



CORNWALL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

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Serving the parish and town councils of Cornwall

CALC COVID-19 BRIEFING – FAQ 11

During this period of Covid-19 the CALC has worked with partners to provide the most up to date information on what you can and cannot do during the pandemic. As we move into the recovery phase, Cornwall is slowly reopening and we are able to start meeting with friends and family in ‘bubbles’. As we move into the recovery phase, please find below a message from Dr Ruth Goldstein of Cornwall Public Health which asks us all to remember why it is so important to remain careful.

"Whatever we do we must always ensure the 1m+ rule or ideally 2m social distancing in all our buildings. The virus is still circulating and the only reason we are not seeing higher case numbers is because we are ensuring that when businesses and public places are opening up these guidelines are adhered to. The learning from places like Leicester and other areas where there have been outbreaks in specific settings is that where social distancing was not at the centre of what the whole population were doing, it resulted in a significant increase in cases and the local lockdowns.

So, whilst opening up our economy in Cornwall is necessary, currently there is no indication that we should reduce our adherence to the guidance. Risk assessments for individual businesses, offices, public gatherings and individuals should remain at the centre of our prevention response and it is still too early to hold public meetings without risk assessments being in place and ensuring the social distancing guidance can be adhered to."

The guidance is continually being updated and people should remain vigilant to what is published on the .gov.uk website to stay up to date as restrictions are changed which may affect our current position."

Meetings of local councils

We are aware of the desire of some local councils and councillors to return to hold physical meetings. Virtual meetings are not the same as face to face meetings with fellow councillors and residents and the technology is not always easy to use.

The Government's advice is that you should continue to hold virtual meetings unless you have an identified need to hold a physical meeting because you are unable to conduct council business in any other way. These meetings must be managed within the social distancing and safer workplaces guidance produced by the government,

which includes the requirement to conduct a risk assessment to determine if it is feasible and safe to hold a physical meeting

If your council wishes to consider holding a face-to-face meeting NALC/SLCC have produced a [checklist](#) to help ensure this decision is made in accordance with relevant regulations and requirements.

It is the view of CALC and all of its national advisors that it remains too early to hold physical meetings and would ask you all to remain patient and wait for further easements. Members who have difficulty in using the technology may wish to consider whether it is practicable to share a connection with one other member of the council to have access to the meeting provided that this can be done safely.

Completion of audit

Parish and Town Councils – a reminder that the AGAR and associated papers need to be returned to PFK Littlejohn by July 31st, 2020 (or August 31st, 2020 if you have obtained an extension).

Parish Meetings (with no parish council) - PFK Littlejohn has now confirmed that it will accept AGAR forms from parish meetings where it can be demonstrated that it was signed off at a physical meeting which meets the Covid-19 restrictions on risk assessment and social distancing. We are continuing to work with MPs and Cornwall Council to lobby for an easement on the requirement for a physical meeting and for further guidance.

Co-option for casual vacancies

As previously advised, the scheme of delegation to Clerks only covers business decisions on behalf of the council. Where councils have a vacancy to be filled by co-option this should be done at a meeting of the council and it is possible for this decision to be made virtually.

VAT on local council hospitality services

Following the Government's announcement that VAT would be reduced to 5% for certain businesses, the CALC's financial advisor Steve Parkinson has produced an update on the implications for local councils. A copy is now available to download from our website [here](#).

Business and Planning Bill – webinar for local councils

The CALC is hosting a briefing event with officers from Cornwall Council to advise on changes to the planning and licencing system including pavement licences. The legislation is likely to come in around July 20th, 2020 and the second update will confirm

the impact on the local arrangements in Cornwall. Please email the CALC office if you would like to attend.

Stay safe.

Sarah Mason
County Executive Officer

July 17th, 2020