

Information sent to the Parish Clerks for distribution via websites

Hi All

Below is advice which Worcestershire ALC have sent to their members and they have confirmed they are happy for us to send on to our members – the first couple of paragraphs refer to Zoom – which I have just sent out and the rest covers annual meetings, home working etc so is very useful information for you all.

As we are in a very changing situation as and when we receive guidance from National we will send out asap.

Hopefully you were able to watch the PM's address to the nation last night. Below is the advice we are giving to Town and Parish Councils

Meetings

As per the PM's address gatherings of more than 2 people from different households will be dispersed. We have been advising for a week or so not to meet unless absolutely necessary. **To be clear you should not meet** in person.

There are a number of apps and websites which can be used to host conference calls or virtual meetings. We have hosted one Clerks meeting on Zoom and will be doing another today.

I would advise where possible to use Zoom. There are time restrictions with the free package, however, it does allow 40 minutes which should be enough time to transact essential business and delegate powers to the Clerk for many of the other activities that might need to be processed.

The two good things about zoom is that links can be provided to residents (or put up on the website) so that there is still transparency and in these times of being at home it might provide a good audience and potential Councillors in the future. Also the

meeting can easily be recorded so that there is an unambiguous record of the decisions.

If you are unable to hold meetings like this then I would recommend decisions via email where the way Councillors have voted can be evidenced.

While it is technically not legal to hold meetings remotely or to make decisions via email. It is felt that with not being able to meet that Government will shortly bring in measure to allow this way of working.

Annual Parish/Town Meetings

These should also be cancelled if not done so already.

We expect that due to the restrictions announced last night there will be guidance from government on a delay in the requirement to hold these meetings

Annual Council Meetings

These meetings should also be cancelled if not done so already. We expect that due to the restrictions announced last night there will be guidance from government on a delay in the requirement to hold these meetings or to hold them remotely/virtually.

The Chairman of the Council will stay in post until they resign or a meeting can be held (possibly remotely/virtually)

Play areas and other assets

ALL PLAY AREAS SHOULD BE CLOSED FROM TODAY.

Signs should be placed up stating that the play areas will be closed per government instructions and that safety checks will not be carried out during this period.

It will be best to take a photo of closing all the play areas, for two reasons, one to post up on social media to make residents aware and secondly to evidence in regard to insurance claims should people violate the closure.

If the play area is in the open (i.e. no fence around it) then tape should be wrapped round the equipment in addition to the signage.

If there is fencing (even if very small) then the gates should be locked (chains and padlock preferably, zip ties if not and tape if no alternative) in addition to the signage. If the fencing is small (i.e. able to be stepped over) then I would advise to also tap the equipment up.

Community Halls/ Town Halls and Council Offices

These should also have been closed or if not already then closed today. With staff working from home.

Allotments

There is no guidance so far from Government to say allotments should be closed. It could be argued that they are a source of exercise and food production. We advise if you have allotments to keep an eye on the Allotment Society Website to see if the guidance changes

<https://www.nsalg.org.uk/news/covid19-information/>

Cemetery

Cemetery workers, both admin and manual workers, are classed as key workers and will be allowed out to undertake their work. Preparations should be made to continue the work required. We would advise to keep up to date with any changes via the

ICCM <https://www.iccm-uk.com/iccm/>

Coronavirus Case Studies

NALC have created a [Coronavirus case studies](#) publication. It includes the great work of 3 Parishes in the County.

Local councils supporting their communities

Classed as essential work local schemes should be progressed if they are distributing food and/or medicines.

These should follow government guidelines on meetings and social distancing.

We expect further announcements in the coming days from government and the County Council and Districts. We are working in partnership with these bodies.

Staff

Home working

Staff should be helped to work from home where possible. This mostly happens anyway with the majority of Clerks

Litterpickers/bin collections in parks

From a public safety/cleanliness point of view these staff will need to keep working while the parks are open. However staff should abide by social distancing

requirements and where possible co-ordinate their activities for quieter parts of the day

Co-Vid19 issues

ACAS had put together a set of pages on advice for those employers dealing with Co-Vid 19

<https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>

Finance

In a press release the government last week announced:

The deadline for local government financial audits will be extended to 30 September 2020

We are waiting for the government to issue further guidance however with the restrictions on meetings and the requirements for internal audit, access for electors to view the accounts and the requirement for signatures on the Annual Return it is likely this will be delayed.

Spending money

Within your financial regulations permissions should already be in place for the Clerk to undertake emergency expenditure if required,

In addition there will be a default permission to spend against agreed budgets.

Online banking and Cheques

We advise that if you are currently undertaking online banking to continue with this

If you are not currently using online banking we recommend that you look into the possibility of arranging it as restrictions may go on for a long time

If you are unable to arrange online banking then we would advise to make arrangements for cheques to be signed while adhering to government guidelines on social distancing and self isolation

Kind regards

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