

From: **National Association of Local Councils** newsletter@nalc.gov.uk
Subject:  CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BULLETIN
Date: 7 May 2020 at 17:30
To: clerk@waddingham.gov.uk



Chief executive's bulletin

Coronavirus webpage update

Updates to our dedicated [coronavirus webpage](#) this week include a letter from the secretary of state, Robert Jenrick MP, to all local government employees in England thanking them for their support during the pandemic, and outlining how staff can get tested.

Media coverage on the financial impact on councils

The financial impact on all types of councils has been a particularly hot topic this week, including media coverage on how this is affecting our local (parish and town) councils. BBC News ran a [story by its Midlands political editor, Patrick Burns](#), about Birmingham City Council and Shrewsbury Town Council. This also picked up BBC Radio Shropshire's excellent interview with the Town Council's clerk, Helen Ball, who very articulately explained the effect on their budgets, restating our call for dedicated funding for our sector (you can [listen again](#) between 2:06:46 – 2:15:35). And probably a sector first by getting mentioned in a Number 10 press conference, with BBC's Patrick Burns sticking with council funding including for local councils with the [first question](#) from the media to Robert Jenrick; who reiterated what he said in his letter last week. We are continuing to explore this further with the government and other local government representative bodies.

County officer videoconference

Council finances also featured in our weekly videoconference with county officers, hosted by Charlotte Eisenhart, our head of member services. Around 40 county association staff took part to receive an update from Justin Griggs, head of policy and communications, on what we have learnt from our recent survey on the impact of coronavirus on local council finances, and provide an update on local engagement

with principal councils and MPs. This was followed by a session exploring how county associations are moving to online training and events. As ever, and with a growing number of county associations taking part, it was a great opportunity to connect with colleagues right across the country and share experiences and insights.

Lawyers in Local Government webinar

I was delighted Lawyers in Local Government invited our senior solicitor and legal services manager, Jane Moore, to take part in a live webinar on remote meetings last Wednesday to give a local council perspective and speak about remote meeting experiences so far. John Austin from the Association of Democratic Services Officers also gave a presentation. You can check out the webinar [here](#).

Meeting of Super Councils Network

On 6 May our policy manager, Chris Borg, hosted a videoconference with around a dozen larger local councils from NALC's Super Councils Network, covering the results of our recent surveys on financial impact and updates on their dialogue with principal councils and MPs.

Communities Prepared

I'm pleased to be in touch with Communities Prepared – a nationwide community resilience programme which equips communities to prepare for, respond to and recover from, emergencies. Our project officer, Claire Goldfinch, [wrote a blog](#) for their website highlighting the work of local councils in supporting their communities during the pandemic. [Communities Prepared](#) have a range of training related to emergency preparedness for local communities which can be accessed by registering as a member (for free!).

Rural Coalition

Following its remote meeting this week, the rural coalition – made up of NALC and 12 other key national organisations – has written to the secretary of state for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, George Eustice MP. The letter calls on the government to consider the implications for rural people and businesses as it reviews the current lockdown situation, and ensure the full engagement of local communities, local business leaders and local government in its planning and implementation. It also called for a future national recovery plan with a strong rural component.

NALC elections research

Today we published our most extensive research report on elections, covering the local council elections held in many parts of the country twelve months ago. Some

quick snapshots include:

- 53% of councils and councillors used social media to promote elections
- 71% of councils want to pilot online voting
- 62% of councils would like the election candidate form simplified
- 65% of councils used NALC's resources
- 51% of councils were aware of NALC's *Make a Change* campaign.

However, the report does throw up some significant challenges as 71% of all seats were uncontested. But I think this is a challenge we can address as a sector through greater collaboration between NALC, county associations, councils and residents. We will be using this report to spark conversations with colleagues and stakeholders about our findings, and recommendations such as making the election process simpler and more cohesive. You can read more in our news story [here](#).

In and about

It's important that having to stay at home doesn't stop us being able to meet and hear from county associations and local councils through our 'in and about'. This week Charlotte joined a chairman's networking session organised by the Norfolk Association of Local Councils and today is attending the meeting of the Worcestershire Association of Local Council's executive committee. Today I joined a meeting of Northumberland Association of Local Councils executive which I was pleased to include representatives from Newcastle City Council and Northumberland County Council.

And finally...

This weekend the nation will commemorate and celebrate #VEDay75, marking the end of the war in Europe. During today's videoconference in Northumberland I heard about how Ashington Town Council had planted 75 trees as a commemoration, and I know many of you are marking the occasion in your own innovative ways, with some highlighted [here](#) by our partners BHIB Councils Insurance. If you're using Twitter to share what you're doing, do tag [@nalc](#) in your posts so we can also share on our feed.

Jonathan Owen



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