

nalc

Coronavirus — information for parish & town councils

NALC has updated its dedicated webpage on the coronavirus. This includes further information on government email alerts, holding meetings, local (parish and town) councils supporting their communities and CiLCA deadlines. See the updates below:

Email alerts from the government

If you would like to keep up-to-date with the government information as it comes out then you can sign-up to their [Covid-19 response bulletin](#).

Holding meetings

NALC strongly encourages councillors and staff to follow government guidance on social distancing and self-isolation. This is particularly important if anyone is in an at-risk group as identified by the guidance. We would encourage local councils to consider if they need to hold scheduled meetings at all. The health and safety of councillors, staff and the public should be your primary concern. If local councils do follow government guidance on social distancing and social isolation and so they do not hold scheduled meetings, including annual council meetings, NALC's opinion is that the likelihood of a successful legal challenge is low.

We are expecting government guidance on holding meetings remotely early next week, and NALC will also produce further guidance next week. In the meantime, if local councils decide to not hold meetings and take decisions by email or other remote methods NALC feels it's likely that afterwards if there were a challenge that the courts will accept that

exceptional times called for exceptional measures. In the absence of government guidance, we would suggest for now only taking decisions remotely for truly urgent issues. In this case, local councils should evidence their decision making as best they can, for example by asking councillors to confirm their votes by email to the clerk for the clerk to keep as a record of the decision.

Local councils supporting their communities

Local councils are ideally placed to inform and support residents as they already do in so many spheres — from assisting during flooding and other emergencies to supporting vulnerable or lonely people. And this will almost certainly be the case in the current situation. Cllr Sue Baxter, chairman of NALC, met Nigel Huddleston MP (DCMS minister and their representative on COBRA) on NALC's Lobby Day on 10 March, who saw a potentially big role for parishes during the current period, including keeping an eye on vulnerable people and encouraging new volunteers to come forward to help.

NALC has also engaged with Public Health England and communicated the desire from local councils to support their communities and the need for information on how best to do this within the scope of government advice on social distancing. PHE is launching further guidance to support community activities next week which we will share widely.

We know already the coronavirus has affected every community in a multitude of ways, with local councils doing a brilliant job in difficult circumstances. Playing their part to support the community and its residents, businesses and groups at this challenging time.

Such as Woodbridge Town Council, Suffolk, which has set-up an emergency response group of councillors and volunteers which will assist with collection/delivery of medicines, shopping, walking the dog or simply being a voice at the end of the phone. Or Hagley Parish Council, Worcestershire, which is acting as an information hub and plans to publicise restaurants offering a delivery service and contact details for NHS helplines. And Backwell Parish Council, Somerset, has a dedicated team of over 30 volunteers who can organise to have someone check in regularly with the elderly or at high-risk either by phone, Skype or FaceTime.

You can read more about their work, and that of other local councils, in our newly published [Coronavirus case studies](#) publication.

But we want to continue to gather your stories about how local councils are responding to the current situation. Which we can share with other local councils to provide inspiration, and importantly to support our engagement with government. Please spend a few minutes to tell us what you are doing in this [short survey](#). Or you can simply email NALC at policycomms@nalc.gov.uk or tweet us [@nalc](#).

CiLCA deadlines pushed back

In light of the ongoing Covid-19 situation, all CiLCA candidates who are currently registered will be granted an additional 3 months to complete their portfolio. This extension will be automatically granted for all candidates and you will not need to contact the CiLCA Administrator. This automatic extension will be reviewed at the end of June. In the meantime all registered candidates who have attended relevant training should continue to submit work when it has been completed to an appropriate standard. New candidates are reminded that they should not register for CiLCA until they have a training programme in place.

This information forms part of a NALC's dedicated webpage on the coronavirus. It should not be used as a substitute for government advice, however, there are some practicalities specific to local (parish and town) councils where we hope this information will help you plan ahead and manage your risks. If you would like further advice and support on any of these topics for your local council then please [contact your local county association](#). This is a fast-moving situation and we will be updating the webpage regularly.