



Chief executive's bulletin

Leading the way on virtual meetings

I wanted to start this week by praising the how I've seen the local (parish and town) council sector embrace virtual/remote meetings, with so many of you holding your first-ever meetings using a range of platforms over the last week – a huge well done. And also to say I'm delighted NALC has been leading from the front using videoconferencing for some time (okay we didn't have rules stopping us!), but we've accelerated this over the last month to meetings of our teams, all staff, Committees, county officers, chairman and vice-chairmen, and more.

Our head of policy and communications, Justin Griggs, hosted this week's county officer meeting via Zoom with around 30 colleagues and NALC staff to stay in touch, provide an update on our work and answer questions, and share information.

NALC's senior management team met the chairman and vice chairman via Zoom on 16 April to discuss our current priorities of business continuity, supporting councils and county associations, and engaging with government, as well as them providing an update on what is happening on the ground in their areas. I was struck by the concluding remarks by our chairman, Cllr Sue Baxter, which I wanted to share: "Thank you to everyone at NALC and our county associations for stepping up and responding to the challenge of new ways of working, and adapting to change so quickly". This applies to our councils too so a huge thank you from all of us.

NALC coronavirus page and mailout

Updates to our dedicated [coronavirus page](#) this week (and highlighted in two dedicated newsletters) covered Zoom discount, demonstration video of a virtual meeting, guidance on hosting public meetings, a legal briefing note, advice on cybersecurity and playgrounds. Please do continue to make use of this resource and

let other local councils know about it too. I want to make a special mention of an update to the [Coronavirus case studies](#), this latest version now includes around 150 brilliant examples of local councils supporting their communities; this will be updated again next week with new examples sent into us.

Financial impact survey

We need your help to gather evidence on the financial impact of the coronavirus on local councils. This information is vital to our representations to the government on the loss of income to local councils during these difficult times, and the need for a tailored financial support package for the sector. Earlier this week we published a short survey which includes questions on precept, staffing and income, so clerk colleagues it would be helpful to have this data to hand when [completing the survey](#). Please help us to help you by taking a few minutes to complete the survey as soon as possible or by 24 April at the latest. NALC's Super Councils Network has already completed a separate survey and does not need to complete this survey. We are also working with county officers on a separate survey on the financial impact on county associations.

New legal guidance

This week we published a [legal briefing](#) which gives guidance on the implications for local councils of the Local Government and Police and Crime Commissioner (Coronavirus) (Postponement of Elections and Referendums) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. This includes commentary on the prohibition on holding elections to fill casual vacancies until 6 May 2021.

Select Committee calls Robert Jenrick MP to give evidence

The chairman of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, Clive Betts MP, has written to the secretary of state, Robert Jenrick MP, asking to him to attend and give evidence on the work of his department during the current situation. Sue has written to Clive to welcome and support this move, highlighting the role local councils playing and including the link to the case studies publication, and urging him not to overlook our councils in this session, and offering to brief him and committee further.

New local government minister...

Yesterday it was confirmed that Simon Clarke MP had extended his existing responsibilities for regional growth by taking over as local government minister from Luke Hall MP (who remains a junior minister for rough sleeping and housing). Our chairman, Cllr Sue Baxter, has already written to congratulate him, calling for urgent dialogue with him about the impact of Coronavirus on the local council sector and the

need for support including financial assistance.

... and new shadow secretary of state

Last week the new leader of the Labour Party, Keir Starmer MP, named his new **shadow cabinet**. The shadow secretary of state for communities and local government, Andrew Gwynne MP – who many of you will know from attending and speaking at NALC events and also his interview in *LCR magazine* – stood down from the role. He has been replaced by Steve Reed MP, the former leader of Lambeth Council who previously held the shadow ministerial briefs for local government and more recently civil society. We have already been in touch to congratulate him to organise an early briefing, in particular on the impact of Coronavirus on the local council sector.

Update on pay negotiations

A quick update on the trade union response to the National Employers for local government final pay offers for the four negotiating groups for which they have the responsibility: the main local government workforce, local authority Craftworkers, chief executives and chief officers. The main local government workforce has been **offered improved pay increase of 2.75 per cent from 1 April 2020**, plus an additional one day's leave which would increase the minimum entitlement from 21 to 22 days per year (plus public holidays). This offer would affect over 1 million employees. The unions have responded asking for further consideration, and National Employers will be reviewing the union's response before replying. The circular setting out the employer offers, forwarded yesterday can now be found [here](#).

And finally...

On the [NALC blog](#), colleagues and I reflect on the last month of homeworking and swapping 109 Great Russell Street for our home office.

Jonathan Owen



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Our mailing address is:

National Association of Local Councils
109 Great Russell Street
London, WC1B 3LD
United Kingdom

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