

From: **National Association of Local Councils** newsletter@nalc.gov.uk
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Chief executive's bulletin

Clapping for you too

Like me, I'm sure many of you are standing on your doorstep Thursday evenings clapping not just for carers but all those working in public services during this difficult time. My applause very much has you in mind too, and I want to again extend the thanks and appreciation from myself, our chairman, Cllr Sue Baxter, and all at NALC, for everything you are doing to play your part in supporting your community. Thank you!

NALC Coronavirus page and newsletters

Our dedicated [coronavirus page](#) on the NALC website is the main source of information and guidance for local (parish and town) councils and county associations and has now received nearly 80,000 hits. Updates this week (and highlighted in two dedicated newsletters) covered holding remote meetings and the great discount NALC has secured on a Zoom subscription, new regulations to extend audit deadlines, neighbourhood planning, and local council meetings. Please do continue to make use of this resource, and can I ask county association colleagues to let local councils know about it too.

Local audit and update to practitioners guide

While I'm pleased the government listened and acted on our call for the need to extend audit deadlines, I'm disappointed they didn't accept our proposal for this to be at least three months, rather than the two months extension contained in the regulations. But coupled with our pressure on the government to allow remote meetings, I hope this flexibility will help councils. The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance published the new [Practitioners Guide 2020/21](#) at the end of March and this will now be supplemented shortly by an addendum setting out information on the new timescales.

MHCLG briefing for local government

I was pleased that on 8 April Sue took part in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) weekly Coronavirus briefing teleconference for local government by the secretary of state, Robert Jenrick. This followed our successful representations for our inclusion in the calls involving principal councils. On this occasion, local government minister, Simon Clarke MP, hosted the call and gave an update on shielding, burials and local government finance, with the health minister, Jo Churchill, covering Personal Protective Equipment. One point made by the minister was he intends all parts of the council family to receive support from the government's financial response. Sue welcomed his comment in a written question submitted during the Question and Answer session, stating it was important local councils weren't overlooked, and that our councils were playing their part in the national effort but were experiencing an impact on cash flow, costs and reduced income. We are following this up with the department and next week we will be publishing a short survey which I hope clerk colleagues will be able to share with us the financial impact on their council; this will be crucial in supporting our case for financial support from the government.

Alzheimer's Society support line

The coronavirus is affecting the most vulnerable in our society, including people living with dementia. Our colleagues at The Alzheimer's Society are continuing to provide up-to-date support for anyone affected by dementia, and during the outbreak, their Dementia Connect support line will remain open every day. If you or anyone you know needs advice or support, please call The Alzheimer's Society on 0333 150 3456. More information, advice and resources on supporting people living with dementia are on their [dedicated web page](#).

NALC Management Board

Our Management Board held a videoconference via Zoom on 7 April, here's a summary:

- The board noted it had been given delegated powers to take urgent decisions and agreed on the following accordingly
- Reaffirming NALC's current priority of responding to Coronavirus with a focus on business continuity, supporting councils and county associations, and engaging with the government, noting other projects and activities would be impacted in the short-term
- The July meeting of National Assembly will be cancelled but a number of usual reports such as the quarterly activity report would still be circulated for comment and any issues of concern discussed at the board's next meeting in

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- Agreed the Finance and Scrutiny Committee would have delegated authority to finalise the end of year accounts
- We're acutely aware of the financial impact of the crisis on councils as well as the county and national associations, stating at this time it has never been more important to have a network of support across the country. Councillors welcomed work underway which includes an assessment of this financial impact through a survey to be circulated shortly, lobbying government, and keeping a close eye on the collection of affiliation fees and timescales to support that network, with councils urged to assist this support network by paying subscriptions promptly where they could.

County officer video conference

This week's video conference with NALC and county officers focussed mainly on supporting councils to hold council meetings remotely following the launch of our guidance on holding remote meetings which are on our [dedicated coronavirus webpage](#). We agreed that county associations would get in touch with each other to share ideas and insights into offering training for councils on remote meetings, and also assess if there are any areas not be able to support members on this issue. Where gaps are identified in the first instance county associations in the region will try to support others that might find it hard or impossible to deliver training and/or guidance for remote meetings. If any region feels that they need support from NALC then we will work together to get something in place. The aim of this is to ensure all councils do get some support, to allow county associations to support one another and to focus NALC's time and resource in the areas that need it most.

New legal briefing

Today we published legal briefing L02-20 on employment law changes which summarises the new changes to employment rights that came in on 6 April including new rights to a written statement of terms, holiday pay reference period adjustment, new parental bereavement law and agency workers. You can find the briefing in the member's area of the [NALC website](#) (login required).

Tree Charter newsletter and Tree Charter Day

Be sure to have a look at March's [Tree Charter newsletter](#)! It outlines the work of two councils – [Dorchester Town Council](#), [Dorset](#) and [Thorpe St. Andrews Town Council, Norfolk](#) – who are doing excellent work around climate change, sustainability and planting trees. And a reminder Tree Charter Day is planned for the 28 November 2020 – this is a great opportunity for councils to order free trees from the [Woodland Trust Community Tree Packs website](#) to arrive nearer to the time. Tree Packs are given on a first come first serve basis, but typically the Tree Nurseries

TREE PLANTS are given on a first come first serve basis, but typically the tree nurseries run out of trees in May! Each Charter Branch is allocated a maximum of 420 trees, so do write 'Charter Branch' next to your name to ensure your application is accepted. For more information about how to get involved in the tree charter please email claire.goldfinch@nalc.gov.uk.

Keeping you informed

Just a reminder that you can keep informed and stay up-to-date on our work supporting councils and county associations through the NALC website and our social media channels [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), or [sign up to receive our newsletters](#).

And finally...

I hope you all have a Happy Easter – at home. Stay safe.

Jonathan Owen



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