



# Chief executive's bulletin

## Coronavirus

The coronavirus situation is fast-moving and I know a number of you will be worried about its impact. We have produced information related to the Coronavirus for local (parish and town) councils on a [dedicated page on the NALC website](#). This should not be used as a substitute for government advice, however, there are some practicalities specific to local councils where we hope this information will help you plan and manage your risks.

## Coronavirus and cybersecurity

NALC's partners Microshade have also provided some timely additional advice for local councils in this [blog](#), as fraudsters are exploiting the spread of Coronavirus to facilitate various types of fraud and cybercrime.

## Budget 2020

In his Budget on 11 March, the new chancellor of the exchequer, Rishi Sunak MP, set out his plan to support public services, individuals and businesses that may be affected by the coronavirus. NALC had called for the chancellor to renew the government's commitment to end the toilet tax, [which I'm delighted he did!](#) You can read more in our [news story](#) including our initial reaction to the Budget.

## Lobby Day success!

And throughout the day on 10 March, we held our parliamentary engagement day – Lobby Day – which combined with other meetings and events taking place through the month will see us engage with around 100 MPs. You can read more in our [news story](#) including the speech to National Assembly by the co-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on local democracy, Richard Holden MP.

## **Communities Partnership Board**

On 9 March I attended a meeting of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Communities Partnership Board, this brings together representatives from around 20 national community and voluntary sector bodies with senior civil servants working on the government's communities agenda, here's a summary:

- Officials set out the new government's emerging thinking and confirmed that they were working on a Devolution white paper which would go further than elected mayors and embrace onward devolution
- Several questions were posed about how to strengthen local councils which we will be responding to, including through a Devolution task and finish group
- A discussion on the £150m Community Ownership Fund and we will be exploring further with officials the relevance for our sector.
- There was also an opportunity to flag up concerns with officials such as reviewing some statutory requirements and timescales if the Coronavirus situation deteriorates.

## **NALC National Assembly**

NALC's National Assembly met on 10 March in Westminster at the start of our annual Lobby Day, and while there were many comings and goings as Assembly members met their MPs, here are some headlines:

- NALC is aiming to produce some simple guidance on the web accessibility regulations, prepared by Cllr Mark Harris, by the end of March
- It was agreed the next round of committee meetings would be via telephone conference, and in extreme and urgent organisational decisions would be taken by the Management Board or the chairman and vice-chairmen in consultation with the chief executive
- Our chairman, Cllr Sue Baxter, reported back on her meeting that morning with Nigel Huddleston MP, minister at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and their representative on COBRA; he saw a potentially big role for our councils during the current situation, keeping an eye on vulnerable people and encouraging new volunteers to help out
- The Policy Committee had instigated work around climate change and devolution, with task and finish groups being established
- Councillors exchanged information on the six regional groupings of county associations which although working very differently, were perceived as being extremely valuable and should continue to be developed; it was agreed that NALC will send a representative to their meetings

## **NALC Finance and Scrutiny Committee**

NALC's Finance and Scrutiny Committee was held on 25 February at the NALC office, here's a summary:

- Cllr Peter Davey was re-elected unopposed as chairman, who welcomed new members Cllrs John Plant, Lorraine Rappè and Gordon Thurston
- The Committee received accounts for the 9 months to 31 December which showed a surplus ahead of budget, the estimated projected year-end also indicates a small surplus which is an improvement on the previous estimate
- Reports were received from officers and it was noted that there is some dependency on events and projects in the last quarter, some of which may not be receivable in this financial year, however, there is no significant concern at this stage
- Councillors also received a budget document which will be examined in more detail once the year-end is available, this will form the basis for the recommendations to be put to the 2020 AGM for the 2021/22 affiliations
- Bank balances reflect the surplus and the year-end results brought forward

### **Latest DIS**

Today we published Direct Information Service (DIS) 958, our fortnightly publication keeping you up-to-date with the latest news including a round-up of government statements and consultations, planning, rural affairs, funding opportunities, events and a recap of NALC's biggest stories — [find out more and get the latest news directly to your inbox](#)

### **Out and about**

Our head of member services, Charlotte Eisenhart, attended the Derbyshire Association of Local Councils Spring seminar on 12 March. The event covered a range of topics including youth engagement and tackling loneliness, with Charlotte speaking about the [Local Council Award Scheme](#) and facilitating an interactive workshop to help councils get a taste of what the application process for the scheme looks like.

### **And finally...**

Just a reminder about the groundbreaking research on dementia and local councils we are undertaking with the University of Plymouth. The research aims to find out what local councils are doing to help support their communities on dementia. So far we've received over 150 responses to the [survey](#) which is great, but there's still plenty of time before the 17 April deadline, so please take a few minutes to fill it in – thank you!

*Jonathan Owen*



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