OALC Newsletter

February 2021

# The headlines

**Latest Corona Advice READ THIS -** page 2- 5

**OALC -** subs, banking survey, helpful hint, Clear Utilities- pages 5-7

**LOCAL NEWS - pages 9-15**

* **OCC Census, covid tests**
* **District Council’s**
* **Armed Forces Bill, ToE**
* **Oxfordshire Growth Board**
* **Ox-Cam ARC**
* **Oxford 2050**

**NATIONAL NEWS - pages 15 -22**

* **Sec. 137**
* **Pay claim**
* **Sleeping councillors – present?**
* **Beauty at the heart of planning!**
* **Handforth Parish Council**
* **Elections**
* **And plenty more articles of interest**

**Consultations - 4 of them**

**Financial briefing –** VAT now we’ve left the EU

**Employment briefing –** Handforth, LGPS and Uber



**Training Programme 2021**

<https://www.oalc.org.uk/events>

All training sessions are on line.

**See page 30 onwards for details of our courses**

**VACANCIES**

* + **Sandford on Thames PC – Clerk**
  + **Cropredy PC – Clerk/RFO**
  + **Witney Town Council- various jobs**

## latest corona virus advice - all the updated advice is below

PLEASE read this section and check the latest [central government guidance](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) (updated 22nd February) as it is constantly evolving. **The headings may look familiar but there are links to all the latest updates.**

1. **A ‘roadmap’ for easing the lockdown was announced on 22nd February** -<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021>

**Stage one is in two parts:**

**8th March**

* All schools and colleges will reopen
* University students can return for practical courses. There will be a review by the end of the Easter holidays for all other students
* Face coverings are recommended in class for secondary school students and also for parents and staff in primary schools
* Wraparound childcare can also return for vulnerable pupils and where it is needed for parents or carers to go to work, support groups or to seek medical care
* Two people from different households can meet outside for recreation, which can include "a coffee on a bench"
* One nominated person can visit care homes, but will need PPE, a lateral flow test and to "keep physical contact to a minimum"

Lockdown rules from 8th March

* Stay home, only leave for work, essential shopping, exercise or medical appointments
* Exercise allowed outdoors once a day, in your local area, You can exercise with your household, support bubble, or one other person
* All schools open, with outdoor after-school sports and activities allowed
* Two people can meet outdoors to socialize e.g. to sit down for a coffee, drink or picnic
* Care home residents are allowed one regular visitor, with whom they can hold hands
* No household mixing indoors or outdoors unless in your support or childcare bubble
* Non-essential shops, leisure and entertainment venues closed
* Pubs and restaurants closed but takeaway food permitted.

**29th March**

* People will be allowed to meet outside, either with one other household or within the "rule of six", including in private gardens
* The stay at home rule will end, but the government will urge people to stay local as much as possible
* Outdoor sport facilities will reopen, including golf courses and tennis and basketball courts
* Formally organised outdoor sports can also restart
* Parents and children groups can return but are capped at 15 and must be outdoors. Indoor groups can take place for vulnerable children and where parents need the groups to go to work
* Weddings attended by up to six people can take place in any circumstances

**Stage two**

**No earlier than 12 April:**

* All shops allowed to open (yay bookshops!)
* Restaurants and pub gardens will be allowed to serve customers sitting outdoors, including alcohol
* Gyms and spas can reopen for individuals and households
* Hairdressers, beauty salons and other "close contact services" can reopen
* UK domestic holidays away from home permitted, with self-contained accommodation able to reopen for use by members of the same household
* Children allowed to attend indoor play activities, with up to 15 parents or guardians allowed to join them
* Zoos, theme parks and drive-in cinemas can reopen
* Libraries and community centres can reopen
* Weddings attended by up to 15 people can take place

**Stage three**

**No earlier than 17 May:**

* People can meet in groups of up to 30 outdoors
* Six people or two households can meet indoors
* Pubs, restaurants and other hospitality venues can seat customers indoors
* Up to 30 people can meet to celebrate weddings or other life events, like christenings
* Remaining outdoor entertainment, such as outdoor theatres and cinemas can open
* Indoor entertainment such as museums, theatres, cinemas and children's play areas can open
* Performances and large events will be subject to limits though. For indoor events they can be at half capacity or 1,000 people, and outdoors they can be at half capacity or 4,000 people - whichever is lower. For large venues (at least 40,000 capacity) up to 10,000 will be allowed to attend
* Hotels, hostels and B&Bs can reopen
* International leisure travel will resume no earlier than 17 May
* Adult indoor group sports and exercise classes can start up again

**Stage four**

**No earlier than 21 June:**

* All legal limits on social contact will be removed
* No legal limits on the number of people who can attend weddings, funerals and other life events. From April, the government will run pilots for events such as large weddings, festivals and work conferences. This will help to determine how measures such as enhanced testing might allow large groups to attend without social distancing
* Nightclubs will be allowed to reopen

**What are the four tests for easing restrictions?**

Each stage will be a minimum of five weeks apart. Four conditions must be met at each stage before proceeding to the next one:

* The coronavirus vaccine programme continues to go to plan
* Vaccines are sufficiently reducing the number of people dying with the virus or needing hospital treatment
* Infection rates do not risk a surge in hospital admissions
* New coronavirus variants do not fundamentally change the risk of lifting restrictions

1. **Meetings**.

The Regulations on virtual meetings – [The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (No.392)](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/392/contents/made) run until 7th May 2021.

There is still much debate in central and local government circles about what the best way forward is and what or whether legislation is necessary to enable virtual meetings to continue.

OALC lobbied our MP’s in early February, meeting with several of them (virtually) pressing the case for the Regulations to be rolled over for one more year while a more considered review of the longer term vision for local authority meetings is undertaken. We collected and passed on your comments on virtual meetings to all the MP’s. We followed up with another email later in the month pressing the case again. But we are still waiting for definitive guidance.

Almost every organisation or body concerned with local government is lobbying for a continuation of virtual meetings but there is a bewildering silence from the centre, despite lots of rumours and whispers behind the scenes.

NALC has suggested that councils prepare for a return to physical meetings

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/coronavirus#preparing-for-the-possible-return-of-face-to-face-meetings>

We will keep you informed as best we can when there is hard, factual news.

1. **Community Halls and sports - no change**

**Updated advice from 5th January 2021** from the government on the use of community facilities https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities

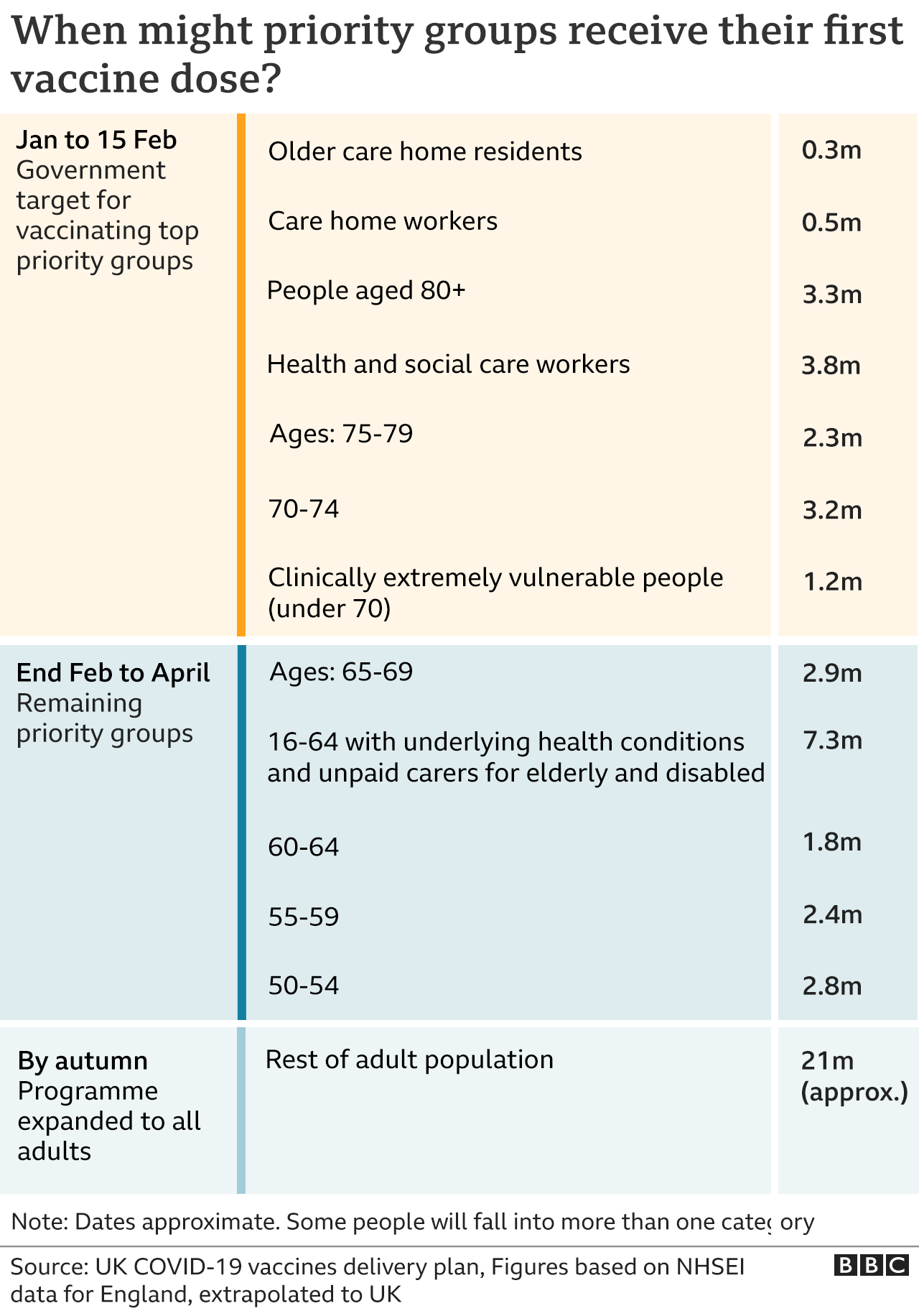
Advice and support is available from [Community First Oxfordshire](https://www.communityfirstoxon.org/)

ACRE has produced a [very helpful visual guide](https://acre.org.uk/cms/resources/covid-19-safer-community-centres-aug-20.pdf) about adapting existing Village Halls and Community Centres to being more covid friendly.

1. **Managing playgrounds and outside gyms updated** **28th January 2021 – no change**

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-playgrounds-and-outdoor-gyms/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-playgrounds-and-outdoor-gyms

1. **Reopening your own offices** (if you have one!). **no change** Please follow the government guidance on safe working updated 6th January 2021 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings>
2. **Charities,** as many councillors are charity trustees you may find this government advice for the charity sector helpful **updated 8th January 2021 no change -** https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-the-charity-sector?utm\_source=833eb9e6-213d-4b07-a327-d894223d0126&utm\_medium=email&utm\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\_content=daily
3. Government advice on **accessing open spaces** **updated 13th January 2021 no change** https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-on-accessing-green-spaces-safely?utm\_source=7e48c2c5-d07b-4c05-944d-f042d073c1da&utm\_medium=email&utm\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\_content=daily



## OALC – subscription invoices for 2021-22 and another thank you

Last year we managed to get our membership subscription invoices in the post to you before the world shut down in late March. Since then we have invested in having our database rewritten so this year you will be getting the membership subscription invoice by email very soon.

There is a small increase from 13.165 pence per elector to 13.757 ppe this represents a 4% increase, most of which is attributable to NALC.

**BANKING SURVEY – Thank you.**

The service which the main High Street banks provide for parish councils has been the topic of low level grumbles for some years. The most frequent complaints are around:

* Length of time it takes to alter signatories
* Not actually understanding what parish councils are, they aren’t charities or third sector organisations
* Sheer bad customer service – hours, weeks, months, even years taken to sort out problems etc.

Some time ago we and other CALC’s asked NALC to take this up on behalf of our member councils. We have joined with Lincolnshire and Worcestershire to survey members and get their views on a few simple questions about banking. This has certainly touched a raw nerve for some of you, not all but a significant number. We are collating responses before forwarding to NALC who are meeting with members of [UK Finance.](https://www.ukfinance.org.uk/) The responses varied hugely, some councils were satisfied but many were not. We are very grateful for you taking the time to give us your views.

Here are a few (anonymized) examples -

* “*Before we changed to Unity we were with Barclays Bank who were an absolute nightmare. Unity are brilliant. On the very odd occasion we’ve had any queries/problems the phone is answered within seconds and the query is also answered by the person answering the phone so you don’t get passed from person to person etc. At one time to sort a query with Barclays it took a total of nearly four hours!!”*
* *“XXX PC does online banking with Santander - it was a nightmare setting up online banking - it took over two years to sort out! “*
* *Setting up signatories, unless they bank with Barclays it is nearly impossible.*
* *Very poor counter service in Banbury where all but one cashier has been removed, so waiting times can be significant.*
* *We do not use electronic banking as having tried the Barclays system as communicated to us, it does not provide the level of service we require. Example being they will only accept a single signature and cannot differentiate between the Clerk [who needs access to move money between accounts or raise payment requests] and named Councillors who should sign cheques. Also appears to be overly complex for our needs. It is also significantly less secure that the manual cheque based process we currently operate, where cheque stubs are initialled alongside invoices. Their system does not provide a record of who requested the payment and who authorised the payment.*
* *The general banking service is fine but there are problems:*
  + *Changing the names associated with the account is difficult and can only be done by post.*
  + *The biggest problem is that one cannot communicate with them by email or secure messaging facility. This would save time waiting for the telephone to be answered at busy times and responding to all the security questions.*
* *POOR COMMUNICATION resulting in prolonged delay in getting authorised signatures altered etc.*
* *Every signatory change is very painful and lengthy*
* *All activities with the bank are very slow, needlessly complicated, and many conversations and correspondence are required*
* *Not considering changing bank - it is difficult to imagine the difficulties this would introduce. I cannot believe any other bank would be any better*
* *WE HAVE BEEN TRYING FOR NEARY 3 YEARS TO GET DUAL-AUTHORISATION IN PLACE FOR ONLINE PAYMENTS, BUT THEY HAVE FAILED TO PROVIDE REQUIRED EQUIPMENT – CARDS AND CARD READERS - TO REGISTERED COUNCILLORS. NOW I HAVE HEARD THAT DUAL-AUTHORISATION IS NOT A SERVICE THEY PROVIDE ANYWAY. WE ARE STILL ISSUING CHEQUES WHICH ARE DIFFICUILT TO GET SIGNED IN LOCKDOWN AND RESULTS IN LATE PAYMENTS (INCLUDING MY SALARY). YOU CANNOT EVER SPEAK TO AN ACTUAL PERSON (IN BRANCH OR ONLINE) WHO CAN HELP OR WHO EVEN KNOWS WHAT THEY ARE TALKING ABOUT.*

## OALC helpful hint – a banking related tale from a member council

The RFO writes:

*“I have just emerged from a weird discussion with HSBC which may also be relevant to any other PCs which use HSBC. It sounds quite trivial but if not addressed will ratchet up completely unwarranted fees over time.*

*We opened the HSBC account in 2014 and signed up to a standard package. I took over as RFO in 2017 and became the Primary User although it seems to have been the case that they treated me for system purposes as still being a secondary user. Despite that I was able to act as if I was the primary user.*

*This month, four years later I spotted a bank charge for "additional services" on our statement.*

*I rang them about this and it seems that the charge relates to an International Payment Facility of £5,000. I pointed out that, as a PC we had no conceivable reason to need to make such payments, to be told that it was a) part of the standard package unless we asked for it to be cancelled and b) that it was a monthly charge that had been inadvertently stopped when I became the RFO. About a month ago I got locked out of the system and it was when I called about that that they told me that I was not set up as the Primary User. So they put that right and, lo and behold, the act of doing so reinstated the monthly charge.*

*They have agreed to cancel the facility and to refund the charges so all is now in order*

*I was not directly involved in opening the account but I have never seen any document warning us of such a charge or what it related to*

*Thus it might be worth emailing your PCs to warn them to investigate this if they are a) using HSBC and b) incurring a £5 monthly charge. The point is that the actual Community Account incurs no charges but the existence of an International Payment facility triggers one.”*

## OALC – possible saving on your councils utility bills



Does your council buy electricity for street lighting and/or buildings?  Do you pull your hair out when you phone round for quotes trying to explain what a parish/town council is and what unmetered supply is?

If you’ve answered “yes” to both questions then CUS may be able to help.  OALC is working with Northamptonshire-based **Clear Utility Solutions (CUS)** to take the pain out of buying electricity for your council.

CUS is a specialist in unmetered supply who know and understand the parish and town council market and have managed to save councils in Northamptonshire in total £27,000 in three months.

Visit the dedicated portal on the CUS web site to get started – <https://www.clearutilitysolutions.com/oalc-partnership>

There are two options: if you have all your paperwork ready and just need a quote choose the Self Serve option.  If you need help to go through the process choose the Easy Serve option and one of the CUS team will get in touch with you.

The plan is to create a buying group of councils meaning that as well as getting great service, member councils will benefit from exclusive pricing too.  And the more councils that use it, the better the prices will be.

Clear Utility Solutions undertakes to always offer a green energy solution whenever they tender for an energy supply and can even calculate approximate carbon savings based on your annual usage data should you wish. Their focus on helping councils to find greener energy has already led to 86,719kg CO2e being prevented from being emitted and this figure is set to grow further.

Clear Utility Solutions also works with a number of 4 and 5 star Trustpilot rated business water companies to provide their customers access to competitive and convenient water supplies. Their close relationships with these companies means they take a similar managed account approach to these contracts as they do their energy customers

**OALC has no financial tie to CUS, we merely thought if CUS can save your council money as it has for those in Northamptonshire then it was worth bringing to your attention. We also know that councils have expressed concern with Castle Water and thought CUS may offer an alternative.**

# Local News



**Households across Oxfordshire will be asked to take part in Census 2021 this spring**

The Census, run by the Office for National Statistics, is a once-in-a-decade survey that gives us the most accurate estimate of all the people and households in England and Wales. It has been carried out every ten years since 1801, with the exception of 1941.

This year, for the first time, the Census will be digital first. All households will receive a letter in early March with a unique access code, allowing them to complete the questionnaire on 21 March on their computers, phones or tablets. For some of our residents, this will make things easier, but we understand that for others it could be challenging.

Surveys were sent by district and city councils to town and parish clerks to help gather this information - **with a deadline of 4 January for completion.**Thank you to all those who completed the short, [online survey](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScKWolzuV90D3D3ThZ6WAEONkhujD4RBJI2XBh84xfvPHKmJg/viewform) .  If you haven’t had the chance yet, the Census team covering Oxfordshire would like to understand where your community may need or can offer support with the Census on the 21 March.

If you have town or parish newsletter, please feel free to use the following text to introduce the census:

‘*The Census is coming on 21 March. Information from the digital-first Census will help decide how services are planned and funded in our local area. Census outputs inform where millions of pounds of public funding is spent on services like transport, education and health, and on cycle routes, schools and dental surgeries. Everyone will receive a letter with a unique access code in the post, allowing them to complete their questionnaire online. Paper questionnaires will be available on request. For more information visit* [*Census.gov.uk.*](https://census.gov.uk/)*’*

If you would like accompanying census graphics and social media content please contact [lisa.stead58@field.Census.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.stead58@field.Census.gov.uk) or on 07452 942723

If you have any questions, or if you haven’t received a survey by email please contact Lisa Stead [lisa.stead58@field.census.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.stead58@field.census.gov.uk) or on 07452 942723 (Cherwell, West Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse) and Sinead Leach [sinead.leach49@field.census.gov.uk](mailto:sinead.leach49@field.census.gov.uk) or on 07452 948074 (South Oxfordshire and Oxford City).

|  |
| --- |
| **Please join Oxfordshire’s Census Engagement Managers on the 4th March at 4pm** to hear all about the Census and how you can help your communities complete it. You should have received an invitation directly from us but if you haven’t, please do get in touch with them by emailing [sinead.leach49@field.census.gov.uk](mailto:sinead.leach49@field.census.gov.uk) or [lisa.stead58@field.census.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.stead58@field.census.gov.uk). |

**Oxfordshire CC covid testing for workers and volunteers**

If you, or someone you know has a role that means you are face-to-face with the public, symptom-free rapid COVID-19 tests (also known as lateral flow tests) are now available for you.

If you get tested every week, it will help pick up a COVID-19 infection early and reduce the risk to others.

The test takes just 15 minutes and results will be available in under an hour. Book your test via the County Council [website](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/coronavirus-covid-19/controlling-local-coronavirus-outbreaks/rapid-symptom-free-testing):

## SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES THROUGH COVID-19 – COMF FUNDING AVAILABLE

In recognising the vital contribution that community and voluntary groups continue to make in the efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19, Supporting Communities Through COVID-19 is open to funding applications from small informal groups as well as established organisations to enable them to deliver activities that will help to reduce COVID-19 outbreaks and the spread of infection. Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA) and Community First Oxfordshire (CFO) are managing this grant scheme on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council.

**But you will probably have been contacted by your district council too about the COMF funding**

You can apply for a maximum of £10,000 for community action projects and a maximum of £50,000 for collaborative, broad reach projects. <https://www.communityfirstoxon.org/supporting-communities-through-covid-19-funding-available-now/>

If you require any further guidance about completing the application form or ask any questions about this grant scheme please contact [communications@ocva.org.uk](mailto:communications@ocva.org.uk).

Grant applications must be received by 10am, Friday 12 March 2021. Please return completed applications by email to[communications@ocva.org.uk](mailto:communications@ocva.org.uk)

*Oxfordshire County Council has been allocated funding from the Department for Health and Social Care Containment Outbreak Management Fund... The County Council has agreed that some of this funding should be granted to grassroots organisations across Oxfordshire to support measures to reduce COVID-19 outbreaks and the spread of infection*. *For example, supporting residents to self-isolate.*

## Armed Forces Bill enshrining the Armed Forces Covenant in law gets its Second Reading in Parliament



The Armed Forces Bill had its Second Reading in The House of Commons on Monday 8 February 2021.

The Bill would require Local Authorities and other bodies to show due regard when considering applications for public services. The minister will be issuing Statutory Guidance on how and why service personnel and their families experience disadvantage. Asked by Tobias Ellwood MP if the minister would legislate to have an Armed Forces Champion in each Local Authority – he thought ’no’, But he praised their role and suggested it might be reviewed in Committee. The Bill now moves to the Committee stage.

On 3rd February a number of Oxfordshire town and parish councils (25+) attended an online meeting of Armed Forces Champions to hear more about their small [grants](https://covenantfund.org.uk/) scheme. Were you aware that each county has a Civilian-Military Partnership Board? Apparently (according to the OCC website) town and parish councils can take part.

The Oxfordshire CM Partnership has been in existence for some years and will be meeting next month – more information on the County Council website -<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/armed-forces-oxfordshire/armed-forces-covenant>

Tracy Evans, Community Engagement, writes:

*We are pleased to announce new funding programmes for the 2021/22 financial year. The £6 million Sustaining Support for Armed Forces Communities programme will open in April.*

*This programme will provide funding for existing charitable projects that give help to Armed Forces communities, but which need short term support to continue, as a result of the impact of Covid on charitable income.*

*Armed Forces charities, and charities that have an existing track record of providing support for Armed Forces communities, will be able to apply for a grant of up to £100,000 for up to one year. Organisations applying for a grant will need to show us they provide support to people from Armed Forces communities, and that it would have a negative effect, particularly on veterans and Armed Forces families, if this work could not be continued. Support for core costs will be available for Armed Forces charities.*

*There will be further rounds of the Force for Change programme, which provides small grants for local projects supporting Armed Forces communities to become less isolated and engage more in their local area.*

Tracy Evans, |Community Engagement, 11 Infantry Brigade South East Headquarters, Building 10 RASC Lines, SHORNCLIFFE, Kent CT20 3EZ  Email: [tracy.evans477@mod.gov.uk](mailto:tracy.evans477@mod.gov.uk)

## Recruiting a new Chair for the Trust for Oxfordshire’s Environment

Our planet faces a crisis. The climate emergency and the actions of humankind are causing irreversible damage to the health and diversity of our natural world. There is growing public awareness and concern about the urgent need to act, both globally and locally. International agreements and national initiatives are starting to appear but we can also do things locally. The Trust for Oxfordshire’s Environment (TOE) enables people and organisations to support nature’s recovery and the local environment in truly practical ways. TOE will assist nature’s recovery; we will focus on increasing biodiversity, on reducing the county’s carbon footprint, and we will encourage understanding of and accessibility to green spaces and the wider countryside.

TOE is a charity with a board of trustees and a small but dedicated staff. Over the last 12 years we have distributed over £3 million to projects supporting the Oxfordshire environment and hope to distribute many more millions over the coming years. Our founder and chair is now seeking to retire and the Trust is looking for someone new to join the board and to take over as Chair. You will, of course, care deeply about the Oxfordshire environment but you will also have charitable experience, be well connected within the county both to its institutions and its business community. You will be dedicated and you will be a leader with the ability to inspire others. It’s a huge challenge we face – our future depends on it.

For a full description of this role and of the work of TOE, please see: <https://www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk>

## Cherwell District Council

The [‘My Neighbourhood’](https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/info/5/your-council/652/my-neighbourhood) page on CDC’s website provides all sorts of useful mapping and information, including planning history and conservation areas, planning policies, listed buildings, tree preservation orders, councillors and local services.

Newly added is the Cherwell Story Map, our visual and interactive tool showing what is going on in local communities around health and physical activity.  The map will be one of the tools helping us to understand communities better, so that collectively with local residents we can plan for a healthy future and ensure communities thrive.

## Oxfordshire growth board



The next meeting of the Growth Board is on 16th March 6.30pm. More information here <http://democratic.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=604&MId=2788>

## Oxford-Cambridge Arc - Spatial framework, new growth body

The government published a Policy Paper on 18th February entitled [Oxford-Cambridge Arc: an introduction to the spatial framework](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/962455/Spatial_framework_policy_paper.pdf).

The four chapters are entitled:

1. [Introduction: Why we need a new approach](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-for-sustainable-growth-in-the-oxford-cambridge-arc-spatial-framework/planning-for-sustainable-growth-in-the-oxford-cambridge-arc-an-introduction-to-the-spatial-framework#introduction-why-we-need-a-new-approach)
2. [What the Spatial Framework will do](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-for-sustainable-growth-in-the-oxford-cambridge-arc-spatial-framework/planning-for-sustainable-growth-in-the-oxford-cambridge-arc-an-introduction-to-the-spatial-framework#what-the-spatial-framework-will-do)
3. [How we will develop the Spatial Framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-for-sustainable-growth-in-the-oxford-cambridge-arc-spatial-framework/planning-for-sustainable-growth-in-the-oxford-cambridge-arc-an-introduction-to-the-spatial-framework#how-we-will-develop-the-spatial-framework)
4. [How you can get involved](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-for-sustainable-growth-in-the-oxford-cambridge-arc-spatial-framework/planning-for-sustainable-growth-in-the-oxford-cambridge-arc-an-introduction-to-the-spatial-framework#how-you-can-get-involved)

In 2020, the government committed to developing, with local partners, a Spatial Framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc – an area which spans the five counties of Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire.

The government apparently view this as an opportunity for it to work with communities and local partners to develop a plan that will:

* support long-run sustainable economic growth across the area
* help to make the area a brilliant place to live, work and travel in – for existing residents and future communities alike
* support lasting improvements to the environment, green infrastructure and biodiversity

They will do this by focusing on the strategic opportunities for growth and environmental improvement that cross local administrative boundaries and require more joined-up thinking.

The Policy Paper sets out:

* why the government is taking this approach
* what it will mean for growth, spatial planning and infrastructure provision in the area
* how it will work with communities and local partners to develop it

The results, due to be published in 2022, will apparently give communities a chance to shape the long-term future of their area and will help to ensure the benefits of growth are felt across the region.

The intention is to establish a government led Arc Growth Body, they believe a coordinated approach is currently difficult because the Arc comprises: 23 local planning authorities; a mayoral combined authority, eight transport planning authorities, the Local Enterprise Partnerships (which have responsibility for economic development), and England’s Economic Heartland – the sub-national transport body that covers a slightly wider area than the Arc. There is also no single institution with the necessary competence and authority to lead a coordinated approach.

The government believe it will require coordination of planning functions across the region. Local councils cannot do this on their own because of the level of coordination needed across the area, and because they do not have all the levers needed to develop a genuinely integrated plan.

The government’s intention is to develop a long-term Spatial Framework for the Arc that will support better spatial planning, provide a blueprint for better-targeted public investment, give investors and businesses greater long-term certainty over growth plans, and allow communities to shape the long-term future of places across the region. **The nature and content of the Spatial Framework will be subject to the outcome of both detailed consultation and sustainability appraisal.**

The government’s approach to the Spatial Framework will be based on 10 core principles:

* **Collaborative** – we will develop the Spatial Framework with local partners, including communities, local councils, businesses and universities.
* **Adaptable** – we will create a framework that provides certainty for communities, local councils and investors about where growth will happen, and the infrastructure that will support it. But it will also need to be flexible and adaptive to change as it happens.
* **Long-term** – we will plan to 2050 and beyond so that we create the foundation for long-term sustainable growth.
* **Integrated** – the Framework will be based on an integrated approach to planning which spans the economy, housing, environment and transport.
* **Inclusive** – the Framework will aim to bring benefits for existing communities and all places in the Arc – not just the highest growth centres.
* **Digital-first** – we will make better use of digital tools to support better, more collaborative long-term policy-making.
* **Evidence-based** – the Framework will be based on a robust and comprehensive evidence base, which we will make publicly available.
* **Sustainable** – the Framework must strengthen our ability to meet the government’s commitment to combat climate change, support sustainable patterns of development, and support lasting improvements to biodiversity and the natural environment.
* **Quality** – we intend to set high expectations for the quality of new development and infrastructure, so that we can create the heritage areas of the future and enhance quality of life in all parts of the Arc.
* **Add value** – we will not duplicate local or national policies and plans, but we will take them into consideration in developing the Framework. Instead, the Framework will be genuinely strategic and focus on cross-boundary issues, policies and opportunities

The spatial framework will outline policies to enable sustainable, transport‑led development. This will include policies to enable:

* new settlements to come forward at the scale and speed needed
* new development to support habitat recovery, delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and provision of good-quality green space within schemes
* brownfield redevelopment and densification, and expansion of existing settlements, in sustainable locations or locations that can be made more sustainable by enhanced access to sustainable transport modes
* housing needs to be met in full, including delivery of much-needed affordable housing

Over the next two and a half years, a specialist team in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will work with communities and local partners to develop a robust, evidence-based spatial framework. Apparently they are committed to working collaboratively with residents and local partners, seeking input at each stage of decision-making.

How this will actually work across 5 counties will be very interesting to watch!

Councillor Barry Wood, Chair of The Arc Leaders Group and Leader Cherwell District Council said:

*We welcome the continuing commitment from Government to the Oxford to Cambridge Arc through today’s announcements.*

*We look forward to working together with local people and our local partners to deliver an economy that works for all, underpinned by a high-quality natural environment. This will include planning for and enabling development that is truly inclusive and sustainable which delivers real benefits for our communities and environment now and in the future.*

## Your thoughts needed for next phase of Oxfordshire Open Thought



Oxfordshire 2050 write:

“We asked you - our county’s residents, businesses and organisations - to give your views on how we might tackle some of the challenges facing us in the future.

And we received hundreds of submissions via online engagement tool [Oxfordshire Open Thought](https://oxfordshireplan.us5.list-manage.com/track/click?u=2b841c81652e7ef218e149734&id=42ff29ff00&e=9bac85a7d7).  
Now we are shining a spotlight on some of the most thought-provoking, bold and innovative ideas on how we should live, work, travel and tackle climate change - and asking for your views.

Organisations such as the Campaign to Protect Rural England Oxfordshire, VeloCity and Sport England are among those who are being profiled.

The submissions cover topics ranging from how to reconnect children with nature to preventing isolation in rural communities to encouraging wellbeing in our villages, towns and cities.

We want your thoughts on the ideas and for you to discuss them with other users on the website.  
It is hoped these conversations will build on the work of the initial Open Thought engagement and help develop real solutions to how we live, work, move around and tackle climate change in the future.

You can view the highlighted responses and leave your comments at [www.oxfordshireopenthought.org](https://oxfordshireplan.us5.list-manage.com/track/click?u=2b841c81652e7ef218e149734&id=d1cf4b4d4a&e=9bac85a7d7)

# National News

## SECTION 137 EXPENDITURE: LIMIT FOR 2021-2022

**Extract from letter to NALC:**

*This is to notify you that the appropriate sum for the purpose of section 137(4)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 (the 1972 Act) for parish and town councils in England for 2021-22 is £8.41.*

*This is the amount as a result from increasing the amount of £8.32 for 2020-2021 by the percentage increase in the retail index between September 2019 and September 2020, in accordance with Schedule 12B to the 1072 Act.*

*I am coping this letter to Rob Smith, Chief Executive of the Society of Local Council Clerks, Tony Crawley, Chief Officer of Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited and Howard Midworth, General Manager at Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments Limited.*

***Chris Widgery,*** *Deputy Director,**Efficiency & Accountability, Local Government Policy Directorate, MHCLG*

## NJC Pay claim 2021-22

This is the most recent communication to NALC from the LGA about the Local Government 2021 pay claim.

This is just the start of negotiations that happen each year. NALC suggest for now there is no need for local councils to take any actions and no confirmed pay change to budget for.

*This NJC pay claim for 2021/22 and accompanying conditions submission is made by the Joint Trade Union Side (UNISON, GMB and UNITE) to the Local Government Association.*

*Our claim is for:   
• A substantial increase with a minimum of 10% on all spinal column points.*

*In addition we are seeking a pay round which underpins and respects the collective bargaining arrangements in place and a separate conditions claims as set out below:*

* *Introduction of a homeworking allowance for all staff who are working from home.*
* *A national minimum agreement on homeworking policies for all councils*
* *A reduction of the working week to 35 hours with no loss of pay, and a reduction to 34  
  hours a week in London. Part-time staff to be given a choice of a pro rata reduction, or  
  retaining the same hours and being paid a higher percentage of FTE*
* *A minimum of 25 days annual leave plus public holidays and statutory days for all starting  
  employees plus an extra day holiday on all other holiday rates that depend on service.*
* *An agreement on a best practice national programme of mental health support for all local  
  authorities and school staff.*
* *A joint review of job descriptions, routes for career developments and pay banding for  
  school support staff, and completion of the outstanding work of the joint term-time only  
  review group.*
* *A joint review of the provisions in the Green Book for maternity / paternity / shared  
  parental /adoption leave*.

The LGA writes that principal councils will be consulted next month at [regional pay briefings](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDUsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMTAyMjMuMzU3NTYyODEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3Byb3RlY3QtZXUubWltZWNhc3QuY29tL3MvWDRObUN3amc3SUwxNEc4aXhKTGVqIn0.429d67MohJZTZUD81H5eu0OSUZJ3XXu_kpTEjkxNbsA/s/1098563174/br/98213327855-l) about the [2021 pay claim for 'Green Book' staff](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDYsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMTAyMjMuMzU3NTYyODEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5sb2NhbC5nb3YudWsvb3VyLXN1cHBvcnQvd29ya2ZvcmNlLWFuZC1oci1zdXBwb3J0L2xvY2FsLWdvdmVybm1lbnQtc2VydmljZXMifQ.bxntzmW3XNy9_1xLvqYDIh9WNW9DeFuurtkG5H6pDbI/s/1098563174/br/98213327855-l). The Employers will not be responding to the claim before the 6 May local elections and cannot give a more specific indication of a timetable beyond that date.

## National Village Hall survey – follow up

ACRE writes: *The foreword to ACRE's survey stated  "The ten-year National Village Hall Surveys provides a snapshot of the state of England’s varied and essential village and community halls, their funding, use and changes over time. Never has a snapshot been more of a historical record than in 2020: This survey records the state of village and community halls immediately before COVID-19 forced the first ever mass closure in their long history"  
  
The survey was launched in February 2020, a year ago.  ACRE will be contacting hall committees shortly to ask them to complete a very short survey to find out the situation for your hall a year on from the first lockdown.  The outcomes of this research are to make sure ACRE has up to date data to inform policy on the future support needs of rural village halls and community buildings so as to ensure continuity in their trusteeship and governance AND to enable identification of the financial resources needed for rural village halls and community buildings post COVID-19.  
  
Please look out for the survey on our website in due course.*

## Sleeping councillors

NALC recently received a request about a councillor who appeared to be sleeping during a remote meeting. The scenario may be more common to remote meetings where fellow councillors are less able to use the subtle (or not so subtle) methods they would use in face to face meetings to prompt a councillor who has nodded off. Technically it’s likely a councillor who is not awake cannot be present so the desirable approach would be for the chairman to pause the meeting to ensure that councillors present are indeed ‘present’ and correct.

## NALC’S LETTER to the editors OF CHARLES Arnold-Baker on Local Council Administration, 12th edition

We believe there is a discrepancy in the latest 12th edition concerning church funding and we are sharing with you the content of the letter we have sent to the editors.

*We have been reading the latest edition of Arnold-Baker on Local Council Administration (CAB) and we have noticed a significant error in section 22.19 in the nature of the power in relation to Free Resource.*

*At the foot of page 211 it explains that there is a prohibition on expenditure where there is a limitation on a power. Correctly this is explained as “a statutory clog on the exercise of a power within a place where it can otherwise be exercised without the limitation.” However on page 212 it acknowledges that the power to spend on parish property is limited to non-church related property but then states that s. 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 (the 1972 Act) can be used to overcome this regarding church property. This clearly contradicts the statement on page 211.  Further, on page 212 it states that the Taylor Review recommended that the law be clarified so as to enable a council to use s.137 of the 1972 Act and the power of general competence to benefit church property. This statement from the Taylor Review shows that it did not believe that s 137 was available otherwise the law would not need clarifying to permit it.*

*This significant error in the 12th Edition of CAB, which has not occurred in previous editions, has caused confusion for our member councils who rely on CAB as an authoritative text. We trust that you will be issuing corrections for the current version as clarification and correction is needed.*

## Government announces beauty will be at the heart of new developments!

Apparently local communities will be at the heart of plans to make sure that new developments in their area are beautiful and well-designed, under proposals outlined by Housing Secretary, Robert Jenrick MP on 30th January 2021. This is somewhat at odds with the dilution of democratic input proposed in the Planning for the Future, White Paper of last year!

In response to the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission report, the government is:

* Proposing [changes to the National Planning Policy Framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals) to place greater emphasis on beauty and place-making, and to ensure that all new streets are lined with trees.
* Publishing a [draft national design code](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals) that provides a checklist of design principles to consider for new developments, such as street character, building type, façade, and the requirements that address wellbeing and environmental impact, which councils can use as a foundation for their own local design codes.
* Encouraging all councils to publish their unique design code, so residents have a real say in the design of new developments in their area.
* Creating an ‘Office for Place’ within the next year, which will support local communities to turn their designs into the standard for all new buildings in their area.
* Opening a new Community Housing Fund to support community-based organisations to bring forward local housebuilding projects for the £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme, backed by £4 million of support for local plan.
* And doubling the available funding for areas under the “local heritage listing – monuments men” campaign, with up to £1.5 million now available for communities to nominate local heritage sites including historical buildings or modern architecture, art and memorials for inclusion in their council’s local heritage list.

Taken together, these measures will apparently help the country to Build Back Better and ensure that current and new residents alike will benefit from beautiful homes in well-designed neighbourhoods as we recover from this pandemic.

Greater concentration will now be placed on the quality, design and the environment in planning than ever before, **with the local community fully involved** in how they want new developments to look and feel. For example, the proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework will set an expectation that good quality design will be approved while poor quality will be rejected, and includes a commitment to ensure that all streets are lined with trees.

The measures mean the word “beauty” will be specifically included in planning rules for the first time since the system was created in 1947 – going back to a previous time when there was a greater emphasis on whether a building was considered attractive to local people.

*The press release is here -*

[*https://www.gov.uk/government/news/all-new-developments-must-meet-local-standards-of-beauty-quality-and-design-under-new-rules?utm\_medium=email&utm\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\_source=a1930f1a-f990-4695-912f-02234b425213&utm\_content=daily*](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/all-new-developments-must-meet-local-standards-of-beauty-quality-and-design-under-new-rules?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=a1930f1a-f990-4695-912f-02234b425213&utm_content=daily)

## Handforth Parish Council, cheshire

The meetings of Handforth Parish Council have become a viral sensation, mainly for all the wrong reasons. As with most events that go viral there is a back story and far more than the edited sound bites which hit the headlines. Rather than debate the rights and wrongs of excluding people, rudeness, bullying, suspension of the Clerk, disqualification under the 6 month rule and a failure to serve the community of Handforth.

I would prefer to use it as a learning tool, an example of the need for training on the [Nolan Principles of Conduct](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life) in public life; understanding the Code of Conduct; treating everyone with respect including employees (Clerk), fellow councillors and the public; following correct procedures and remembering the whole point of being an elected councilor is to serve the community. If a fraction of the 3,500 people that ‘attended’ the subsequent virtual meeting could be converted to the idea of being a positive force for change in their community as a councillor then some good will have come from the viral sensation.

Jackie Weaver, the County Officer of the Cheshire ALC has sought in subsequent interviews to encourage more people to stand and to get behind the NALC [#Make a Change campaign](https://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/local-elections)



NALC has issued a number of press statements:

5th February <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/news/entry/1655-nalc-responds-to-handforth-parish-council-s-meeting-going-viral-1>

11th February <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/news/entry/1661-nalc-urges-the-government-to-strengthen-standards-regime-to-improve-behaviour-in-councils>

15th February <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/news-stories/3448-letter-to-clerks-attending-slcc-practitioners-conference-220221/file>

## May 2021 elections are happening

These elections are happening on May 6th:

* Police and Crime Commissioner
* Oxfordshire County Council
* District Councils – West Oxfordshire, Oxford City, Cherwell
* Town and parish councils in WODC and Cherwell
* Any Neighbourhood Plan Referendums and by-elections where an election was demanded by 10 electors

**The timeline is below**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Publication of Notice of Election**  Your district council will supply the Notice of Election. It is essential that the notice is displayed by 29th March, and put on your council website too if possible  **Purdah starts** | 29 March 2021 |
| **Receipt of Nominations**  Nomination papers to be delivered by hand not posted (not necessarily by the candidate) but don’t put the responsibility on your Clerk. If you are standing it is your responsibility to make sure the form is correctly completed, with a wet signature and delivered to your district council offices. This deadline is absolute but don’t leave it until the last moment in case there are errors which need to be corrected. | 04:00 pm 8 April 2021 |
| **Withdrawal of Candidate** must be received by the Returning Officer by | 04:00 pm 8 April 2021 |
| **Publication of Statements of Persons Nominated** | 04:00 pm 9 April 2021 |
| Last date for receiving applications to be included in the Register of Electors for the election | 19 April 2021 |
| Deadline for receipt of applications to vote by post | 20 April 2021 |
| Last day for publication of Notice of Poll | 27 April 2021 |
| Deadline for receipt of Proxy Vote Applications | 27 April 2021 |
| Last day for the appointment of Polling and Counting Agents | 28 April 2021 |
| Period for receiving applications to vote by emergency proxy | 29 April – 6th May 2021 |
| **DAY OF POLL** 6 May 2021 | **polling stations open from** 07:00 am to 10:00 pm |
| **New Councillors take up office** | **10th May** |
| **Annual Meeting of the Council** In an election year, the Annual Meeting of the Council must be held within 14 days of taking office (ie Monday 10th May). This is the meeting at which the Chairman of the new council is elected.  **Declaration of Acceptance of Office.** A member must have signed and returned their Declaration of Acceptance of Office to the Clerk for witnessing at or before the start of the Annual Meeting. Failure to complete the acceptance will lose their seat unless the Council resolves to give an extension | **no later than 24th May 2021** |
| **Completion of Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.** The Register must be completed as soon as possible after the election and no later than 28 days after taking office. | No later than 7th June |
| The Return and Declaration of Election Expenses must be delivered to the Returning Officer within 28 days of the election being declared. Where no expenses have been incurred you submit a ‘nil’ return | 10 June 2021 |
| Co-option to fill Casual Vacancies. If vacancies remain after the election, but where the council is quorate, the council is able to advertise and co-opt to fill any remaining seats. 14th June 2021 | 14th June 2021 |

**Sell the job of being a councillor, your council needs younger, more diverse people on it**

Put the message out to the widest possible number of people that there is an election the more people that know, the more that might be persuaded to stand.

Believing that you are saving money by having exactly the same number of candidates as vacancies is not democracy, it might be argued that this will save money but it is denying your community the chance to have a choice.

Use any and every possible medium to get the message out:

* Put an article on your website
* Use the same article in the parish (and church) newsletter, and then a different article each month. Litter bins can’t compete with Twenty Shades of Grey but do your best to engage your community.
* Use Facebook and Twitter - an aspect of council life in each posting, make it interesting and lively, and consider your audience.
* Put posters up on the parish council notice board
* Talk to local radio about what your council does
* The eligibility criteria are on the [Electoral Commission website](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-01/Overview%20P%20and%20C.pdf)
  + Aged 18, on electoral role, citizen of UK, Commonwealth, EU or Ireland
  + Resident or within 3 miles of the parish, own land or work in the parish

**On 23rd March 2021 OALC is running a training session on how to attract new councillors more info here** <https://www.oalc.org.uk/event-detail/00000000112>

****

There is a series of video biographies of councillors on the NALC website here -<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/news/entry/1665-nalc-to-release-a-video-series-on-councillor-stories>

It’s worth putting a link on your website or Council Facebook page to these short clips, they are accessible and human stories.

You could use this job description…

|  |
| --- |
| **PARISH COUNCILLOR – JOB DESCRIPTION**  **Title**: Councillor  **Responsible to**: The Council and its electors.  **Responsible for**: Effective leadership to foster the interests and deliver services to electors and the community  **Role purpose to**: Bring local issues to the attention of the council, help it make decisions on behalf of the local community and represent the views of parishioners within and outside the parish.  **Main duties and responsibilities:**     * To represent effectively the interests of the whole parish by listening to views from the community * To improve the quality of life for those that live, work or visit the area * To participate fully in the formation and scrutiny of the Council’s policies, strategic plans, budgets and service delivery * To ensure that the Council is properly managed * To prepare for, attend and participate in Council meetings, decision making and abide by corporate decisions * To undertake appropriate training and development to help fulfil the requirements of the councillor role * To keep up to date with significant developments affecting the Council at local, regional and national levels * To represent the Council on outside bodies to which the Councillor is appointed and report back activities * To maintain proper standards of behaviour and comply with the Council’s code of conduct * To deal with resident’s enquiries and representations fairly and without prejudice   **Skills needed by a Councillor:**  • Having, exploring and expanding ideas  • Interpreting, evaluating and reviewing information, drawing conclusions then making decisions  • Understanding budgets and financial systems  • Encouraging yourself and motivating others  • Listening, questioning constructively  • Dealing with conflict  • Seeing the bigger picture  • Understand legislation and the difference between private and personal interests  • Public speaking  • IT and social media skills |

**Don’t forget about purdah which will start at the end of March. The ordinary business of a council should continue but any council with elections needs to avoid controversial business that could be used for the purposes of electioneering. More advice will follow next month.**

## Consultations

**1. Government proposes Right to Regenerate** (used to be Right to Contest)

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) launched on 16th January a consultation seeking views on proposals to reform of Strand 2 (land owned by a local authority or certain other public bodies) of the Right to Contest under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 operated by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.  The main consultation document can be downloaded [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/right-to-regenerate-reform-of-the-right-to-contest/right-to-regenerate-reform-of-the-right-to-contest) .

**Context**

Currently longstanding vacant, derelict or underutilised public sector land can have a significant impact on the attractiveness of a local area, sometimesacting as a focus for anti-social behaviour. Since 1980, the public has been able to request that the government considers whether certain publicly owned land is unused or underused, and if so, direct that it be sold (under strand 2 of the right to contest).  NALC has been liaising closely with MHCLG since last Autumn on this right; currently local councils have the power to invoke the right to challenge other defined public sector landowners under use of land, and refer such cases for consideration to MHCLG.

The government wants to empower people to challenge the inefficient use of public sector land in their communities, and to bring it into better economic use, including to provide new homes. The government is consulting on the effectiveness of these requests as it considers reforms to make the process more efficient and more transparent.

The government believes that reforming the Right to Contest and relaunching it as a new ‘Right to Regenerate’ could provide a quicker and easier route for individuals, businesses and organisations to identify, purchase and redevelop underused or empty land in their area. In turn, the government believes, a strengthened right would support greater regeneration of brownfield land, boost housing supply and empower people to turn blights and empty spaces in their areas into more beautiful developments.

Currently town and parish councils are not in the list of public landowning bodies which can be challenged under this right – but this consultation seeks views on whether town and parish councils who own underused or derelict land should be challengeable under this right in the future.

**NALC’s concern:**

NALC is concerned that developers will be tempted to approach local people and remunerate them for putting their names on the challenges being made.  Whether local councils are subsequently subjected to the 'Right to Contest' or the 'Right to Regenerate', there needs to be a requirement about how the land or buildings are subsequently dealt with after they are passed on to ensure that developers are not tempted to use a front to acquire land or buildings, perhaps at below market value.

In addition NALC has some other minor concerns regarding the new right to regenerate as below:

* + - That semi-natural wildlife areas become deemed to be ‘under-used’.
    - Given the government’s pro-developer stance, will any land that is transferred in this way be given some kind of ‘prior permission’ status, thereby by-passing the normal planning system?
    - What mechanism will be available to adjudicate between competing claims for the same piece of land?
    - What are the implications for council-owned land that is subject to certain statutes, such as allotments or village green?
    - Assuming local councils were to be added to the Schedule 16 list, would all of them have to produce regular reports, or just those where requests have been made under the ‘right’?

Your council can complete the consultation directly here <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/right-to-regenerate-reform-of-the-right-to-contest/right-to-regenerate-reform-of-the-right-to-contest> The consultation closes on 13th March 2021

**2. NPPF changes and National Model Design Code**

On 30th January the Government published [a consultation](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals) on some revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The text has been revised to implement policy changes in response to the [Building Better Building Beautiful Commission “Living with Beauty” report](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/living-with-beauty-report-of-the-building-better-building-beautiful-commission).

A number of other changes to the text of the NPPF are also set out and explained in the consultation document. The government is not proposing a review of the National Planning Policy Framework in its entirety at this stage. A fuller review of the Framework is likely in due course, depending on the implementation of its proposals for wider reform of the planning system.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) launched a consultation seeking views on proposals to create a new Office for Place which would involve each local planning authority drawing up its own design code in consultation with local people that developers would have to adhere to.  This would involve some changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).  There is currently an eight-week consultation on the proposals which will close on 27th March.  The main consultation document can be downloaded [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals) and the National Model Design Code is [here](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/957205/National_Model_Design_Code.pdf)

The process of developing a code is based on three steps: Analysis, Vision and Code

**1. Analysis**

1A - Scoping: Agreeing on the geographical area to be covered by the code and the policy areas that it will address.

1B – Baseline: Bringing together the analysis that will underpin the code and inform its contents.

**2. Vision**

2A – Design Vision: Dividing the area covered by the code into a set of typical ‘area types’ and deciding on a vision for each of these area types.

2B – Coding Plan: Preparing a plan that maps out each of the area types and also identifies large development sites from allocations in the local plan.

2C – Master planning: On larger sites working with land owners and developers to agree a masterplan for each of the development sites establishing the key parameters and area types.

**3. Code**

3A – Area Type Guidance: Developing guidance for each area type by adjusting a set of design parameters.

3B – Design Code Wide Guidance: Agree on a set of policies that will apply equally across all area types.

The government is inviting [expressions of interest](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-model-design-code-testing-programme-expressions-of-interest) from ten local planning authorities in England to test the National Model Design Code.

The rationale, proposals and specific questions for this consultation, as well as the draft text updates to the NPPF and the annexed draft National Model Design Code (which is referenced in the main consultation questions) can be downloaded from [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals).

The following paragraphs outline NALC’s current policy positions, account of which will steer the response which they are likely to make to this consultation.

NALC agrees with the government that the planning system could be improved and should have more emphasis on building design, NALC endorsed the recommendations in the report ‘Living with beauty’ published by the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission – as we said in our overarching statement in response to the Planning White Paper and Changes to the Current Planning System consultation last year.

The NALC Policy Committee on 6 October 2020 adopted a suite of planning positions including the following one directly relevant to this consultation: “NALC will support changes to the planning system which it perceives will strengthen the system and the voice of democracy and lead to better quality, appropriately sited developments.  It will not support planning changes which it perceives will work in the opposite direction.”

Other NALC Views:

* We welcome the proposed change in the NPPF to the definition of 'sustainable development' and also the section covering the presumption in favour of sustainable development (paras. 7 and 11), the strengthened wording for turning down poor development (para. 133) and the integration of design codes (para. 109).  The other aspect which can be supported are the proposals in respect of development in protected landscapes (para. 175).
* We are concerned about the restrictions that are proposed for the use of Article 4 Directions (para. 53).
* In Chapter 12 we would advocate that the default for the expression of local character and design preferences should be through a neighbourhood plan (though we do not advocate that every community area should be required to go through the neighbourhood plan exercise).  We are suggesting that if a neighbourhood plan has a policy on design or develops a design code - that this is the standard against which design will be measured in their area.
* Whilst NALC agrees that local-specific policies on beauty will be needed, the concept of Supplementary Planning Documents might provide a simpler solution, which could embrace individual village design statements and their urban equivalents.  We think there is no reason why where Village Design Statements were adopted - they could not be updated and incorporated into the local design codes.

Please email your responses to this consultation to [chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk](mailto:chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk) by 17.00 on **Friday 12 March** 2021.

## Message from West Oxfordshire Planning Policy Consultations

I am writing to notify you that following a successful public consultation last autumn, West Oxfordshire District Council has formally submitted the Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (AAP) to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) for independent examination.

The submitted AAP and all other relevant documents have been made available on the Council’s website at [www.westoxon.gov.uk/gardenvillage](http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/gardenvillage)

This includes copies of the representations received, the submission letter to PINS as well as a series of core documents, supporting documents and technical evidence reports.

The Council’s website will be updated as the examination progresses and more information becomes available, including the name of the appointed Planning Inspector and the anticipated dates of any hearing sessions.

The Council have appointed an independent Programme Officer to facilitate the examination process -

Rosie Morton - Programme Officer, C/O West Oxfordshire District Council Tel: 01628 672181 [rosemary.morton@publicagroup.uk](mailto:rosemary.morton@publicagroup.uk)

## Local Transport and Connectivity Plan: Vision Consultation

The Oxfordshire County Council’s Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP). vision document is now out to public consultation and the County Council would welcome your feedback on the document. The vision consultation runs from **15 February until the 29 March 2021** and can be found here: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ltcpvision>

The LTCP vision ensures a clear long-term ambition for transport in the county and will underpin all the policies and schemes included in the full LTCP document.

The vision has been developed following analysis of the council’s engagement activity conducted in March 2020, through engagement with stakeholders and through an analysis of transport data.

**What happens next?**

Once the consultation period is complete, a summary of the responses received will be produced and we will update the vision, key themes and policy focus areas accordingly. Work will then commence on developing the detailed LTCP which will include the specific policies, and proposed schemes.

A second consultation planned for later 2021 will cover the development of the full LTCP including an updated vision and themes.

Joe Kay, Strategic Transport Lead, Infrastructure Strategy Team, Planning and Place Communities, Oxfordshire County Council

# Financial Briefing

**OALC offers its member councils the benefit of advice from Steve Parkinson, our Finance, Audit and VAT advisor. If you have any problems or queries concerning finance, VAT, accounting process or financial governance we will send them on to Steve so that you can benefit from his extensive experience. Please send us an email (**[info@oalc.org.uk](mailto:info@oalc.org.uk)**) with a clear description of your problem with as much background information as possible. We will send it on to Steve and get back to you with his response.** As part of his work for us Steve writes a short article each month. This month’s is about **VAT.**

**VAT now the UK has left the EU**

Now that the UK has left the customs and VAT union with the EU, the rules have changed for dealing with purchases from outside the UK.

Anyone purchasing goods directly from suppliers outside the UK and importing them into the UK will need an Economic Operators Registration and Identification (EORI) number, which can be obtained from [www.gov.uk/eori](http://www.gov.uk/eori) and must be given to the supplier. This will affect councils that have bought equipment (such as speed indicator devices) from EU countries and need to order replacement parts.

UK VAT (and possibly customs duty) will be due on import and councils will need to ensure they follow the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) guidance and have arrangements in place to make the necessary declarations and payments, unless the supplier has a UK agent.

Different VAT rules apply for purchasing from an online marketplace, ordering small, low value goods by post, or bringing goods into the UK in person.

Where digital services (such as web hosting, downloadable software or e-publications) are purchased by anyone that is not VAT registered, the place of supply is deemed to be the UK and the supplier must register for and charge UK VAT.

For example, Zoom Inc. registered for VAT in the UK from 1 January 2021 (at the time of writing, their VAT number had still not been issued by HMRC) and now charges UK VAT on invoices to anyone not registered for VAT.

The situation is different for VAT registered councils, which must account for VAT on purchases from outside the UK. UK VAT will not be payable to the supplier (such as Zoom Inc), as long as a council provides its GB VAT Number.

Instead, VAT registered councils must use the reverse charge mechanism to account for the VAT. This means that they must:

* Calculate VAT on the full value of the supply received
* Add this as output tax in Box 1 of the VAT return
* Also add it as input tax in Box 4 of the VAT return
* Add the net value to Box 6 (total value of sales)
* Also add the net value to Box 7 (total value of purchases)

The overall effect is that the council accounts for VAT and claims it back on the same return, so there is no actual payment made.

This article is intended as a guide to some of the main changes and councils should ensure they refer to the guidance on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

# Employment Briefing

Employment law is complex and specialized. OALC can assist with general employment queries but we retain the services of Chris Moses, Personnel Advice and Solutions Ltd. to provide expert advice to our member councils. We have retained Chris for four hours per month to provide specialist employment advice free of charge to our member councils. OALC pay for this, because we believe it is an important and valuable service to our members. Each month he writes a briefing on relevant employment issues.

**Handforth Parish Council from an employment point of view**

I suspect by now most people who are involved in Town and Parish Councils have heard of Handforth Parish Council’s Planning meeting that went viral.

For people not involved in local politics at this level there appears to be surprise at the conduct of those attending the meeting. However, those of us who are regularly involved in dispute resolution at Town and Parish Council level, like myself, may be left wondering what all the excitement is about. Unfortunately, I've seen this happen many times.

What is also unfortunate is that I cannot watch that video without putting my “work head” on and considering the behaviour of Elected Members toward the CALC County Officer, Jackie Weaver. In my experience it would not be unique to see such conduct directed at the Clerk.

Clearly some of the comments directed towards her were abusive, confrontational, hostile and intimidating.

With my “work head” had Jackie been an Employee of the Council such conduct would constitute a breakdown in the employment relationship, and a breach of the trust and confidence an Employee should expect of their Employer. The conduct witnessed came from a section within the Council; the Chair’s supporters; and although they do not represent the whole Council, in legal terms anything done by a member of the Council is done by the body corporate as a whole. Consequently, the conduct of one or more Councillors towards an Employee is effectively done by the whole Council. As a result, the Employee may have a claim for breach of contract, Constructive Dismissal and possible harassment against the whole Council even if the problem was caused by a small minority.

There is a get out of jail clause for Councils within the Equality Act 2010, which enables it to effectively disassociate itself from the problem behaviour and defend any claims for Constructive Dismissal. Section 109 of the Act states that proceedings against the Employer can be defended if that Employer can demonstrate that it has taken reasonable steps to prevent the problem. Such steps include having an up to date conduct protocol, effective Grievance procedures, robust Standing Orders, an impartial internal dispute resolution procedure, and evidence of regular training on anti-harassment, discrimination and Employee rights.

A measure of how “reasonable” such steps are was recently tested in the Employment Appeal Tribunal (*Allay v Gehlen*). According to this judgement the Council’s defense would be considered ‘stale’ if the training had been delivered over 12 months ago.

To be able to demonstrate that the Council is genuinely committed to preventing harassment and bullying in the workplace, it needs to ensure that training is delivered on a regular basis and is fully up to date. it doesn’t matter if some of the Elected Members chose not to attend the training event, what matters is that the Council as a body corporate has facilitated the training and provided Members and Employees with an opportunity to keep up to date.

**Can a Council stop offering the Local Government Pension Scheme to new employees?**

Many Councils who have traditionally offered the Local Government Pension Scheme to all Employees, have stopping doing so for new recruits on the grounds of cost. Most LGP Schemes require Councils to contribute an average of 20% of the Employee’s Gross Pay, which doesn’t compare well to other Pensions such as NEST or People’s Pension, which only have a contribution of 3%

In a drive to reduce overhead costs, a number of Councils have decided to only offer the cheaper options to new recruits. However if that results in younger recruits being offered less favourable terms, there could be a claim for Age Discrimination against the Council, as happened in [Sargeant v London Fire Commissioner & Others](https://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKEAT/2021/0137_1202.html).  
  
Claims were brought be a number of firefighters against their employers in the form of local Fire and Rescue Authorities ('FRAs'). They argued that the terms of a new pension scheme, were discriminatory on the grounds of age. The new scheme changed the benefits for employees born on or after 2nd April 1971 so that they were less favourable than for younger employees.

This was found to be age discrimination by both the Employment and Employment Appeals Tribunals. As a result, if Councils are considering offering new recruits cheaper pension schemes, on the grounds that the old plan was unaffordable, and as a result they will be imposing ‘less favourable’ pension schemes on younger workers; they could face claims for age discrimination.

**Does the Uber Ruling in the Supreme Court have any bearing on Town / Parish Councils?**

A number of Town and Parish Councils have a long term, ongoing relationship with ‘self-employed’ contractors, who are not treated as employees and don’t qualify for sick or holiday pay

The key points from the Uber case for councils are that they should examine the reality of the relationship between the parties, and not be bound by whatever is written in any contracts or other documentation. The key tests are:

* ***Control:****Does the Contractor work under the direct managerial control and supervision of their customer?  If so they are acting as a worker.*
* ***Financial Investment:****Does the Contractor provider their own tools and equipment, or rely on their customer to provide them.  If they provide their own tools, they are acting as a self-employed contractor.*
* ***Interchangeability:****Can the Contractor send someone else to do their work?  If not, and the customer expects the same individual to carry out, they are treating them as a worker.*
* ***Mutuality of Obligation:****Does the Contractor expect to get regular hours of work and does their customer expect them to work on an ongoing basis? If so, the Contractor fulfils the definition of a worker.*

If the balance of these tests are in favour of the Contractor being a ‘worker’ they will accrue leave entitlement and are entitled to SSP if they earn over £120 per week. Furthermore, the Council needs to be deducting PAYE and NI form their payment.

**PROFILE**

Chris Moses LLM Chartered FCIPD is Managing Director of Personnel Advice & Solutions Ltd. He is a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, and has a Master’s Degree in Employment Law. If you have any questions regarding these issues please feel free to contact him on (01529) 305056 or email [p.d.solutions@zen.co.uk](mailto:p.d.solutions@zen.co.uk)

[www.personneladviceandsolutions.co.uk](http://www.personneladviceandsolutions.co.uk)

## Training of all sorts



SLCC CiLCA Train the Trainer       Friday March 5th 9.00am - 1.00pm on Microsoft Teams

For potential trainers and mentors who have not attended before or who would like a refresher; the event introduces CiLCA, the assessment process and ideas for training specifically for CiLCA.

Trainers should also attend a separate generic train the trainer course organised by LRALC before becoming a CiLCA Recognised Trainer.

The cost to attend our CiLCA Train the Trainer event is £30 + VAT per person. Please register using this link <https://www.slcc.co.uk/event/train-the-trainer-5th-march/> the password to enter is Train.  Bookings will close on Thursday 25th February.



Take part in our LEADERS TALK: BUILDING BACK RESILIENT COMMUNITIES on 25 March 2021.

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/rebuildingcommunities>

This event will look at the significance of local (parish and town) councils to key aspects of community recovery as we begin to emerge from lockdown – ranging from the future of community resilience to partnership working.

The expert panel features:

• Mark Law, chair of Locality and chief executive of Barca Leeds, who will talk about the local response to local issues, the emergence of new leaders and community actions, new partnerships, cooperation’s historical boundaries, and the way we plan and deliver services.

• Cllr Bridget Smith, deputy chair of the Local Government Association Safer and Stronger Communities Board and leader of South Cambridgeshire District Council, will talk on resilience, what it is, the different types including environmental, emergency and climate, economic, health and wellbeing and community resilience, and what are the roles, responsibilities and opportunities for local councils.

Prices for this event start from £30. The event is sponsored by BHIB Councils Insurance, Blachere Illumination and CCLA.

## OALC Training programme

All OALC training is delivered via Zoom

Our training courses are limited to 14- 20 participants, depending on the trainer. We do training **not** webinars and our trainers are always experienced and knowledgeable practitioners, they know their subject and they know this level of local government. Our courses fill up quickly and as a consequence we often have waiting lists.

**Bookings close one week before the date of the course. When bookings have closed we will then send to all those booked on the course the Zoom joining instructions, presentation (where appropriate) and any other papers. We ask that you confirm your attendance, no shows are annoying when there is a waiting list.**

 Please note our revised cancellation and late payment policy which is on the website

All courses can be booked online here <https://www.oalc.org.uk/events>

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| date | subject | Half/full day | trainer | description |
| Tuesday March 9th  10 am | Introduction to Neighbourhood Planning  FULLY BOOKED | Half day morning | Neil Homer |  |
| Tuesday March 23rd  1pm | Finding new town and parish councillors  3 places available | Half day afternoon | Breakthrough | How can you effectively find and encourage people to stand or be co-opted as town or parish Councillors? In many areas it is increasingly hard to find people who are willing to put their names forward either at election time or to be co-opted. We show you effective ways Councils and Councillors can encourage more people to come forward and this interactive session explores practical ways to do just that. |
| Wed. March 31st & Wed. April 14th 9.30 am | Chairmanship  FULLY BOOKED | 2 morning sessions | Kim Bedford |  |
| Tues. April 27th & Wed. April 28th 9.15 am | Cemetery Management and Legal Compliance  FULLY BOOKED | 2 morning sessions | ICCM |  |
| Tuesday May 25th 10am | Village Greens  11 places available | Half day morning | Wellers Hedleys | This online session will cover the following:   * Definition of Village Greens * Registration of Village Greens * Evidence required for registration * Preventing establishment of a Village Green * Effect of Village Green status * Ownership of Village Greens |
| Thurs. June 3rd &Thurs. June 10th 9.30am | Clerks, the Knowledge  9 places available | 2 morning sessions | Kim Bedford | This two part online workshop, explores the knowledge needed to be an effective Clerk to a Town or Parish Council.  It is ideal for new practitioners and those wishing to prepare for ILCA and CiLCA. |
| Thurs. June 24th 10.30am | Employing Staff with Confidence  17 places available | Half day morning | Chris Moses | The training is aimed at Councillors and Clerks who want to avoid the numerous legal and practical pitfalls associated with being an Employer.  It will provide an overview of the essentials of getting it right when employing a Clerk or other members of staff.  The course starts with recruitment and interviews, moves to induction and the legal requirements of taking on new staff, issuing contracts, and then managing sickness and disciplinary issues.  It will also ensure that attendees are brought fully up to date with the latest legal changes. |
| Tuesday July 13th 10am | The Experienced Councillor  12 places available | Half day morning | Wellers Hedleys | This is designed as a refresher course for councillors who have attended a core Councillor training session and spent some time gaining hands-on experience as a local councillor.  Councillors, as elected representatives, are often thrown in at the deep end with very little training and support.  Whilst core councillor training sessions provide a much-needed introduction to local councils, there is little opportunity for more experienced councillors to pause and reflect on what is still to be achieved in terms of professional development and learning.  The session is focused around a series of case studies, providing an important opportunity for councillors to explore and discuss commonly arising issues and typical scenarios in greater depth.  The purpose of the session is to refresh knowledge of procedure and practice and to further empower councillors to handle council business effectively and confidently.  A range of topics will be covered including local council spending powers, councillor conduct and planning ahead for the medium term.  Councillors will receive key sector updates. |
| Tuesday August 24th 6.30pm | Councillor Fundamentals  1 place available | Evening session | Kim Bedford | In this session we will set the scene of local government -   * Roles and responsibilities concerning the five main components of the council - Council, Councillor, Chairman, Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) * The importance of the law in meetings with an effective agenda and accurate minutes * Council delegation through committees; ways of managing your responsibilities; the place of Annual Meetings * Making a council plan for delivery of services to and for your community * Not forgetting - compliance through governance arrangements with full transparency |
| Tues. Sept. 7th & Tues. Sept. 21st 9.30am | Clerks, the Knowledge | Two morning sessions | Kim Bedford | This two part online workshop, run by Kim Bedford, explores the knowledge needed to be an effective Clerk to a Town or Parish Council.  It is ideal for new practitioners and those wishing to prepare for ILCA and CiLCA. |
| Tuesday Sept. 14th  10 am | Roles and Responsibilities | Full day over two sessions | Liz Howlett | This course, aimed at newly elected councillors, will be in two online sessions on the same day 10 - 12 and then 1 - 2.30pm.  **Session One**   * Terminology * Collective responsibility * Chairing a meeting * Relationships * The Agenda   **Session Two**   * Code of Conduct * Disorderly conduct * Managing difficult situations * Practical tips |
| Wed. Sept. 29th 6.30pm | Councillor Fundamentals | Evening Session | Kim Bedford | In this session we will set the scene of local government;-   * Roles and responsibilities concerning the five main components of the council - Council, Councillor, Chairman, Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) * The importance of the law in meetings with an effective agenda and accurate minutes * Council delegation through committees; ways of managing your responsibilities; the place of Annual Meetings * Making a council plan for delivery of services to and for your community * Not forgetting - compliance through governance arrangements with full transparency |
| Tuesday October 12th 10.30am | Appraisals for Parish Council Staff | Half day morning | Chris Moses | The Purpose of Appraisals  Overcoming Staff Worries  The Appraisal Form  Preparation for an Appraisal |
| Tuesday October 26th 10am | Introduction to VAT | Half day morning | Steve Parkinson | Essential for any council contemplating major building projects.  Topics include: • how VAT law applies to local councils • where to find the law and guidance • business and non-business activities • understanding whether sales are taxable or exempt from VAT • when a council must register for VAT • when VAT can be reclaimed • Partial exemption • Reclaiming VAT when using grants and donations  By the end of this session you will: • Know where to find the relevant legislation and guidance • Understand the key concepts of VAT • Know when a council can or can’t reclaim VAT • Recognise when a council must register for VAT • Be aware of activities that require special attention |
| Tuesday October 26th 1.30pm | Budgeting | Half day PM | Steve Parkinson | This session is aimed at officers and councillors of parish & town councils, who are involved in preparing, approving and monitoring budgets.  Topics include: • setting a budget and precept • Contingencies and reserves • how the council tax base affects the budget • Inflation • budget monitoring  By the end of this session you will: • Understand how and when to prepare a budget • Know how to approve and issue a precept • Be aware of the factors that affect a budget • Understand how to manage a budget |
| Thurs. November 25th 10am | Roles and Responsibilities | Full day over two sessions | Liz Howlett | This course, aimed at newly elected councillors, will be in two online (Zoom) sessions on the same day 10 - 12 and then 1 - 2.30pm.  ***Session One***   * Terminology * Collective responsibility * Chairing a meeting * Relationships * The Agenda   **Session Two**   * Code of Conduct * Disorderly conduct * Managing difficult situations * Practical tips |

# vacancies

If your council has a vacancy or anticipates having a vacancy OALC has a number of resources which can assist your council:

* A template for the advert to ensure your council provides all the necessary information and has thought about a job and person specification
* Information on salary scales
* A step by step guide to recruitment
* Copies of draft NALC/SLCC Model Contract
* NALC publication *Being a Good Employer* (in members area of the website)
* Access to OALC HR/Employment consultant for advice or an independent job evaluation (chargeable service)
* Library of employment briefings (in members area of the website)

|  |
| --- |
| **Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer**  **Sandford-on-Thames Parish Council** |
| To provide administrative support for the function of the Parish Council. We are a small friendly council of up to 7 Parish Councillors This post is available from 1st August 2021 or possibly sooner by negotiation. |
| Mostly home-based role. The monthly Parish Council meetings are held online at present. Otherwise held in the Village Hall. |
| **Hours:** 7.5 per week |
| **£ salary (range) & other key benefits**  £11.30 per hour (LC1, SCP 11), office expenses, laptop provided for duration of employment. |
| Duties include production of agendas and minutes for all meetings, carrying out the Council's decisions, advising on procedural matters (help and training is available from various sources) and maintaining the parish (village) website.  There are eleven meetings a year (every month except August). They usually take place on the first Monday each month at 6.30pm and the clerk would be expected to attend but currently these meetings are held online. Most other duties can be performed from home.  The Responsible Financial Officer’s work includes   * dealing with the payment of bills (predominantly on-line) * managing the computerised accounts and preparing updates for meetings * producing an annual budget and preparing the annual accounts for internal and external audit * preparing statutory and transparency documents for Parish Council approval * dealing with VAT claims * payment of the Clerk’s salary through the PAYE system   Good systems are already in place for dealing with all this and a laptop is provided. |
| The ideal candidate will have good organisational, interpersonal and computer skills with a good working knowledge of IT systems including Microsoft Office, email and online document management. Attention to detail is required especially for online banking and accounts management. |
| **How to apply:** In writing with a CV and covering letter/email to:  [**sandfordparish@gmail.com**](mailto:sandfordparish@gmail.com)  or email first for an informal discussion/expression of interest/job description  **Deadline: 1st April 2021**  **Interview date:** TBC |

**CLERK / RFO CROPREDY PARISH COUNCIL**

|  |
| --- |
| **Vacancy for Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer** |
| **Location:** Home (required to attend 10 Parish Council Meetings in Cropredy] |
| **Hours: per week or month:** 8 hours per week on average |
| **Salary:** Dependent on experience, Range (LC2 (18-23), £12.98 to £14.42 per hour. There is also an allowance for ‘office costs’ with working from home. |
| **Job Description**  To carry out the administrative and clerical functions of the Parish Council, provide guidance on compliance and legal matters, and as the Responsible Financial Officer, manage the Council’s finances. We are friendly group of 6 Parish Councillors serving the lovely village and vibrant community of Cropredy, in North Oxfordshire.  Duties as Parish Clerk include:   * Administration of Parish Council meetings (10 per year). Meetings are currently held on Zoom but normally would be in the Village. Responsibilities include: supporting the chair in preparation of agendas, notices of meetings, minutes, follow up actions, ensuring compliance with local government protocol; * Managing the Council’s response to planning applications; * Managing Council correspondence; * Administration of the Village cemetery; * Administration of Allotments; * Ensuring annual inspection of Play Area and maintaining records; * Maintaining the Register of Member interests; * Registration and compliance with the Data Protection Act; * Compliance with Health and Safety legislation.   As Responsible Financial Officer, duties include:   * Ensure legality and propriety of Council Transactions; * Ensure a balanced budget is set for each financial year; * Financial control of income and expenditure; * Production of annual accounts and ensuring audit; * Government returns including VAT, Income Tax and National Insurance |
| Candidates should have good organisational and communication skills (written and oral), be competent in IT including working with documents and spreadsheets, and have some experience with financial data. Candidates should have a good understanding of local government processes **or** be prepared to develop this through training, which is available**.**  Some knowledge of the use of the internet for business transactions and communications, and of social media would be desirable. |
| For further information or to arrange an informal chat, please contact the current clerk, Ken Porter, by email at [cropredypc@btinternet.com](mailto:cropredypc@btinternet.com). To apply, please email your CV plus with a covering letter setting out your suitability for the post.  **Deadline: Applications to be received by 26th March**  **Interview date: (via Zoom):**  To be arranged between 14th April and 20th April. |

**Witney Town Council**

Applications are invited for the posts of:

• Town Clerk PA & HR Administrator (P/T – 25 hrs per week)   
• Finance Officer/RFO & HR Officer (P/T – 30 hrs per week)   
• Democratic & Legal Services Officer (F/T – 37 hrs per week)   
• Administration Support Assistants x 3 (1x F/T & 2x P/T - 25 hrs per week)

For job descriptions, an application form, and further information, please visit our  
website: [www.witney-tc.gov.uk](http://www.witney-tc.gov.uk)

**Closing date for applications: 5pm, Wednesday 10th March 2021**

**Interview dates: 15th - 17th March 2021**

Witney Town Council prides itself on being an equal opportunities employer and  
encourages and welcomes applications from people regardless of age, gender  
reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant or on maternity  
leave, disability, race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or  
belief, sex, or sexual orientation.