OALC Newsletter

August 2020

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**Training Programme 2020** <https://www.oalc.org.uk/events>

All our training sessions for the rest of this year and next year will be delivered on line.

See page 26 for details of any spare places on courses in the autumn

**Vacancies**

None this month

## latest corona virus advice

**PLEASE read this section and check the latest** [**central government guidance**](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) **as it is constantly evolving**

1. Following the government announcement of further easing of lockdown restrictions from 4 July, **both NALC and SLCC still strongly advise local councils to continue to meet remotely,** without the need for face-to-face contact.

If the council wishes to consider returning to face-to-face meetings then there are a range of issues that will need to be addressed before this can take place. NALC and SLCC have produced a checklist (below) to help the council ensure this decision is made in accordance with relevant regulations and requirements. It is in the member’s area of our website as well.

Further guidance related to COVID-19 can be found on the NALC <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/coronavirus> and [SLCC websites](https://www.slcc.co.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Item** | **Confirmed** |
| **1** | **There is no way for the council to conduct business except through a face-to-face meeting.** |  |
|  | The council staff and councillors are unable to conduct business without a face-to-face meeting.  *Note: The* [*government rules*](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) *still state that we should all work from home if we can.* |  |
|  | The council is unable to make use of telephone or online technology to conduct quorate council meetings.  *Note: Local councils* [*have the powers*](https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/news-stories/covid19/3234-l01-20-the-local-authorities-and-police-and-crime-panels-coronavirus-flexibility-of-local-authority-and-police-and-crime-panel-meetings-england-and-wales-regulations-2020/file) *to hold public meetings remotely by using video or telephone conferencing technology until May 2021. Parish meetings do not have such powers to meet remotely.* |  |
|  | The council has a reasonable business need, or legal need to meet in person at this time.  *Note: The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No.2) (England) Regulations 2020 state that a public authority can only hold a gathering of over 30 people if certain conditions are met* |  |
| **2** | **Action has been taken to seek a number of options for an appropriate venue for the council meeting.** |  |
|  | These venues comply with normal council meeting requirements.  *Note: NALC members can access* [*Legal Topic Note 5*](https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/members-library/legal-topic-notes/council-business-law-and-procedure/1618-5-parish-and-community-council-meetings-june-2015-1/file) *– Parish and community council meetings.* |  |
|  | The venues allow the public to observe council meetings with social distancing without placing restrictions on the number attending. |  |
|  | The venues conform to the government guidance for [multi-purpose community facilities](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities) and for [council buildings](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). |  |
|  | If the venue is not owned/managed by the council the owners have been asked for their risk assessment and what actions they are taking to reduce risk. |  |
| **3** | **There is a potential venue the council can use in compliance with the above requirements.** |  |
| **4** | **The council understands and is acting in compliance with** [**‘safer workplaces’**](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/shops-and-branches) **guidance.** |  |
| **5** | **The council has checked if there are councillors or staff that will be unable to attend face-to-face meetings due to health, disability or other reasons.** |  |
|  | The council has considered how it will make reasonable adjustments to allow individuals with disabilities or other needs to take part in the meeting. |  |
|  | The council has considered a [hybrid approach](https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/news-stories/covid19/3232-nalc-holding-remote-meetings/file) to meetings. |  |
| **6** | **A** [**risk assessment**](https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/news-stories/covid19/3272-risk-assessment-for-covid-19/file) **has been conducted.** |  |
|  | Consideration has been taken towards what the council can do to reduce risk to councillors, staff and public including:   * Providing hand sanitiser to those entering the meeting room and making sure hand sanitiser is readily available in the room itself. * Staggering arrival times for staff, councillors and members of the public. * Ensuring seating is placed at least 2-metre apart. * Asking people to wear face masks. * Holding paperless meetings. * If papers are provided, people should be discouraged from sharing with others and asked to take the papers with them at the end of the meeting to minimise how many people handle the papers. * Arranging seating so people are not facing each other directly. * Choosing a venue with good air flow, including opening windows and doors where possible   *Note: The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No.2) (England) Regulations 2020 require that the person responsible for organising the gathering has carried out a risk assessment and the organiser has taken all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission taking into account the risk assessment.* |  |
| **7** | **The council has decided, based on the risk assessment and with risk management actions that it is safe and appropriate to meet.** |  |
| **8** | **All risk mitigating actions identified by the risk assessment have taken place.** |  |

1. 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) came into force on 4th April 2020. All member councils have received NALC briefing L01-20 explaining what the Regulations mean in practical terms. The Regulations apply to town and parish council meetings until 7th May 2021.
2. **Parish Meetings** can from 1st August meet virtually

[*‘The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Amendment Regulations 2020’*](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/808/contents/made)were laid in Parliament on Thursday 30 July.  They will come into force on **Saturday 1 August** and apply to local authority meetings held before 7 May 2021.

The regulations extend the definition of “local authority” under the Regulations to include Parish Meetings. The regulations remove the existing requirements for such bodies to hold annual meetings and allow meetings to be held remotely, enabling council members, officers and members of the public to access meetings and associated documents remotely.

1. Check your district council website and the County Council’s too <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-from-the-government/>
2. **The lockdown is easing.** However, if you are confused about what you can and can’t do please go to this government website – it outlines the businesses/premises which can reopen including play areas, outdoor gyms, community centres, museums. However, they are still expected to follow covid-19 safety measures – **updated 26th August**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

1. **Risk assessment on reopening facilities.** All member councils received on 10th June, from OALC the BHIB/ NALC *Risk Assessment for Covid-19* which is in the Members Area of our website under NALC briefings. It’s a useful document covering:

* Government guidance
* What is a COVID-19 risk assessment?
* What standards should we use?
* Undertaking a COVID-19 risk assessment
* How to assess risk
* Measures to reduce and manage risk
* Record keeping
* Publicising council decisions
* Public information
* Staff and contractors

1. **Reopening your own offices** (if you have one!). Please follow the government guidance on safe working - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>
2. **Village and community halls** have been allowed to reopen from 4th July.  The latest guidance **updated on 21st August** from ACRE is here -

<https://acre.org.uk/news/2020-08-21-information-to-help-village-halls-reopen-updated-again>

## OALC - HELPFUL hint - be careful of unexpected bank account changes

Please be very careful, this week a Clerk was very nearly tricked into paying an invoice (for a 5 figure sum) into the wrong bank account.

The Clerk was expecting an invoice from a building company for the last installment for work it had carried out. It came with the correct amount and the correct invoice number but the email said that the company bank account details had changed, would the clerk please pay the invoice into the new account. The email was not actually from the company, the email address the scammers used was **just one letter different from the correct company name**. The Clerk was concerned and thankfully checked with the real company asking when and why they had changed their bank account. Of course, they said nothing had altered.

Just one letter different – we are all in a hurry, too many things to do, too little time. Be aware if you get an email about a change of bank details, pause and think before you pay it.

## Oxfordshire County Council



Please refer to the County Council website for their latest information and their specific Covid-19 webpage <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/coronavirus-covid-19> .

**Planning ahead**

Oxfordshire County Council Emergency Planning team are working in response to Covid but also looking forward towards winter. Normal disruptive events will still occur during Covid for example flooding, snow, gales, power cuts, water supply disruption. Over the last year in Oxfordshire we have dealt with over 10,000 homes with no power during snow for more than two days, 3000 homes with no mains water for three days as well as numerous other incidents. During these events we need to ensure that we can identify those most vulnerable who need support- those over 65, with medical conditions or disabilities and those with children under 5. There is support available for these groups during an incident but we need to know people are there, we need those in these groups to read the leaflet at the link below and ensure that they sign up to the priority service lists for EACH of their utility providers. It doesn’t matter who you pay your bill to or whether you pay the bill you are still eligible. In an emergency these lists are shared with us to provide help.

<https://www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/fireandpublicsafety/emergency/Utility_Failure_Complete.pdf>

Everyone can help themselves to be prepared by having a small stock of food, a bottle of water, a wind up torch and a ‘flu friend’ someone who could collect shopping, collect prescriptions and assist in an emergency.

We can supply resilience bags of information to vulnerable groups to distribute, if any groups would like a supply of these please contact [emergencyplanning@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:emergencyplanning@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

**Volunteer Fix My Street Super Users**

Following on from last month’s OALC update of the Fix My Street Volunteers, the volunteer coordination team have received several additional parish/towns expressing an interest in undertaking the FMS SuperUser role.

We have amended our training process and are now ready to re-start the FMS-SU training program again. We are looking forward to working with you, if you are interested and have not yet contacted us or would like to find out more information, please email us: [volunteercoordinationteam@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:volunteercoordinationteam@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Or you can also find more information on this and other Highway Volunteering activities via our Oxfordshire Together document - How-to-Guides.

Visit: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/about-council/OxfordshireTogether.pdf>

**Oxfordshire’s local outbreak control plan**

The first wave of the coronavirus pandemic in the UK is now beginning to pass, with the number of new cases declining. As national lockdown is gradually eased, local plans have been put in place by local authorities in partnership with the NHS and Public Health England to reduce the spread of infection and manage local outbreaks. This combined effort aims to avoid a second wave anywhere across England.

Oxfordshire’s local outbreak control plan is designed to help return life to as normal as possible for as many people as possible in a way that is safe, protects our health and care systems, and supports our local economy.

It has been developed by Oxfordshire County Council’s Public Health team, working with colleagues from the city and district councils, Oxfordshire Health, Oxford University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Public Health England and Thames Valley Police.

The link to the plan is here -

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/coronavirus-covid-19/controlling-local-coronavirus-outbreaks/local-outbreak-control-plan>

## Devolution – oxfordshire and forthcoming white paper

NALC has been asking for councils views on the widely anticipated White Paper on devolution (see previous editions of the Update). Devolution is a slightly misleading term as this appears to be a re-run of the previous unitary debate with extra topics thrown in for good measure.

On Wednesday 26th August Oxfordshire County Council published a report they commissioned with Cherwell District Council from Price Waterhouse Cooper, PwC. The report Local *Government Reform in Oxfordshire* is here - <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/independent-experts-take-a-fresh-look-at-options-for-delivering-key-local-services-to-oxfordshire-people/>

Into

PwC are also the authors of a more wide ranging report for the County Councils Network reported on by the BBC <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-53934725> This report suggests that one body for each area would reduce complexity and give communities a single unified voice. It goes on to suggest that abolishing 213 smaller councils in England and replacing them with 25 new local authorities could save almost £3bn over five years. But as it is commissioned by the County Councils Network it would say that wouldn’t it!

The Oxfordshire report (at a reported cost of £35,000) offers a high level appraisal of three options:

*“1. Optimising the existing two-tier collaboration*

*2. Establishing a new single unitary authority*

*3. Establishing two new unitary authorities, based on a 50/50 split of the population to meet Government criteria around size*

*Each of the options has been assessed against the MHCLG criteria or tests for local government reform set out by the Secretary of State on 22nd July 2019.*

*The report states that from their analysis it appears that local government reform presents an opportunity for Oxfordshire to address the cumulative deficit of £46.9m to 2024-25 which existed pre-covid and to deliver improved outcomes for its residents*

*The table below represents a “base case” net annual savings scenario for each of the three options taking into account the impact of reorganisation and transformation. The table shows that while each option has the potential to deliver savings to Oxfordshire, it is the single unitary option that delivers the highest net annual savings through reorganisation and transformation.*

|  |
| --- |
| ***Reorganisation and Transformation Base (£m)*** |
| ***Option*** | ***Net Savings Per Year*** | ***One Off Costs*** |
| *Two-tier collaboration* | *15.5* | *-21.6* |
| *Single unitary* | *69.0* | *-28.0* |
| *Two unitary* | *45.3* | *-31.0* |

*Through reorganisation and transformation, Oxfordshire can deliver place-based outcomes for its citizens including:   
● delivering the Oxfordshire Plan 2050.  
● ensuring there is an inclusive plan for economic recovery that includes delivering more affordable  
housing and infrastructure.  
● addressing inequalities in communities and ensuring that health and wellbeing outcomes improve.  
● Tackling the impact of climate change and ensuring the local environment is sustainable.*

*There is, however, a challenge facing Oxfordshire as it considers the most appropriate option for reform, especially as it seeks to preserve those elements of the existing system that work well whilst also addressing the challenge of making the geography of the county, and its population, work against the stated MHCLG population criteria for the establishment of new authorities.  
There is also an additional challenge in terms of managing the potentially disruptive consequences, and costs, of disaggregating key county functions (Fire and Rescue, Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care and Education) and rebuilding the associated delivery models and governance arrangements in a two unitary model.”*

The leaders of Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council suggest the PwC report will provide ‘food for thought’ in anticipation of the White Paper and point out that the report doesn’t make any recommendations.

Oxford City Council and West Oxfordshire District Council have issued a joint statement on the same day the PwC report was published -<https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1534/statement_on_local_government_reform_in_oxfordshire_report_from_oxfordshire_county_council>

They give a detailed response suggesting that now is not the time for major restructuring of local government. They say -

*“This report looks rushed and flawed, before the Government has set out its policy on this. It gives attention-grabbing financial forecasts without looking at the delivery of essential services. It makes basic errors on essential data like the size of population. The savings assessments are flawed, un-evidenced and contradict other reports – including by PwC.*

*“The report does not consider all options, nor, crucially does it even acknowledge the current context of COVID-19 in terms of health arrangements, community support and economic recovery…”*

The White Paper may be out next month, so watch this space.

# Local News

## Councillor covid grant scheme – SODC and vale

Each South and Vale District Councillor has up to £2,000 to make discretionary grant payments to community groups and other appropriate organisations that are directly responding to the Coronavirus pandemic in their ward. Please contact your district councillor directly or email [grants@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:grants@southandvale.gov.uk)

## Cherwell DC Councillor Covid Fund

**Cherwell Councillor Covid-19 Priority Grants** – Each Councillor is allocated £2,000 to award to groups with projects responding to or promoting recovery from the Covid crisis in their communities.  Many parish based groups have already benefited, with 54 grants having been awarded, totaling £40,000. Guidance notes and application form are at <https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/Coronavirus-grant>.  Any enquiries should be addressed to [grants@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:grants@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

## Oxfordshire Community Foundation Small Grants

OCF has announced a new round of small grants to support COVID-19 response and recovery. Grants between £250 and £2,000 are available to small, local organisations working to alleviate hardship caused by the pandemic, including educational disadvantage, homelessness, loneliness, digital exclusion and more. Ongoing running costs can be covered; closes 9th September. [Find out more and apply](https://oxfordshire.org/grants-2020/covid-19-small-grants/?dm_i=1OSY,6ZPXT,WXJTSY,S602P,1)

**Reminder: Business Grant Scheme closed down** - The Government grant scheme designed to help small and medium-sized businesses affected by coronavirus closes today Friday 28 August and this includes the ‘Retail, Hospitality and Leisure’ grant, which many community halls and sports pavilions have benefited from.

## Good Neighbour Information schemes

Good Neighbour schemes are local voluntary groups which offer a service in their community for those in need of help and support.

They offer befriending and practical help to older people - whether it's transport, collecting repeat prescription, walking the dog, tidying up the garden, taking someone to hospital, doing a bit of shopping or changing a light bulb. The service aims to help people to stay independent, safe and well.

The Community Information Network teamed up with Volunteer Link Up to encourage more people, to join or set up a Good Neighbour Scheme.

More information here <http://www.vlu.org.uk/good-neighbour-scheme.html>

## Oxfordshire County Council - Gypsy and Traveller Service

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Pete Gammond**  Service Manager  07867 538 029  [Peter.gammond@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Peter.gammond@oxfordshire.gov.uk) |
|  | **Ewa Fras**  Traveller Site Officer  07554 115 677  [Ewa.fras@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Ewa.fras@oxfordshire.gov.uk) |
| [Andy Rymer's Profile Photo](https://www.facebook.com/profile/picture/view/?profile_id=1206921563) | **Andy Rymer**  Traveller Support Officer  07551 680 637  [Andy.Rymer@Oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Andy.Rymer@Oxfordshire.gov.uk)  Working days - Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. |

Office number 01865 815569 Office email: [Travellers@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Travellers@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Postal address: Oxfordshire Gypsy and Traveller Services, 1st Floor, Bicester Fire Station, Queens Avenue, Bicester, Oxfordshire OX26 2NR

If you have any concerns about Travellers in your parish or vicinity contact Pete Gammond, or one of the team - they are the experts, they will respond very quickly. They keep Clerks informed about what is going on throughout the county with a weekly update like this below. If you aren’t receiving it please contact them to be put on their distribution list.

# National News

## road safety trust grants

**£300K FUNDING FOR ROAD SAFETY PROJECTS ANNOUNCED**

New funding announced in response to the impact COVID-19 has had on UK roads for charities, local authorities, and community groups.

Road Safety Trust, a charity dedicated to making the UK’s roads the safest in the world, will open its Small Grants Plus Programme to applications on 15th September for five weeks.

The scheduled Small Grants Programme was suspended in March 2020 and the reintroduction of it has been modified to encourage applications that respond to changing road use and emerging road safety issues as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.  Eligible projects are pilots or trials, an expansion of successful trials across a new area, and/or the evaluation of road safety interventions.

The modification means that the total value of the fund is £300k with each project being awarded between £20k and £50k.

The Road Safety Trust is the largest independent road safety grant giver in the UK and funds vital research and practical interventions committed to reducing the number of people killed or injured on UK roads. Since it was established in 2014, the Road Safety Trust has awarded grants worth £3.7m to 49 different projects.

Each application should have a UK lead organisation which must be local public sector, charity, not-for-profit social enterprise or community interest company. Universities can also apply but they must have a partner from one of these organisations as a lead. An element of partnership working is expected in all projects.

The Small Grants Programme will be open for applications from **15th September until 21st October.** For more information visit: [https://roadsafetytrust.org.uk/](https://roadsafetytrust.org.uk/" \t "_blank)

 For more information, contact: Sarah Colombini, 07731462451 [sarah.colombini@campaigncollective.org](mailto:sarah.colombini@campaigncollective.org)

## From nalc

**Letter from Simon Clarke MP**  
  
NALC has [**received a letter**](https://nalc.us12.list-manage.com/track/click?u=16886b5d6c31eade2f9a50027&id=549e92b782&e=2593660dc7) from Simon Clarke MP, Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government at MHCLG. It thanks organisations across local government that “have responded so magnificently to the challenge of ensuring that vital council business continues by conducting your council meetings remotely”. The letter also provides information on changes to the regulations that affect Parish Meetings — you can find out more in our[**legal briefing**](https://nalc.us12.list-manage.com/track/click?u=16886b5d6c31eade2f9a50027&id=908a633bfd&e=2593660dc7). It also contains a range of useful information and guidance on several topics related to council meetings, all of which align with NALC’s views. The letter also includes information on the six-month attendance rule, which might affect some councillors if they have not been attending meetings during the pandemic, so it’s worth checking that information.  
  
**New guide on community business**  
   
 [**NALC has partnered with the Plunkett Foundation and Power to Change**](https://nalc.us12.list-manage.com/track/click?u=16886b5d6c31eade2f9a50027&id=6e53a2202e&e=2593660dc7) and will release a new guide on community business, later this year.  
  
The Good Councillor's guide to community business will aim to help parish and town councils better understand the principles of what a community business is, their benefits and help consider whether it would be beneficial for their area.  
  
As part of the guide, stories and experiences will be essential. We're calling for anyone involved with a local council, community business collaboration, or partnered project to share their knowledge and get in touch with [**alison.macklin@plunkett.co.uk**](mailto:alison.macklin@plunkett.co.uk). You could feature as a case study too!  
  
**LGA code of conduct consultation**  
  
NALC responded to the LGA's draft code of conduct consultation — [**available on our website**](https://nalc.us12.list-manage.com/track/click?u=16886b5d6c31eade2f9a50027&id=f7ef6e58fe&e=2593660dc7) (login required). To form the response, we worked with several partners including the LGA, NALC's Policy Committee, the Society Local Councils Clerks, as well as taking part in two webinars set up by the LGA, which our chairman, Cllr Sue Baxter attended. We will continue to work with the LGA as the final code is produced and will provide updates on any developments.  
  
**LGA remote meetings survey**  
  
NALC has been working with the LGA and other national stakeholders to support councils at all tiers of local government about remote meetings. To support that work and help inform the next stages, the LGA is asking local councils to [**complete a short survey**](https://nalc.us12.list-manage.com/track/click?u=16886b5d6c31eade2f9a50027&id=2fcd7f0dcc&e=2593660dc7) by **4 September 2020**.

## Green Homes Grant

You may be aware of [the new Green Homes Grant Scheme](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/quality-assurance-at-heart-of-new-2-billion-green-homes-grants) that will see the Government fund up to two-thirds of the cost of home improvements of over 600,000 homes, supporting over 100,000 jobs in green construction. The Government has now set out further details on the range of measures included and how consumers in England will be able to claim vouchers, which are worth up to £5,000 for homeowners. [Households on low income can receive vouchers](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/906544/ghg-additional-information.pdf) covering 100 per cent of the cost of the improvements, up to a maximum of £10,000.

Local authorities can also bid for funding under this scheme to improve the energy efficiency of low-income households in their area. All local authorities in England are eligible to submit a bid, applications close at midday on Tuesday 1 September 2020.

Builders, plumbers, and other tradespeople across England will need the Government’s seal of approval to provide their services as part of the new green homes grant, which goes live at the end of September. Tradespeople must register for [TrustMark](hhttps://www.trustmark.org.uk/ghgs) or [Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS)](https://www.trustmark.org.uk/ghgs) accreditation to take part in the scheme.

## Charities receive over £32 million from dormant trusts

The Charity Commission and UK Community Foundations call for more charities to join a programme to release charity money.

Future funding announced last month (July) a programme that takes funds lying dormant in the accounts of inactive or ineffective charities and puts them to good use. The programme is managed by the Charity Commission and the charity UKCF, with funding from the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/charities-receive-over-32-million-from-dormant-trusts>

## National pay AWARD – finally!

E01-20 2020-21 NATIONAL SALARY AWARD

The National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) has agreed the new pay scales for 2020-21 to be implemented from 1 April 2020.

The NALC briefing lists the new pay scales for clerks and other employees employed under the terms of the model contract including SCPs 50 and above. These calculations have been checked by the ALCC and are based on the changes agreed by the NJC. These should be applied from 1 April 2020.

Due to the introduction of the national living wage, the NJC agreement included the introduction of a new pay spine on 1 April 2019. Reference to the former pay scales has been removed. However, if you wish to see how the old spinal column points and scale ranges translated to the new scales, these are set out in E02-18

Due to copyright reasons the briefing cannot be reproduced here but is attached to this Update and both briefings E01-20 and E02-18 are in the Members Area of the OALC website (login required) under NALC briefings.

## NALC website accessibility publication

NALC has issued a publication to assist your council to be compliant with the Website Accessibility Regulations <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/952/made> we have put it into the Members Area of our website. In summary it covers:

**Requirements**

* Legislation
* Standards
* Exemptions
* Disproportionate burden
* Accessibility statement
* Timing
* Non-compliance

**What you need to do - checklist**

* Have a plan
* Remedy

## AUDIT deadline is monday 31st August

**ALL DOCUMENTS MUST BE SUBMITTED ON OR BEFORE 31 AUGUST 2020** – please do not wait until your public inspection periods have concluded before submitting your documents.

Moore will be sending chasing letters next week to those that haven’t yet sent the required documents. Don’t forget each chasing letter/email from them will be charged at £40 (except Parish Meetings who have had less time to comply).  
   
The key changes for publication of draft and final accounts are:   
  
**For Category 1 authorities:**

* The deadline for authorities to publish draft financial statements moves from 31 May to 31 August 2020.
* The deadline for publication of final (audited) financial statements moves from 31 July to 30 November 2020.

**For Category 2 authorities (smaller authorities):**

* The deadline for authorities to publish draft Annual Governance and Accountability Returns (AGAR) moves from 31 May to 31 August 2020.
* The deadline for publication of final (audited) AGAR moves from 30 September to 30 November 2020.

For both Category 1 and Category 2 authorities, the requirement for a ‘common’ inspection period has been removed. The requirement to hold a 30-working-day inspection period remains, but for 2019-20 both Category 1 and Category 2 authorities can commence the inspection period at any time, **except it must commence no later than 1 September 2020**. This will allow authorities to produce their draft accounts and commence their inspection periods as soon as they are able.  
  
**If you have concerns or may have a problem meeting this extended deadline for whatever reason please contact the external auditors - Moore**

The primary contact for any enquiries relating to the limited assurance review process is Rich Dixon, Audit Manager.  The team can be contacted by telephone on **01733 397300** or via email [Oxon.sa@moore.co.uk](mailto:Oxon.sa@moore.co.uk)

<https://www.moore.co.uk/sectors/public-sector/smaller-authorities>

## Furloughing of staff

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will close on 31 October 2020.

From 1 July, employers can bring furloughed employees back to work for any amount of time and any shift pattern, while still being able to claim CJRS grant for the hours not worked.

From 1 August 2020, the level of grant will be reduced each month. To be eligible for the grant employers must pay furloughed employees 80% of their wages, up to a cap of £2,500 per month for the time they are being furloughed.

More information on the government website here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme/changes-to-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>

## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE, WHITE PAPER

## CONSULTATION, REFORM OF THE PLANNING SYSTEM and two other planning consultations

There are two planning consultations and a call for evidence open at the moment, in chronological order of their closing dates:

**1. Changes to the current planning system** (closes 1st October) <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907215/200805_Changes_to_the_current_planning_system_FINAL_version.pdf>

This makes four proposals:

* changes to the standard, much tinkered with, method for assessing local housing need, which as well as being a short term proposal links into proposals for land supply reforms set out in Planning for the Future (proposal 4);
* securing of First Homes, sold at a discounted market price for first time buyers, including key workers, through developer contributions in the short term until the transition to a new system. The Government intends that a minimum of 25 per cent of all affordable housing units secured through developer contributions (sec.106) should be First Homes.
* as a short term measure lifting the small sites threshold in sec 106 agreements, below which developers do not need to contribute to affordable housing, to up to 40 or 50 units to support SME builders as the economy recovers from the impact of Covid-19;
* extending the current Permission in Principle to include major development so landowners and developers have a fast route to secure the principle of development for housing on sites. PiP was introduced in 2017 for allocated brownfield sites and extended in 2018 to small sites under 10 dwellings. The Permission in Principle consent route has two stages:

• the first stage (“Permission in Principle”) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle for development. This grant of Permission in Principle is for five years and no planning conditions can be attached to it

• the second (‘technical details consent’) stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed, and conditions can be attached.

A grant of Permission in Principle plus a grant of technical details consent together equate to full planning permission.

**2. *Planning for the future*, White Paper**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

Consultation closes 29th October. Email responses via [planningforthefuture@communities.gov.uk](mailto:planningforthefuture@communities.gov.uk) or via the website <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

This White Paper is potentially the biggest change in the planning system since Town and Country Planning Act, 1947

Central government perceive the current planning system to be:

* + Too complex
  + Discretionary, not rules based
  + Taking too long to adopt a Local Plan
  + Housing needs assessments, viability and environmental impact statements are too opaque
  + To have lost public confidence
  + Based on old tech
  + Developer contribution negotiations are complex, slow and unclear
  + Not have enough focus on design; and
  + Not enough homes being built

There are 24 proposals in the White Paper, split under three Pillars or headings – Planning for Development; Planning for beautiful sustainable places and Planning for infrastructure & connected places. The numbers in brackets below are the proposals.

**Pillar one - Planning for Development**

The idea is that Local Plans should be simplified, digitized, standardized, slimmed down and their production speeded up and to have a 10 not 15 year life span. All areas to have Local Plans by 2023. They should identify three zones – Growth, Renewal and Protect. (1)

**Growth Areas** – suitable for substantial development such as new settlements, urban extensions and areas for redevelopment such as ex-industrial land suitable for urban regeneration. Automatic outline approval – Permission in Principle would be conferred by adoption of the Local Plan. (5) Detailed permission secured in one of three ways – reformed reserved matters; Local Development Order prepared by LPA in parallel with the Local Plan, linked to Master Plan and design codes or for exceptionally large sites a Development Consent Order under Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project.

**Renewal Areas** – suitable for smaller scale development, infill, densification and rural areas. General presumption in favour of development established in legislation (plan led system). Consent given for pre-specified forms of development. A new route to automatic planning permission if it meets certain design and other criteria.

**Protected Areas** – Green Belt, SSSI’s, AONB’s, flood risk areas, wildlife sites etc. More stringent control to ensure sustainability but planning application to the LPA.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will be the primary source of policies (2), set nationally along with development control policies, not repeated in the Local Plan which just has the site or area specific policies. Local Planning Authorities to produce local design codes in parallel with the Local Plan.

The Local Plan to be subject to a single sustainability test - “*Will the Local Plan contribute to achieving sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF*”. Abolishing the duty to co-operate between LPA’s, slimmed down deliverability text and remove existing test of soundness. (3)

There will be a standard national method for establishing housing requirements and for distributing the 300,000 new annual homes requirement. The 5 year land supply requirement will go (4)

Faster decision making with firm deadlines; shorter more standardized applications, national digital templates and supporting technical information; standard national conditions and LPA’s to return fees if appeals are successful. (6)

Local Plans to be visual, map based with standardized data sets to a new national template (7)

30 month Local Plan production timetable to be adhered to, 5 stage method. Review every 5 years. Risk government intervention if non-compliance. (8)

Neighbourhood Plans to be retained and supported, more use of digital tools (pilots) (9)

Masterplans should seek to include a variety of development types by different builders to encourage faster build out. Few details (10)

**Pillar Two Building Beautiful, sustainable places**

The White Paper suggests that a slimmed down faster planning system is just the start of high quality development and better place making. It refers to the work of the [Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission.](https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/building-better-building-beautiful-commission) It expects design codes and guidance to be prepared locally and to be binding on decisions. (11). MHCLG will set up a body to support delivery of local design codes and each LPA is to have a Chief Officer for design and place making. (12)

[Homes England](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/homes-england) to provide leadership in giving emphasis to delivering beautiful places (13). There will be a ‘fast track’ for beauty for applications which comply with established good design principles, incentivizing attractive and popular development which reflects local character (14)

Amend the NPPF to strengthen but simplify the way the planning system considers environmental issues (15 &16)

Review and update the planning framework for listed buildings, allowing sympathetic changes to support continued use of buildings. Perhaps allowing experienced architectural specialists autonomy from listed building consent. (17)

Introduce ambitious improvements in energy efficiency standards to net-zero by 2050 (18)

**Pillar Three Planning for Infrastructure and connected places**

Consolidated Infrastructure Levy (IL) replaces L both Sec 106 agreements and CIL. A mandatory nationally set rate/s. Abolish planning obligations. (19)

IL to be extended to capture changes of use through permitted development which don’t necessarily create additional floor space. (20) IL to deliver affordable housing on site which CIL currently doesn’t. (21)

More freedom for LA’s on what they spend IL on, 25% for parish councils to be kept. MHCLG is interested in ways to enhance community engagement about how funds should be spent (22)

Proposals 23 & 24 are about providing resources & skills for the planning sector and strengthening enforcement powers and sanctions.

**Observations – Pro’s:**

* Recognition of the need for proper resourcing of the planning system
* Great to have encouragement of Building for Beauty, this has been much neglected by volume housebuilders
* Maintains the foundation of a plan led system
* Continued support for Neighbourhood Plans and parish councils getting 25% of IL
* Good to encourage better use of digitization
* Suggests the reforms will “radically and profoundly re-invent engagement with local communities” which is a pro but can’t see how this will happen in reality (con)

**Cons:**

* Thin on detail
* Narrow emphasis on build to buy ([First Homes](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/first-homes) - 25% of affordable homes, only 5% other tenancies), little about other tenancies and Community Land Trusts. Will affect rural affordable housing (CPRE very critical <https://www.cpre.org.uk/news/major-planning-reforms-criticism/>)
* Massive centralization with government templates for Local Plans, binding housing numbers set nationally, Development Management policies, national body for design codes
* Where is the duty to co-operate, or joined up strategic planning across an area?
* General presumption in favour of development. Development, simplicity or speed of delivery aren’t the answer to everything and probably mean less rigorous and less effective local scrutiny, less democratic engagement
* Only three categories of zoning. Towns and countryside are far more nuanced, three zones is too blunt an instrument. Sub-zones for self-build will be introduced.
* Climate change has slipped down the agenda and environmental assessments appear to be marginalized
* Streamlining or speeding up of the planning permission system is likely to mean less opportunity/time for parish councils to comment.
* Ironic emphasis on ‘beauty’ (subjective?) and place making when current system allows office to rabbit hutch conversions with no windows! Volume house builders have never been known for beauty.

3. A call for evidence to seek **views on proposals to help councils and local communities better understand who controls land in their area** and to assist SME and new entrants to the housing market identity land suitable for development. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907213/Call_for_evidence_on_Contractual_Controls.pdf>

The call for evidence closes on 30th October, details of how to respond via the link above.

HM Land Registry (HMLR) is committed to registering all publicly owned land by 2025 and aims to achieve comprehensive registration by 2030. But the information it holds is primarily associated with conveyancing and does not cover all interests in the land such as contractual arrangements—rights of pre-emption, options and conditional contracts.

## Consultation on England’s Economic Heartland’s draft Transport Strategy

The Heartland region is a net contributor to the Treasury and a vital economic asset for the UK, both during its recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and in the decades that follow.

As the region’s Sub-national Transport Body, we are delighted to publish our draft Transport Strategy for consultation. The strategy’s overarching aim is to support sustainable economic growth while achieving a net zero carbon transport system no later than 2050.

The strategy seeks to harness the Heartland’s strengths and sets out how the region will:

* Use the need to decarbonise our transport system as the opportunity to harness innovation and deliver solutions that in themselves generate economic growth
* Champion investment in digital infrastructure as a means of improving connectivity, particularly within our rural communities, in order to reduce the need to travel
* Use delivery of East West Rail as the catalyst for the transformation of our strategic public transport networks, investing in those networks to connect our economic assets and communities in a shared endeavour that unlocks added value
* Champion increased investment in active travel and shared transport solutions to improve local connectivity and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to realise their potential
* Ensure that our freight and logistic needs continue to be met whilst lowering the environmental impact of their delivery.

As our experience during the pandemic has shown, there is considerable scope to increase our use of flexible and remote working; to challenge received wisdom when it comes to the future for our transport system; to do things differently.

**A formal consultation on the Transport Strategy will now run until midnight on October 6** and the survey is on the website, <http://www.englandseconomicheartland.com/Pages/transport-strategyconsult.aspx>

# 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. We will put these articles in our Member’s Area for reference as well. This month it is on -

**Bank Reconciliation**

Up to date, accurate financial information is important for decision making and for exercising financial control. Over time, accounting records can become inaccurate if no steps are taken to check that the records agree with the real world. Transactions may get missed, duplicated, entered in the wrong place or for the wrong amount. It is essential to have processes in place to ensure that these are picked up and corrected.

Bank reconciliation is a key tool is ensuring that accounts are accurate, by checking them against information from an outside source. This will pick up any discrepancies between the council’s cashbook and the bank. Where mistakes are picked up, these must be corrected and not left as reconciling items, otherwise the accounts will still be inaccurate.

Items such as interest received, bank charges, direct debits and receipts into the bank account need to be recorded in the cashbook to give an accurate financial position. Duplicate or unidentified payments, along with any for the wrong amount require corrective action and should not be left. True reconciling items will normally be those where there is a timing difference, such as unpresented cheques or cash received but not banked.

Where a council has more than one account, movements between these accounts are neither receipts not payments – the council already has this money and is simply moving it around. Last year a council that closed its second bank account treated the money as a receipt into their main account and couldn’t work out why the accounts didn’t balance.

If reconciliation is done monthly, it is a quicker and simpler task as well as ensuring that any serious discrepancy is picked up promptly. The Practitioners Guide (2020 edition) says that the reconciliation “should be reported to members, and the full reconciliation made available for their scrutiny each time it is done. Approval of the bank reconciliation by the authority or the chair of finance or another authority nominee is not only good practice but it is also a safeguard for the RFO”.

This is particularly true where a clerk is the only employee and it is important that the reconciliation is checked against the bank statement (which is the whole point of doing the reconciliation). Each council should determine how frequently it wants to see it, but it is particularly important that members see that the accounts reconcile at 31 March each year.

**Disclaimer**This guidance is issued to assist in finding and understanding the relevant legislation and guidance. It is not a statement of law, nor does it account for individual circumstances. The Parkinson Partnership LLP accepts no liability for any loss arising from situations where users of this guidance note have not followed the law and HMRC guidance.

# 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 available free of charge to member councils. OALC pay for this, because we believe it is an important and valuable service to our members.

**AUGUST 2020**

**Shielded Staff Facing a Return to Work Dilemma**

Employees who have been subject to Shielding Notices since March now face the prospect of returning to work. There is no doubt that some will be glad to return and “get back to normal”, but it is also indisputable that many may feel uncertain. These anxieties may be compounded by the recent increase in infection rates in some parts of the country, along with a return to some lockdown restrictions.

Despite these concerns, the Government has stated that Shielding Notices for many have now ended, and they no longer qualify for Furlough Leave and payments through the Job Retention Grant.

These employees now need to return to work, however their employer may find that they need to take steps to encourage anxious staff to come back. Councils could consider the following range of support measures to help returning staff.

1. An **effective dialogue** is important. Take time to discuss the Council’s risk assessment with returning staff to make sure they understand, and are comfortable with, the Council’s infection prevention measures.
2. If possible, consider **a phased return**. The transition from 4 months effective isolation to getting straight back to work can be daunting for some people, causing anxiety and stress. A phased return over 4 weeks could help resolve the problem. This could also be combined with some home working if possible.
3. **Temporary Redeployment**. This would involve moving front line Employees who would have regular direct contact with the public when they return to work, to alternative posts where they have less contract. This could be conducted over a short-term period of 2-3 weeks, just to allow the returning employee to re-acclimatise.
4. Employees with particular vulnerability, such as those receiving treatment for cancer or diabetes, may want to consult their doctor prior to returning. The doctor may issue them with an amended Fit Note, stating that they can come back to work, but with certain limitations. The council needs to follow the doctor’s guidance, if reasonably possible, to ensure the safety of the returning employee.
5. Provide a quick **contact point** for returning employees if they become worried, or panicky about their working environment. Under these circumstances the Employee could contact a line manager/supervisor/Chair at short notice to say that they are worried, and to be able to take a break. This could be a temporary measure covering the first 2-4 weeks return to work.

Finally, do not forget the Council’s obligations to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate any employee with disabilities. Most employees who have been subject to shielding notices have done so due to a pre-existing disability. The Equality Act 2010 requires councils to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate such employees.

Consequently, treating someone unfavourably because of their shielding and subsequent adjustments needed to help them return to work, could result in a claim for Disability Discrimination.

**SEPTEMBER 2020**

**HMRC is starting to investigate Furlough Fraud**

HMRC has realised that not everyone has made claims for the Job Retention Grant correctly. Some employers including town and parish councils have made genuine mistakes, which is not surprising when the panic and confusion that existed when the scheme was announced is taken into consideration. However there have also been a number of erroneous applications.

When the Job Retention Grant and Furlough Leave were introduced in March, HMRC stated that they did not expect to receive Grant applications from public sector employers. Despite this announcement, a number of town and parish councils did make use of the Grant, on the understanding that the closure of their income generating facilities such as sports centres and community centres, would put the staff employed in them at risk of redundancy.

We have seen the first arrest for furlough fraud. It was of an individual in the West Midlands, who allegedly committed a fraud on the scheme amounting to almost £500,000.

The Finance Bill which has just received Royal Assent, contains an important amnesty provision. If within a period of 90 days an employer, including Councils, go back to HMRC to point out any claims that were mistakenly made, they can repay the grant and not incur a penalty. Penalties can be severe – up to 100 per cent of the value of the erroneous claims. **Councils should therefore check their furlough applications really carefully at this point, so they are able to take advantage of the amnesty offer.**

It is not just a potential HMRC problem that awaits any council that has abused the scheme. The government has made it clear that they will pursue corporate bodies and individuals (which could include Councillors and employees) through the criminal courts if they have been party to the commission of an offence. Given that it is estimated that more than 180,000 applications were falsely made (although the figure is probably far higher than that), this may be a real threat. There are a number of crimes that may have been committed. These include offences under the Fraud Act 2006, cheating the public revenue, false accounting and money laundering. Significant prison sentences and the risk of being disqualified from acting as a director may await those found guilty.

**Do you always have to have a disciplinary hearing to sack someone?**

Can an employee be fairly dismissed without any procedure (including an appeal), after a breakdown in working relations?  
  
Yes (in rather unusual circumstances), held the Employment Appeal Tribunal in [*Gallacher v Abellio Scotrail*](https://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKEAT/2020/0027_19_0402.pdf)*.*  
  
The Claimant was a senior manager in the Respondent's business. Her relationship with her line manager deteriorated at a critical juncture for the Respondent. The Claimant's manager decided, after consulting with HR, to dismiss her at an appraisal meeting with no procedure, forewarning or right of appeal.

The tribunal found the dismissal to be fair, the decision to dismiss without any procedure being within the band of reasonable responses in these particular circumstances, even holding that a procedure would have made the situation worse.  
  
The Employment Appeal Court, noting the rather unusual circumstances of the case, declined to overturn the tribunal's decision. There may be cases, albeit rare, where procedures may be dispensed with because they are reasonably considered by the employer to be futile in the circumstances. The tribunal had found that on both sides the working relationship had broken down. There is no rule of law that the absence of any procedure renders a dismissal unfair, all the circumstances of the case have to be taken into account. But the EAT noted that:

"Dismissals without following any procedures will always be subject to extra caution on the part of the Tribunal before being considered to fall within the band of reasonable responses."

**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 and development



1. **NEW OALC CILCA ONLINE MENTORING SESSIONS** starting 7th October; 3hr Zoom sessions (October, November, January 2021 and March) Cost £275 per person in total for all four sessions.

**Please contact OALC** [**info@oalc.org.uk**](mailto:info@oalc.org.uk) **to register your interest now**

Please note that the cost for registering with SLCC for the Certificate will go up on 1st October 2020 from £350 to £410.

For more information on CiLCA go the SLCC website here - <https://www.slcc.co.uk/qualification/cilca/>

1. NALC is pleased to announce details for a further six events to its Rebuilding Communities online event series taking place over the next 18 months. The series will bring together national influencers, policymakers and decision-makers, along with people from across the sector to share ideas and good practice on how to build back stronger and more resilient communities. To find out more about the series and the events visit [**www.nalc.gov.uk/rebuildingcommunities**](https://nalc.us12.list-manage.com/track/click?u=16886b5d6c31eade2f9a50027&id=1fcc51ae8d&e=2593660dc7).  
     
   [](https://nalc.us12.list-manage.com/track/click?u=16886b5d6c31eade2f9a50027&id=1f4eda41c2&e=2593660dc7)The first event in partnership with The Woodland Trust is, **Leaders talk: Putting trees at the heart of your community,** and takes place on 8 September 2020. The event covers how parish and town councils can provide sustainable wildlife habitats, tackle climate change with woods and trees, understanding the Tree Charter and its benefits (free trees!), and how to get involved in Tree Charter Day.

**Leaders talk: Rebuilding sustainable communities** 28 September 2020 — 12.00 - 13:00  
NALC member: £30 — Non-member: £40

The event will focus on what local councils can do after declaring a climate emergency, climate action plans, working with principal authorities, how to ensure community assets and biodiversity are sustainable and how to rebuild sustainable green communities.   
[**Register your place**](https://nalc.us12.list-manage.com/track/click?u=16886b5d6c31eade2f9a50027&id=9381bd634d&e=2593660dc7)  
  
**Health and Wellbeing Week** 26 - 30 October 2020  
Many parish and town councils across England have stepped up to support health and wellbeing in their communities, and now COVID-19 has permanently embedded that role. Health and Wellbeing Week will showcase their importance to community health.  
  
The week, which takes place between 26 and 30 October, will feature seven online events. The event themes will cover:

* Local councils and the COVID-19 health agenda
* The future of health challenges post COVID-19
* Community revival through COVID-19
* Collaboration through health and wellbeing
* Local councils and hidden disabilities
* Supporting mental health in your community

Ticket prices start from £30 for single events and £210 for the full week. Health and Wellbeing Week is sponsored by BHIB Councils Insurance, Blachere Illumination and CCLA.

**In conversation: Frome virtual study tour** 17 November 2020 — 12.00 - 13.15  
NALC member: £30 — Non-member: £40  
[**Register your place**](https://nalc.us12.list-manage.com/track/click?u=16886b5d6c31eade2f9a50027&id=e2258cb604&e=2593660dc7)  
  
**In conversation: Biggleswade virtual study tour** 26 January 2021 — 12.00 - 13:15  
NALC member: £30 — Non-member: £40  
[**Register your place**](https://nalc.us12.list-manage.com/track/click?u=16886b5d6c31eade2f9a50027&id=b83ed710ca&e=2593660dc7)

## MAKING EVERY CONTACT COUNT (MECC) TRAINING

Kate Austin, Public Health, Oxfordshire CC asked us to circulate this information -

Making Every Contact Count (MECC) training is available to help give volunteers the skills and confidence to have conversations about health with others and to follow up with signposting for support. MECC works through opportunistic conversations in everyday life to talk about health and involves responding appropriately to cues from others to encourage them to think about behaviour change and steps that they could take to improve their health and wellbeing.

As a Volunteer you may be having brief conversations with others in your community through your role, and there may be opportunities to have MECC conversations through these various day to day interactions. This could be with people that you talk to through your volunteering activities as well as with neighbours, family, friends and colleagues.

The MECC approach has a preventative element; this means that by helping and supporting people to change their lifestyle habits we may help people stay healthy for longer. MECC uses the millions of day-to-day interactions that we have with other people to support them to take positive steps towards improving their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

The nationwide MECC initiative is led by NHS Health Education England and Public Health England. This training course in Oxfordshire is being coordinated by Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Oxfordshire County Council, Cherwell District Council and the Oxfordshire Training Hub as members of the Oxfordshire MECC Systems Implementation Group.

**What will I get from the training?**• Develop the skills, knowledge and confidence you need to have brief conversations with the public about their health and wellbeing.  
• Gain information to help signpost the people you are helping to services they may require for more specific health related support.

**What does the training involve?**We are piloting a virtual training model which involves two stages, step 1 and step 2. As this is a pilot project, we would welcome your feedback at each stage of the course. You can do this informally by contacting the Oxfordshire Training Hub by email [oxfordshire.training@nhs.net](mailto:oxfordshire.training@nhs.net) as well as by completing the questionnaire (via a link sent to you) before and after the course.

**More general information about MECC can be found here:** http://www.makingeverycontactcount.co.uk/

* **21st Sept 10.30 to 12.00** - <https://oxfordshiretraining.net/event/e-learning-making-every-contact-count-mecc-training/>
* **22nd Sept 10.30 to 12.00** - <https://oxfordshiretraining.net/event/e-learning-making-every-contact-count-mecc-training-2/>
* **23rd Sept 10.30to 12.00** - <https://oxfordshiretraining.net/event/e-learning-making-every-contact-count-mecc-training-3/>
* **7th Oct 10.30 to 12.00** - <https://oxfordshiretraining.net/event/e-learning-making-every-contact-count-mecc-training-4/>

Registration closes one week prior to each interactive session to allow participants time to complete the e-learning module first.

**Step 1 – The background**Participants will access a short on-line e-learning course to gain a basic level of MECC knowledge before attending the live and interactive session. A link for this will be sent through to you when you register for the complete MECC training course on the Oxfordshire Training Hub (OTH) website.

The e-learning, should only take about an hour to complete and will really help attendees prepare for the live session. It includes the following:   
• Explaining what MECC is and who it is for  
• An introduction to behaviour change and the COMB behaviour change model  
• How to have a MECC conversation using a three step approach, the 3A’s.  
• Using open – discovery questions  
• What to consider when providing information or signposting a person to a service

Areas we would really like you to focus on are: The COMB behaviour change model and the three step approach (the 3A’s).

**Step 2 – The practical**A live, on-line, interactive session – The second stage to this training will be live and with a real MECC trainer. A Microsoft Teams link will be sent through to you by the trainer after registration for this second stage. If you anticipate any issues with using Microsoft Teams please let OTH know, details are below.  
The live session aims to quickly recap on the content that you learnt about in step 1 and then focuses on the practical side of MECC. This includes: Discussing what MECC is, practicing good conversation skills and how to ask open questions. It will also look at local resources and tools to help you with your MECC conversations.  
When registering please include any training support needs that may affect your experience of this course, this is to prepare organisers and trainers to make necessary alterations.

How to register – book your place <https://oxfordshiretraining.net/events/>   
Contact for more information [oxfordshire.training@nhs.net](mailto:oxfordshire.training@nhs.net)

## OALC Training programme - the future is online

OALC has taken the decision to move all its training online via Zoom for the rest of this year and for next year too.

 There are positives and negatives to the online training experience but in the circumstances we really don’t have much choice.

We will review as we go along, the future may end up being a mixture of online and smaller face to face training in larger rooms. We don’t really know what 2021 will look like but we will do our best to continue to provide quality training in a safe format.

We have released a few more places on some of our courses.

If you have a place booked, please turn up, we have waiting lists of people wanting any spare places. IF YOU BOOK A PLACE PLEASE TURN UP, IF YOU BOOK AND DON’T PAY THAT IS A HEINIOUS CRIME.

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

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **subject** | **timing** | **trainer** |
| Monday  7th September | Councillor Fundamentals  FULL | 7pm | Kim Bedford |
| Wednesday 9th September | The Experienced Councillor  FULL  Chairing and Facilitation skills  FULL | 10am  2pm | Frances Webster, solicitor  Wellers Hedleys |
| Wednesday 23rd September | Roles & Responsibilities for new councillors and clerks  3 places left | 10.30am | Elizabeth Howlett, solicitor |
| Wednesday 21st October | Financial management for councillors  2 places left  Budgeting & financial control not Procurement as previously advertised  4 places left | 10.30am  2pm | Steve Parkinson |
| Sat 7th November | Roles and Responsibilities for new councillors and clerks  6 places left | 10.30am | Elizabeth Howlett |

# vacancies

**No vacancies this month**