

Coronavirus updates

NALC has reviewed and updated its coronavirus information. This includes an update on the position on council meetings. See the update below:

Local council meetings

NALC strongly advises local councils to continue to meet remotely, without the need for face-to-face contact.

Local councils have the powers to hold public meetings remotely by using video or telephone conferencing technology currently until May 2021 and are advised to make use of those powers. There is an intrinsic risk to everyone attending a face-to-face meeting at this time. In particular, local councils have a duty to allow the public to observe council meetings without placing restrictions on the number attending, which many council meeting venues will not be able to accommodate in a safe way at this time.

This information forms part of a NALC's dedicated webpage on the coronavirus. It should not be used as a substitute for government advice, however, there are some practicalities specific to local (parish and town) councils where we hope this information will help you plan ahead and manage your risks. If you would like further advice and support on any of these topics for your local council then please [contact your local county association](#). This is a fast-moving situation and we will be updating the webpage regularly.



CORNWALL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

UNIT 1/1A, 1 RIVERSIDE HOUSE, HERON WAY, NEWHAM, TRURO TR1 2XN

Serving the parish and town councils of Cornwall

CALC BRIEFING – FAQ 14

January 5th, 2021

GUIDANCE ON LOCAL COUNCIL SERVICES DURING NEW NATIONAL LOCKDOWN

On January 4th, 2021 Government announced that all areas of England had been placed under a new lockdown similar to the one introduced in March 2020. There are a number of key differences to the early restrictions and this FAQ tries to pick up on the latest Government advice.

The Government has produced guidance to support the introduction of the new statutory requirements which will include fixed penalties for breaches. [National lockdown : Stay at Home](#) was published with the Prime Minister's Statement on January 4th, 2021 and councils are advised to use this document as their main point of reference for details of the new restrictions.

This briefing will summarise our understanding of the new restrictions and we will work to clarify the details in the coming days.

Covid 19 Principles

The Covid 19 principles remain unchanged, but a number of restrictions have been introduced aimed at restricting movement and contact with others. Local councils should bear these restrictions and simple measures when considering any activity.

- Hands, face, space – these principals remain in place, but the Government has reintroduced the threshold of 2m for social distancing. Further information about [meeting others safely and social distancing](#) has been produced.
- The requirement to stay at home has been reintroduced and you are only permitted to leave home where it is necessary to work, exercise,

shop, access medical or veterinary care or support others within a recognised bubble.

- If you must leave home then you should stay local to the village, town or part of the area in which you live.
- You cannot meet with anyone you do not live with (or share a support bubble with). You can exercise with your household or one other person but must always remain 2 meters apart from anyone not in your household.

There is further guidance for those who are [extremely vulnerable to Covid](#).

Meetings

Council and Committees

With the reintroduction of restrictions on movement, it is CALCs understanding that it would be unlawful to ask people to attend your meetings. The latest government briefing states that 'you must not leave or be outside of your home except where you have a reasonable excuse'. This restriction is being put into law with Fixed Penalty Notices for those who breach the requirement.

At this time, you should continue to hold virtual meetings and not undertake physical council meetings either indoors or outdoors.

Site Meetings

We have been asked for guidance on site meetings which are not open to the public and are necessary for the work of the council. The lockdown states that 'you must not leave your home unless you have a reasonable excuse'. The regulations do permit work meetings provided that they are necessary for the business of the council. This would include undertaking risk assessments, inspections and planning site visits. However, these meetings/visits must be done in accordance with the Covid 19 guidelines and when considering if a meeting is necessary councils must consider

- Why do you need to meet?
- Is it essential?
- Why does it need to be a physical meeting?
- What are the risks and how do you manage them?