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Chief executive's bulletin

Coronavirus webpage update

Updates to our dedicated [coronavirus webpage](#) this week included the letter from the secretary of state, government guidance on getting tested, homeworking expenses and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Secretary of state's letter to local councils

I was pleased to see the brilliant work of local (parish and town) councils in supporting their communities commended by the secretary of state for communities and local government, Robert Jenrick MP, in his open [letter](#) to local councils, and recognition for the financial challenges some of you are facing. I am not sure that the solution proposed is necessarily the right one, and as our chairman, Cllr Sue Baxter, says in [our initial reaction](#), we are exploring this further with the government and other local government representative bodies such as the Local Government Association.

Media coverage

We've had some success, both nationally and regionally, in the media too for your brilliant work during the coronavirus crisis. Nationally, the independent news brand for the UK public sector, *PSE (Public Sector Executive)*, ran our story which you can read [here](#), and our head of policy and communications, Justin Griggs, is quoted in *Local Government Chronicle* [here](#) on our call for financial support. Locally, our councils have also been successful, with West Berkshire councils being featured in the *Penny Post* [here](#), Harling Parish Council in Norfolk made the local press with an article in the *Eastern Daily Press* [here](#), *Shropshire Newsroom* highlighting local councils coming together [here](#).

Meeting with shadow secretary of state

I very much welcomed this week early engagement with the new shadow secretary of state, Steve Reed MP, in his introductory meeting with **Sue**. Held via videoconference (obviously!), Sue focussed on the current pandemic and provided a briefing on key issues facing the sector including the financial impact, which the shadow minister agreed to take up with the government.

Meeting with Defra

Justin and I had a virtual meeting via videoconference with officials from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on 29 April about coronavirus and issues in rural areas. It was good to update them on **how local councils are supporting communities** and hot topics such as meetings, audit, elections, financial impact, support for village halls, our engagement with stakeholders and beginning to consider the recovery phase.

County Officer videoconference

Our head of member services, Charlotte Eisenhart, hosted our weekly video meeting with county officers on 29 April. As ever it was great to see the wider team and for us all to share our experiences and insights. Topics this week included local audit and end of year accounts, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, and the future of council meetings (remote, face to face or a mix?). Do still send us your views on the latter to policycomms@nalc.gov.uk.

Tree Charter newsletter

Be sure to check out **April's tree charter newsletter** outlining the great work of **Sandford Parish Council in Devon, Saddleworth Parish Council in Yorkshire** and, **Stanley Parish Council in Derbyshire** around climate change, sustainability and planting trees. Don't forget local councils can also sign up to become Woodland Trust volunteers by signing up [here](#).

And finally...

"Pinch punch, it's the first of the month". Have a good weekend and stay safe!

Jonathan Owen



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