

PARISH NEWSLETTER

March 2020 | **Corona Virus Special**

Fraud Related Crime

Recently the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB) reported a new trend in fraud related to Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19.

Updated figures show that there have been 105 reports to [Action Fraud](#) since 1 February 2020, with total losses reaching nearly £970,000.

What scams are they seeing?

The majority of reports are related to [online shopping](#) scams where people have ordered protective face masks, hand sanitiser and other products, which have never arrived.

Fraudsters are providing articles about the virus-outbreak with a link to a fake company website, where victims are encouraged to click to subscribe to a daily newsletter for further updates.

Fraudsters are also purporting to be from HMRC offering a tax refund and directing victims to a fake web-site to harvest their personal and financial details. The emails often display the HMRC logo making it look reasonably genuine and convincing.

Action Fraud
National Fraud & Cyber Crime Reporting Centre
0300 123 2040

Legal Powers for Local Councils

Please see below the advice LRALC has received from Wellers Hedleys Solicitors:

In terms of an area-wide co-ordinated response with principal authorities, parish council powers are limited to s.137 and s.111 LGA 1972. Parish councils do not themselves have emergency powers to act in a civil emergency but could possibly, under s.111 LGA 1972, look to make existing council-run facilities (website/ buildings) available for a secondary purpose connected with the resilience planning.

With regards to the community shopping scheme the general principle is that councils should ideally first give consideration to whether such activities form part of their statutory functions and powers. Any such activities would then need to be risk assessed, insured, managed and compliant with the law (Health and Safety and GDPR etc.). The precise requirements will probably vary from activity to activity and each would need to be considered on their own merits.

Play Areas and Parks

Bodies such as the National Trust, Bradgate Park and NWLDC have now closed their facilities due to the public failing to observe social distancing.

Guidance therefore recommends that, where it is possible and until further notice, parish and town councils secure facilities (play areas, parks, etc) where people are likely to gather in close proximity.

A public notice should be placed on or near the property and on your website advising the public that the facility is closed and for people not to gather in groups and to maintain distance is recommended. In these unprecedented times safety is paramount.



North West
Leicestershire
District Council

Grants

In view of the current situation with the Covid-19 virus, we have now suspended all grant schemes until further notice.

All applications that have been submitted and received will in due course be assessed. For applications already received and funded, you should already have received correspondence from us asking you to update us on your intentions regarding whether your project can still go ahead, whether you wish to cancel or whether you intend postponing your project until later in the year.

NALC Advice on Holding Meetings

NALC strongly encourages councillors and staff to follow government guidance on social distancing and self-isolation. This is particularly important if anyone is in an at-risk group as identified by the guidance. Do you need to hold scheduled meetings at all?

If local councils do follow government guidance on social distancing and social isolation, they should not hold scheduled meetings, including annual council meetings. NALC's opinion is that the likelihood of a successful legal challenge is low.

Government guidance on holding meetings remotely is on its way and NALC will also produce further guidance.

If local councils decide to not hold meetings and take decisions by email or other remote methods, NALC feels it's likely that, if there was a challenge to this decision, that the courts will accept that exceptional times called for exceptional measures.

In the absence of government guidance, NALC suggests for now only taking decisions remotely for truly urgent issues. In this case, local councils should evidence their decision making as best they can, for example by asking councillors to confirm their votes by email to the clerk for the clerk to keep as a record of the decision.

Business Support and Advice

The government has outlined financial relief for businesses to support you during the outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19).

The full range of business support measures available, including sector specific advice and further FAQs, can be found on the government's [Coronavirus Business Support website](#).

We are working in partnership with Hinckley & Bosworth District Council to provide this support, therefore any enquiries related to business rates should be sent to: covid19businessrates@hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk.

Employer and business guidance relating to symptoms, sick pay and more can be found via the links below.

[Guidance for employers and businesses on coronavirus \(COVID-19\) \(GOV.UK\)](#) - For providing advice to your staff on COVID-19, how to help prevent the spread of respiratory infections and what to do if someone is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19.
[COVID-19: guidance for employees \(GOV.UK\)](#) - For employees advice on working from home, sick pay, and frequently asked questions.
[COVID-19: support for businesses \(GOV.UK\)](#) - For the latest government guidance on what support is being provided to businesses.

Allotments



At the moment there is no instruction to close allotments and plot-holders are still permitted to visit their plot, to take daily exercise on their own or with members of their household.

It is vitally important that tenants follow all the advice about social distancing and hygiene and not gather together on site.

Any plot-holder who is **self-isolating** because a household member is ill with corona-virus should not be visiting the site.

Associations/landowners should display an advice notice on their boards, advising tenants that they should be following precautionary measures.

It is essential that no unauthorised people are allowed onto the plots for the duration of this emergency.

Careful consideration should be given to introducing anyone over 70, those with underlying illness or pregnant women.

For more information visit :

<https://www.nsalg.org.uk/news/covid19-information/>

Community matters...

Telephone Box Libraries

The virus can remain viable on cardboard for up to 24 hours and on plastic and stainless steel for up to 72 hours. It would be advisable to close these facilities until further notice.

MIND you Keep Well

For anyone feeling stressed, [MIND](#) has some helpful practical advice to help you stay well.



National Advice and Guidance

Click [here](#) for all the latest advice and guidance.

