own arrangements with their visitor for gaining access to the building. During the visit, building users should ensure that their visitor is following the same hand hygiene, cough/sneeze etiquette and social distancing requirements expected of our employees and Elected Members.

17. Managers Checklist

Managers/Group Leaders should consider the following for users returning to the building.

- *Has the risk assessment for the Team been updated to reflect Covid measures in place.*
- *Has approval from the SRWG been given for users coming back into the office.*
- *Has the user read this 'Welcome Back' guide.*
- *Has the importance of individual hygiene measures been reinforced.*
- *Has the user been made aware where their work area is.*
- *Has the user been allocated a specific work station (if relevant).*
- *Has the user been advised which days/weeks they should be based in the office.*
- *Has the user been advised of any Fixed Teams, Partnering or Cohorting arrangements.*
- *Has the user been given a time window for starting work. 50% of users must start before 8:30am and 50% of users should start after 8:30am.*
- *Has the user been given a time window for finishing work. 50% of users must finish before 5pm and 50% of users should finish after 5pm.*
- *Has the user been allocated a time to take lunch. 50% of users to take lunch between 12pm to 1pm and 50% of users to take lunch between 1pm to 2pm.*

18. Useful Links

- [Aberdeen City Council 'COVID-19 Advice' Intranet pages](#)
- [Scottish Government Route map through and out of the COVID-19 crisis](#)
- [Scottish Government Test, Trace, Isolate and Support strategy](#)
- [Health Protection Scotland COVID-19 Information and Guidance for General \(Non-Healthcare\) Settings](#)
- [Health & Safety Executive: Talking with your workers about preventing coronavirus](#)