

24 MARCH 2020

NALC AND SLCC JOINT STATEMENT

As the coronavirus pandemic continues and the UK enters this new phase of government measures, we wanted to reach out to the local (parish and town) council sector. These are unprecedented and challenging times, and our first thoughts are for the health and welfare of yourselves and your communities.

We are hearing stories from up and down the country of local councils stepping up and supporting their local communities and most vulnerable. Such as Woodbridge Town Council in Suffolk, which has set-up an emergency response group of councillors and volunteers to assist with collection/delivery of medicines, shopping, walking the dog or simply being a voice at the end of the phone, and Hagley Parish Council in Worcestershire, which is acting as an information hub and plans to publicise restaurants are offering a delivery service and contact details for NHS helplines. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has collated further case studies and is keen to find out more from a wide range of local councils — tell us more at www.nalc.gov.uk/coronavirus.

Following the prime minister's announcement, we wanted to reiterate the importance of following the new rules on **staying at home and away from others**. This guidance impacts on all of us and there are the **additional need to self-isolate or shield from contact** depending on your situation. It essential that we all follow these rules to slow the pandemic and to support our NHS. Both NALC and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) are asking local councils to stop holding any physical meetings or gatherings during this time. This includes full council, committee meetings, annual parish or council meetings. These are extraordinary times, and they call for extraordinary measures. The health and safety of your staff, councillors and local communities should be your first concern.

The government is working on a Coronavirus Bill and associated legislation that will allow your council meetings to be held remotely and to make decisions without the need for physically meeting. This will be introduced soon, and so we encourage you to be patient. We are making representations to ministers, parliamentarians, civil servants and the Local Government Association to ensure our sector's concerns are considered and addressed and will be providing updates to our respective members as soon as further information is forthcoming.

NALC and SLCC are in regular contact to share knowledge, understand the sector's concerns and provide mutual support for our members.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Owen, chief executive of NALC

Rob Smith, chief executive of the SLCC