



E-NEWS UPDATE...

Lincolnshire Councils Covid-19 Impact Survey

A huge thank you to those Councils that have taken the time to complete and return the Covid-19 Impact Survey. Please keep the information coming, so we have an idea of what is happening within our communities and the financial impact it has/may have on the council.

At 12 noon on Tuesday 7 July, there was a meeting with The Local Democracy All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) to raise awareness of the role local councils have played in supporting their communities during the coronavirus pandemic and the impact on their finances. Lincolnshire's MPs were invited to join the meeting, along with NALC officers.

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LALC News Summer Edition 2020 – Share Your Good News Stories!

As always, we are looking to share Good News Stories in the next edition of LALC News which will be published in July/August. Most especially, for this edition, we are looking to receive stories of fantastic community support and Councils and community members going above and beyond during the Covid-19 Outbreak.

Please could those interested share a small article with us at amy.bestwick@lalc.co.uk by Friday 18th July 2020 and we will endeavour to share as many of these as possible.

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LALC have received lots of queries from councils with regard to the new LCC websites, training, uploading the information, etc. I have contacted LCC with those concerns, please see response below from Bex Allen:

Some parish councils will not have been contacted about training dates yet as we are doing this in two sections, those that had training, who have already been emailed and those that haven't.

The councils that didn't have training due to their sessions being cancelled will be contacted with training dates this week.

It is our intention to do videos however due to limited staff resources and a large section of the team now covering the emergency cell, the priority has been to get the websites finished and the training sorted.

We will look at this as soon as we can, but in the meantime we encourage anyone looking after the websites to book on to the rearranged training and make full use of the users guides being sent out.

We are happy to help clerks as much as possible with any difficulties they have using the website and they are welcome to email us or call with any issues. The best email address to get us on is LCCtownandparishnews@lincolnshire.gov.uk

We can call clerks back if needed if they email us first.

However, we cannot move content across for councils as unfortunately we do not have the staff available to do this.

All the councils are being provided with a ready built template as their website, where in most cases they can just edit it.

The most important thing is that they get the content moved across that they have to have on their website as part of their legal requirements. I would recommend to clerks that this is their priority, especially if they only have limited time. Everything else they can be added as and when they are able to e.g. community page content.

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A reminder to councils

CiLCA deadlines pushed back

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 situation, all CiLCA candidates who are currently registered will be granted an additional three months to complete their portfolio. This extension will be automatically granted for all candidates and you will not need to contact the CiLCA administrator. This automatic extension will be reviewed at the end of June. In the meantime, all registered candidates who have attended relevant training should continue to submit work when it has been completed to an appropriate standard. New candidates are reminded that they should not register for CiLCA until they have a training programme in place.

Data protection and GDPR

On 12 March the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) [released a statement](#) to reassure organisations seeking to support their communities at this time. It includes this information: "Data protection and electronic communication laws do not stop Government, the NHS or any other health professionals from sending public health messages to people, either by phone, text or email as these messages are not direct marketing. Nor does it stop them using the latest technology to facilitate safe and speedy consultations and diagnoses. Public bodies may require additional collection and sharing of personal data to protect against serious threats to public health.

The ICO is a reasonable and pragmatic regulator, one that does not operate in isolation from matters of serious public concern. Regarding compliance with data protection, we will take into account the compelling public interest in the current health emergency."

To support this statement the ICO has also produced [further guidance around data protection and coronavirus](#).

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NALC launches publication on website accessibility

NALC has launched a new publication on website accessibility requirements.

The publication provides practical steps that local (parish and town) councils can follow to understand the new regulations, put in place an accessibility statement, and start plans to improve the accessibility of their website.

Many people rely on the internet as a source of information on public services. Local councils already consider those with disabilities when organising events, delivering services and public meetings. Similarly, thought must be given to how accessible information is on council websites. Disabilities can have a significant impact on how a person can access information online, so local councils must make their websites as accessible as possible. Even making small adjustments to a website can have a considerable effect.

To reflect the need for accessing information online from public sector organisations, The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 aim to ensure reasonable adjustments to websites are made, so they are accessible to people with various disabilities. From 23 September 2020, all local councils must have an action plan and an accessibility statement in place and would have started work to their websites to become more accessible.

[Read the website accessibility requirements publication](#)

New model code of conduct consultation

The Local Government Association (LGA) has launched a [consultation](#) on a new [model member code of conduct](#).

High standards of conduct and behaviour are of huge importance to the local (parish and town) council sector as they are needed to protect the integrity of decision making, maintain public confidence, and safeguard local democracy.

NALC therefore strongly encourages local councils and county associations of local councils to consider the proposed new [model member code of conduct](#) and respond to the LGA [consultation](#) before the deadline of **17 August 2020**.

We all know the impact that poor behaviour, bullying and harassment can have on individuals and on local councils as organisations, so it is vital we continue to work as a sector to improve standards and push for further reform, at both local and national level.

Therefore, while NALC will be responding to the consultation and engaging further with the LGA, we are also calling for further action by the government to introduce a new power for local authorities to suspend councillors for a period of up to six months, and for the Committee on Standards in Public Life to review progress on the implementation of the reports wider recommendations.

Local council meetings

Our [dedicated Coronavirus webpage](#) has been updated with a statement on local (parish and town) council meetings. Following the government announcement of further easing of lockdown restrictions from 4 July, both NALC and the Society of Local Council Clerks are strongly advising local councils to continue to meet remotely, without the need for face-to-face contact. You can read the statement in the Local Council Activity and Operations section, under Local meetings

Public toilets

On 28 June, Local government minister, Simon Clarke MP and environment minister, Rebecca Pow MP [wrote to councils](#) setting out the government's position on public access to household waste recycling centres and municipal public toilets, which includes government guidance on opening public toilets.

Re-opening and hygiene

Playgrounds must be opened in a safe way in accordance with government guidance. If the playground remains closed then it is important that it is still inspected. It is also important that any closure measures (such as signage and locks) remain in place and remain effective. These measures will need to be checked during routine inspections.

Risk assessment

To support local councils using the *Risk assessment for COVID-19* guide – the templates for [council reopening checklist](#) and [general workplace risk assessment](#) have been made editable.

Supporting local councils to reopen playgrounds safely

On Thursday 2 July, a number of national bodies with interests in play NALC (National Association of Local Councils), SLCC (the Society of Local Council Clerks), The Play Safety Forum (PSF), Association of Play Industries (API) & The Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII) met with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to discuss the current government guidance. All involved were delighted by the enthusiasm shown for the provision of play, with it having huge mental and physical benefits to young people particularly at a time when their abilities to enjoy play outside of their homes have been curtailed during the current crisis.

Following representations from NALC and SLCC we were pleased to be invited to this meeting. We had positive discussions with MHCLG colleagues on recent government guidance on managing playgrounds and outdoor gyms. NALC and SLCC welcome [API's guidance](#) that provides practical steps for playground operators. It refers to the Government guidance and sets out examples of practice that may be appropriate for local (parish and town) councils or other owners and operators to consider when opening their play areas from 4 July onwards.

BHIB Councils Insurance has also a set of templates and resources to help councils risk assess play areas and other council assets to consider if and how they can be safely re-opened. These are available on [NALC's coronavirus webpage](#).

NALC chairman, Cllr Sue Baxter, said: "Play areas occupy a special place in local communities and are a central way to how many local (parish and town) councils contribute

to the health and wellbeing of their place. I am pleased that we have been able to represent the challenges local councils are facing in reopening play areas safely and that we now have in place a committed dialogue with government officials to ensure that we all can support local councils at this time. We are in challenging and difficult times, the threat of coronavirus is still very real. It may be that it will not be safe to reopen a number of play areas at this time, but with the additional resources we have provided I am confident local councils will be able to make the decisions that are appropriate for their communities at this time".

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**Coronavirus Job Retention Grant Scheme
Flexible Furlough Leave Update**

24th June 2020

As you are no doubt aware, the Government has announced that workers who were on Furlough Leave before the 10th June 2020, can return to work on a Part Time/Reduced hours basis from the 1st July.

- It is up to Employers to decide what hours should be worked, as long as they would fall within Employees normal hours of work.
- Staff will get paid 100% of their normal hourly rate of pay for the hours that they work.
- Employers will be able to claim 80% of the difference between the part time worked hours, and the workers contracted hours, through the Job Retention Grant.
- Employers will need to get an updated "Flexible Furlough" Agreement signed, see attached. This would probably be signed by the worker on the day they start their part time/reduced hours.
- The original Furlough Leave Agreement stated that workers could be recalled at short notice. As long as Employers provide "reasonable" advance notice, and the part time hours are during the workers normal hours, the Employer is within their rights to make this request.

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