



Chief executive's bulletin

Business and Planning Act

The Business and Planning Act received Royal Assent on 22 July, just under a month since it was first introduced by the government aimed at helping the economy recover from the coronavirus pandemic. A **collection of planning guidance**, including on extension of certain planning permissions, has been published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). But I'm particularly pleased to let you know **we persuaded the government** to use the legislation to extend virtual meetings rules to include parish meetings. Regulations are due to be published shortly, coming into force on 1 August, and we will be updating our guidance accordingly.

AGAR deadline end of August

The Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments Limited (SAAA) has informed us that just 33% of Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) forms have been received. This leaves 6,570 not yet submitted with just 6 weeks remaining until the statutory deadline. Only 20% of parish meetings have submitted their forms, partly as they have not been permitted to hold remote meetings, until now of course. Can I strongly encourage you to complete these important returns before the end of August – please remember if this deadline is not met and auditors have to send out reminders, you will be charged per the statutory fee scales!

Rebuilding Communities online events series

Some events in our new online Rebuilding Communities series are now **open for bookings**. In August our chairman, Cllr Sue Baxter, will be joined by a panel including the chairman of the Local Government Association, Cllr James Jamieson, to discuss how local councils can help build back local communities after the coronavirus

pandemic. Then in September, we are bringing together a panel to discuss the environmental perspective of community recovery. And over the next few weeks do lookout for more information about our Health and Wellbeing Week from 26-30 October – so watch this space!

Updated government guidance on playgrounds

I was pleased NALC was invited to engage with MHCLG to feedback concerns from the sector on their guidance on play areas and outdoor gyms. After feedback from a range of stakeholders, including NALC and Society of Local Council Clerks, this **guidance has been updated**. The changes are both in tone and content and it is now more practical and easy to interpret. So if your council does operate any outdoor play areas or gyms do revisit this guidance.

New legal guidance

We have reissued Legal Topic Note 79 on staff pensions to update the content (for example the figures in paragraph 7) and make it more relevant and remove out of date information. You can find this in the members' area of the **NALC website**, login required.

County officer weekly meeting

This week's meeting with county officers included a presentation from Linda Hammond, project officer, on a proposal for a new national e-learning platform. We will be piloting this with several county associations over the Summer and are confident this will give county associations the tools they need to develop an even wider and more accessible training offer for local councils.

Funding coverage

Do check out the **strong article by Justin in local government magazine LGC** arguing for fair funding (but be quick as LGC have kindly put it in front of the paywall, for now!). Also, well done to the Yorkshire Local Councils Association for their representations leading to South Yorkshire mayor, Dan Jarvis MP, **getting behind our funding campaign** (will other metro mayors do likewise?), and securing an **Early Day Motion** from Jon Trickett MP calling on the government to provide support for local councils.

And finally...

Congratulations to those local councils who received an award through Local Council Award Scheme during June and July:

- Salisbury City Council, Wiltshire (Quality Gold Award)
- Chippenham Town Council, Wiltshire (Quality Gold Award)
- Anstey Parish Council, Leicestershire and Rutland (Quality Gold Award)
- Whittington Parish Council, Worcestershire (Quality Award)
- Grundisburgh and Culpho Parish Council, Suffolk (Foundation Award)
- Clive Parish Council, Shropshire (Foundation Award)
- Churchdown Parish Council, Gloucestershire (Foundation Award)
- Hatfield Peverel Parish Council, Essex (Foundation Award)
- Harling Parish Council, Norfolk (Foundation Award)

Following the two pilot phases, the national panel recommences in September and we are seeking panel members, so if you are interested you can express your interest by **completing the form** or for further information contact linda.hammond@nalc.gov.uk.

Jonathan Owen



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