

# ESSEX ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

# Weekly Walk Through

# Covid19



14th April 2020

Issue No. 1

We all find ourselves in unrepresented times at the moment.

The EALC is working hard to try and bring you as much information relating to the Coronavirus (Covid 19) as possible. As you are aware this situation is moving very fast and we aim to get you any newly emerging information as soon as practically possible.

The EALC have published Covid19 email Updates daily with important information for all Parish and Town Councils in Essex. We have now produced a document of relevant legal information, Council good news stories and some frequently asked questions.

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## Covid 19 Weekly Walk Through

Dear Members,

I do hope you are all well at this time.

We have produced a new publication called the 'Weekly Walk Through'. We have collected all the information which has been sent out during the previous week, so that you can use it like a directory, to find the answer to your questions, of which we hope you find useful.

There will be a question and answer page, full of information we have received from your emailed queries throughout the week. If we think they are relevant to other Clerks we will share the query and the subsequent answer on these pages as a way of supporting each other.

Pearl has been very busy setting up Clerks Forums of which we will be collecting questions and answers for this Weekly Walk Through publication that can be shared. We are also sharing good new stories, and would love to hear about the amazing work your Parish or Town Council are doing to help and support each other.

The other new piece will be a link to FAQ which Joy will be compiling, so when a question pops into your head or inbox you can go straight to that document and see if the answer is already there for you.

Please let us know if there are things we should be including for you.

Have a lovely week

*Charlene Slade AATQB*

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## Covid 19 Weekly Walk Through

Dear Chairman, Councillors and Clerks

Thank you for your kind messages for my retirement. However, retirement has not panned out to be what I expected. No holidays, no trips to the seaside and visits to National Trust and English Heritage places of interest. Times have changed and the now new normal has some good benefits. Air pollution down and lots of walking the local paths. Yesterday it was colder, but my walk was rewarded by seeing a herd of (fallow) deer in a field in our parish.

With the new normal I am working 12 hours and agreed to come back for a short time to support Charlene your new Chief Executive Officer through this National crisis. The EALC has put in place a good structure to help us function during this period. I will be focusing on the legal work, Health and Wellbeing and Covid 19. Some of you will have already received correspondence from me when you have asked questions. The work going on in the parishes, villages and towns is simply amazing. I hope that you will enjoy our new publications - Weekly Walkthrough Covid 19. The daily briefings will continue and we will be speaking with many of you through the new EALC Connections project.

My new job title is Strategic Lead Manager. I hope to be working with you for the next few months. Take care and wherever possible stay at home.

*Joy Darby*

Strategic Lead Manager  
Essex Association of Local Councils  
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## EALC Connections

EALC Connections is going to be a Clerks Forum during COVID 19. This is going to be on a weekly basis & our aim is to be able to provide all of our Clerks the chance to have a chat if they have any concerns & queries that they wish to discuss during this particular time or achievements within their Parishes that could be passed on to other Clerk's.

Pearl Willcox, EALC Executive County Training Officer will be hosting the meeting along with one of our EALC Executive Members from that District. The Forums will run for 1 hour & over the coming weeks we aim to introduce a forum for Chairman & Councillors to working in the same format as the Clerks.

### **EALC Connection forums for Clerks week commencing 13th April as follows:-**

Maldon, Basildon, Brentwood & Rochford	Wednesday 15th April – 11am-Midday
Braintree District	Wednesday 15th April 1.30pm-2.30pm
Colchester & Tendring District	Thursday 16th 9.30am-10.30am
Epping & Chelmsford District	Thursday 16th 1pm-2pm
Uttlesford District	Friday 17th April 2pm-3pm

### Allotments

The National Allotment Society is working to provide clarity for their members on what the virus outbreak and ensuing impacts will mean for Allotment Holders. The National Allotment Society has issued useful guidance on how to manage allotments in accordance with government regulations.

Please read the Q & As on how the outbreak is affecting Allotment Sites and their use. <https://www.nsalg.org.uk/news/covid19-information/>



### Council Audits

NALC's engagement with government around Local Council audit timeframes final regulations were published on 7 April and will come into force on 30 April. These extend the statutory audit deadlines for 2019/20.

- The publication date for final, audited, accounts for Local Councils will move from 30 September to 30 November 2020
- To give Local Councils more flexibility, the requirement for the public inspection period to include the first 10 working days of July has been removed. Instead, Local Councils must commence the public inspection period on or before the first working day of September 2020
- This means that draft accounts must be approved by 31 August 2020 at the latest or maybe approved earlier where possible.

• Authorities must publish the dates of their public inspection period this year, and the government recommends that they provide public notice on their websites (where available) when the public inspection period would usually commence, explaining why they are departing from normal practise for 2020. We will provide updates for our members once these regulations have been made. The Joint Practitioners Action Group (JPAG) will also provide an addendum to the Practitioners Guide to layout fully for councils the new time frames that the government puts in place.

View The Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 for more information

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/404/contents/made>



### CiLCA Deadline

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 situation, all CiLCA candidates who are currently registered will be granted an additional three months to complete their portfolio.

This extension will be automatically granted for all candidates and you will not need to contact the CiLCA administrator. This automatic extension will be reviewed at the end of June. I

In the meantime, all registered candidates who have attended relevant training should continue to submit work when it has been completed to an appropriate standard. New candidates are reminded that they should not register for CiLCA until they have a training programme in place.

### Employment Law Changes



A number of important changes to employment rights took effect from 6 April, including a new right to a written statement of terms

Please see the attached NALC Legal Briefing LO2-20

### Elections

The Coronavirus Act, which the government introduced on 19 March, postpones any elections that were due to be held in May 2020 until 6 May 2021. Any other electoral events, such as the council or parliamentary by-elections, will also be postponed until May 2021.

### Events

Many local councils were planning to get involved in national events and celebrations such as Great British Spring Clean and VE Day 75, these have been postponed. The national commemorations to mark VE Day 75 on 8 May are being scaled back and the government is working on new plans to ensure the nation can still thank the Second World War generation on VE Day in May and provide the fitting tribute they deserve. Once this immediate crisis abates, communities may also be encouraged to turn their attention to planning for VJ day on 15 August.

The Great British Spring Clean has also decided to postpone its annual event and relaunch later in the year, with the postponed campaign hoping to take place between 11 and 27 September 2020. For these and other events, Local Councils should check the relevant event website for the latest information and updates.

**IMPORTANT UPDATE**

**Remote Council 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 (“the 2020 Regulations”) come in to force on 4 April.

The Regulations enable Local Councils to hold remote meetings (including by video and telephone conferencing) for a specified period until May next year. They also remove the requirement to hold an annual meeting. The 2020 Regulations apply to Local Council meetings, committee and sub-committee meetings.

Please see the attached Legal Briefing LO1-20



Please see the attached NALC Holding Remote Meetings publication

**Signing of the summons**

As noted in Legal Briefing LO1-20 the advertising requirements for meetings remain the same in terms of paragraph 10 (2) of Schedule 12 to the 1972 Act. If a clerk does not have an electronic signature our view is that typing their name will suffice.

**The six month rule**

The new meetings Regulations do not deal with the six month rule.

ADSO were advised by MHCLG that remote attendance by members counts for the purpose of the six-month rule on attendance. Where there is absence for illness the Council can continue to deal as now and pass the necessary resolution to approve the reason for the absence.

**Discount for Zoom**

NALC is very pleased to have worked with the Crown Commercial Service so that Local Councils are included in the public sector organisations eligible to access a discounted package from Zoom. This discount means that councils can access the Pro plan for Zoom at £7.99 per month.

To access this discounted rate please email Zoom and quote contract number CCS 020A33. If asked which department or category you are related to please state the National Association of Local Councils.

### Relief Efforts

As we all know, Local Councils are limited in their powers and in how they can assist with the relief efforts.

Generally speaking, Local Councils can rely on s.137 of the Local Government Act 1972 to make grants to groups assisting with the response (e.g. to foodbanks and other local charities or voluntary groups) subject to the s.137 criteria or, if eligible, do so under the general power of competence.

#### Emergency Food Provision – Community Shield starts in Essex

People across Essex are doing an amazing job supporting their family, friends and neighbours who at the most risk from coronavirus because they are older, vulnerable and have health conditions.

From now, public services across Essex are stepping up support for people who may not have help from their nearest and dearest.

Please see the attachment



This Emergency Grant launched on the 27th March 2020

This Grant is to be used to fund Foodbanks during the height of the COVID 19 pandemic

Applicants can apply for up to £1,000 per project

Applications will be assessed on a case by case basis by our Funding Officer and CEO

You must have your own bank account, whether this is in your organisation name or via an alternative source, who are willing to act as a broker

The application form is available to download from our website

Please contact Louise Gambardella on [louise.gambardella@ealc.gov.uk](mailto:louise.gambardella@ealc.gov.uk) if you have any further questions

Essex County Council set up a Coronavirus Action Group on Facebook, working with local community Facebook group admins to share information, offer advice and create a group of volunteers willing to help those in need during this uncertain time.

Over 3,000 people have already registered as volunteers. We would encourage people to continue to sign up [here](#).



### Council Good News Stories

It is very encouraging to hear how communities have pulled together in so many ways during these times.

#### Danbury Parish Council



On March 19th Mandy Hessing (a member of the Parish Council and EALC Executive member) and Liz Hiscock (a co-opted member of the councils Health & Wellbeing Committee) had a discussion around what they could do to support the community during the Coronavirus pandemic. 'let's establish a volunteer support group on Facebook to see if we can get help.

- \* 400 plus volunteers in the Facebook group,
- \* 138 volunteers' active, of which 77 active within the village and helping residents.
- \* Leaflets printed and distributed to about 2300 homes (Danbury Little Baddow, and Bicknacre)
- \* Appealing for food donations – Tesco Express & the Co-op have food donation trolleys within the stores.
- \* A card payment & mobile card reader is now being used (donated by a local business), trying to eliminate the use of cash.

I can assure you that the Parish Council takes the welfare of all our residents very seriously and is, as always, trying to act in the best interests of Danbury. In the mean time the council continues with its day to day business with staff members working remotely from home.

Stuart Berlyn  
Chairman of Danbury Parish Council



#### Ramsden Cray Parish Council & Ramsden Bellhouse Parish Council

Both Ramsden Crays and Ramsden Bellhouse village shops offered deliveries to the vulnerable – contactless etc. and worked with the PC's for this. Managed to get a newsletter hand delivery before the lock in for Ramsden Crays and on the notice board and from the shop etc in Ramsden Bellhouse.

Understand that councillors in both parishes are working with the community to help the vulnerable with additional issues.

Georgina Bassett (Mrs.)  
Proper Officer/Parish Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer  
Ramsden Bellhouse Parish Council / Ramsden Crays Parish Council

## **Great Notley Parish Council**

At Great Notley Parish Council the Parish Council Facebook page is a major asset in disseminating information extremely quickly to residents. This has involved directing them to websites for advice such as Gov.uk and NHS but also letting them know of sources of local support - BDC is liaising with Community 360 to offer practical support and the methods of contact have been promoted on the Facebook page.

They have also posted about activities such as online health such as active Essex, and information as to how to digitally obtain a book or magazine from Essex Libraries.

The 3 District Councillors who are also Parish Councillors have posted their contact details on the page to be more readily available for residents and the Essex Coronavirus action group has been promoted.

The Parish Council is aware of ad hoc groups assisting residents and has been liaising with them too.



Suzanne Walker  
Clerk to Great Notley Parish Council

## **Langley Parish Council**

With help from Carol Elkington, Chair of Langley Parish Council, they have organised volunteers in the village Langley (Upper & Lower Greens) to help with shopping, collection of prescriptions and social phone calls to those living alone or those who need help In any way.

The volunteers (26 in a village of 300) are part of a WhatsApp group, for ease of communication and dissemination of information and we have a dedicated private FB Group, Langley Coronavirus Help Group, for those who are on Facebook and of course they can also use Facebook Messenger for private contact.

The Parish Council has funded 2 flyers with volunteers contact details, and use their 'fan out' email address and website for useful information regarding the current crisis.

Liz Cable  
Secretary of Community Centre



## Useful Information

### EALC CONTACT

All staff are now remote working from home and can be contacted directly through email.

The phone is being diverted to a mobile, which will enable you to contact Pearl Willcox directly for urgent matters. Pearl will then be able to direct all matters to the responsible staff member. Please note the mobile number: 07495 915 912

### Essex Association of Local Councils - Community Help Schemes – Inspired by Sir Bernard Jenkin MP



Many Councils are helping communities by organising food, prescription and delivery of supplies plus many other services. Most of this is being completed by informal voluntary groups. An idea has been suggested by Sir Bernard Jenkin MP to set up a scheme where the community give donations and the parish council organise a scheme to support either the local shop, community shop or a group of residents to help vulnerable local people.

The EALC has put a briefing paper together that gives the legal powers that a council may use to deliver such a scheme. The briefing went out with the COVID 19 today – 14<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

### COVID-19 UPDATES

Don't forget all the COVID-19 Updates can be found on the EALC website.

Web address: <http://www.ealc.gov.uk/covid-19-updates/>

### Next Week's Issue

Next week this page will include Frequently Asked Question we have received from our Members.



Essex County Council

The Essex Association of Local Councils wishes to thank Essex County Council for the continued support and financial commitment to subsidise the Essex Association of Local Councils in developing services for the parish sector in Essex.