**From:** OALC
**Sent:** 24 March 2020 11:55
**To:** OALC
**Subject:** Corona virus OALC advice for parish councils

Dear Clerks and Councillors,

Following the Prime Minsters statement last night please note this advice:

**Meetings**

Gatherings of more than 2 people from different households are not allowed. So your council should NOT be meeting in person. Whilst it is technically not legal to hold meetings remotely, legislation has not kept up with the virus so we have to be pragmatic. We anticipate the government will bring in measures to facilitate this soon. There are a number of apps and websites which can be used to host conference calls or virtual meetings such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams. With Zoom there are time restrictions on the free package (only 40 minutes) but if you haven’t already delegated powers to your clerk and Chairman/Vice Chairman then this may be one method of getting the delegation. Apparently with Zoom links can be provided to residents (via your website) so there is still transparency and might provide some entertainment to bored residents! It also allows recording of meetings for the record.

**Annual Parish Meetings**

These should be cancelled or moved to the very end of May (although restrictions may still be in place then) We expect guidance soon on this.

**Annual Council Meetings**

Like Annual Parish Meetings it is probably prudent to cancel these. We expect guidance on this soon and expect a delay in the requirement to hold them. The Chairman of the parish council will stay in post until they resign or a meeting can be held, possibly remotely to elect the new Chairman.

**Play Areas**

ALL PLAY AREAS SHOULD BE CLOSED FROM TODAY

Signs should be put up stating that play areas will be closed following government instructions and that safety checks will not be carried out. Take a photo of the closed play area, post on your website/Facebook etc to show residents and as proof should there be insurance claims. Tape off if you can’t close the playground

**Village halls/council offices**

These should be closed now and staff working from home.

**Allotments**

It appears that Michael Gove has said that allotments can still be visited, they do provide food and exercise but social distancing should be observed. Guidance from the National Allotment Society is available here <https://www.nsalg.org.uk/news/covid19-information/>

**Cemeteries**

Cemetery workers are classed as key workers and can continue their work. Keep up to date via ICCM  [https://www.nsalg.org.uk/news/covid19- information/](https://www.nsalg.org.uk/news/covid19-%20information/)

**Corona Virus case studies**

NALC has created  a Corona virus case studies publication here <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/coronavirus>

**Staff and homeworking**

Many staff already work from home but if not assist them to do so where ever possible.

**Finance**

We are waiting for further guidance on audit but understand the deadline may be extended to 30th September 2020. In the meantime talk to your internal auditor and keep preparations for audit ongoing. We are waiting for more government guidance however ith the restrictions on meetings it is likely that audit will be delayed.

If you aren’t currently using online banking we suggest this is a priority for the future. The powers of delegation should allow the Clerk in consultation to pay bills and invoices.

**E**lections

If your council was due to have an election in May please try and persuade any councillors that might have been minded to resign to stay until  life is a little calmer.

Please be calm, pragmatic and observe all social distancing

Kind regards

Christine

County Officer



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