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Chief Executive
SUFFOLK AGM
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Coronavirus and Local Councils – the story so far and where next for local councils?

EXTRAORDINARY RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC FROM LOCAL COUNCILS



- Speed of response
- [400 case studies](#)
- Local knowledge
- Human focussed, not weighed down by process or bureaucracy
- Generally coping with new ways of working including remote meetings

EXAMPLES FROM SUFFOLK

Sudbury Town Council

Electorate: 10,295 Precept: £332,061 Expenditure: £320,191

The outbreak of COVID-19 across the globe has had an unprecedented impact on everyday lives, communities and businesses. All businesses are having to rapidly adapt to continue to provide their services while prioritising the welfare of their staff and customers. This crisis has had a particularly severe impact on our independent high street businesses. Sudbury's Virtual High Street has been compiled by Sudbury Town Council in partnership with the best of Sudbury as a way to encourage supporting local businesses now to ensure they are here in the future.

<https://www.sudburytowncouncil.co.uk/virtual-highstreet>

EXAMPLES FROM SUFFOLK

Worlingham Parish Council

Electorate: 2,500 Precept: £36,000 Expenditure: £34,000

Worlingham Parish Council is working alongside its neighbouring town council and East Suffolk and Suffolk county councillors to organise a group of volunteers. The organisation has provided several community volunteers who have been allocated areas of the parish to assist with day-to-day tasks such as shopping and the delivery of medication (with their consent), among other tasks

<https://www.worlingham.com/>

NALC AND SALC HERE TO SUPPORT YOU

- On 13 March NALC launched a dedicated Coronavirus webpage. Since then the webpage has received almost 130,000 hits, with regular emails sent to our mailing list to highlight changes to the information provided.
<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/coronavirus>
 - NALC has also produced a range of guidance and advice covering
 - Remote/hybrid meetings and checklist for face-to-face
 - Risk assessments and templates for opening facilities, play areas etc
 - Cyber security
 - HR matters
- Much material available from SALC too

WHERE NEXT FOR LOCAL COUNCILS? Short term issues

- **Local Councils at the forefront of community response and resilience**
 - continues or greater role in emergency preparedness? Second wave?
 - helping recovery of town centres and rural areas, risk assessments
 - re-opening council facilities, parks, markets
- **Local community is at the centre of much debate around how we rebuild our lives and the economy**
 - vital that local councils' role is considered and championed
 - what about areas where there are no local councils?
 - planning changes and making streets covid secure
 - impact of changes/challenges in other tiers. Re-organisation?
- **Some local councils hit hard financially**
 - NALC is calling for a national fund to support local councils whose finances were impacted or whose financial viability is at risk. 1st tier of government and should access available funds
 - what will happen next year? Reduced council tax base?
 - early budgeting for next year, engage public
- **Impact of virtual meetings for public engagement and diversity**
 - would we like to keep that flexibility permanently?
 - complete audit returns!

WHAT ARE THE EMERGING LONGER TERM LESSONS?

Polling for the RSA shows:

40% of people feel a stronger sense of community

85% want changes to stick

80% of organisations want things to be different in recovery

None wanted to go back to the way things were!

“Recovery will be driven as much by the dictates of restoring social well-being as securing economic renewal.” (Localis report)

“Localism, leadership, fewer cars and more green spaces” (Local councils key role in rebuilding thriving high streets – Bill Grimsey review)

LET'S NOT MISS OPPORTUNITY TO PUT SECTOR AT HEART OF BUILDING BACK STRONGER COMMUNITIES!

- Demonstrate relevance. Active, adept, fleet of foot, getting on with it.
- Harness new community spirit and engagement. Facilitate opportunities for continuing involvement.
- Build community leadership and partnerships. Work with other agencies including other tiers, health and community sector
- Active Place-Shaping. Using recovery plans to build better communities: Sevenoaks, Shrewsbury
- Strengthen diversity. More people from all backgrounds involved
- Embrace technology. On-line training; promote engagement (.gov domains, e-mails, social media); hybrid meetings.
- Build capacity. Effective and resilient processes in place including finances.
- Relationships between councillors and clerks (code of conduct consultation)
- And don't forget the climate emergency!

BUILDING BACK COMMUNITIES

[Open letter to the sector](#)

This crisis has demonstrated how important our sector is in building stronger communities, and we will continue to make the case to the government and others that we should be at the heart of building back communities as we move into the recovery phase.

If there are any positives to come from this, it is the greater sense of community spirit and civic action. Our task now is to harness this to support the work of our councils and encourage more people to stand at future elections.

I want to pay particular tribute to clerks and council staff, who have diligently kept the show on the road. They are working under immense pressure — having to not only cope with the anxieties we all share but additionally the difficult task of balancing home working with other responsibilities. It is crucial as councillors and local leaders that we recognise their challenge and support their efforts.”

Cllr Sue Baxter, Chairman NALC

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In conversation: Building back stronger communities Frome In conversation: Frome virtual study tour 17 November
virtual study tour 2020 — 12.00 - 13.15

28 July 2020 — 12.00 - 13.00

**Leaders talk: Building back stronger
communities**

25 August 2020 — 12.00 - 13.00

**Leaders talk: Rebuilding sustainable
communities**

28 September 2020 — 12.00 - 13.00

Health and Wellbeing Week

26 - 30 October 2020

In conversation: Biggleswade virtual study tour

26 January 2021 — 12.00 - 13:15

Building back communities week (TBC)

22 – 25 March 2020

Find out more at

www.nalc.gov.uk/rebuildingcommunities

nalc

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THANK YOU

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