



The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

Dear Secretary of State

16 December 2020

RE: Covid-19 Financial Support Package for Local Councils

We write to strongly urge you to change the government's current approach to providing Covid-19 funding for Local Councils through principal authorities.

The Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) represents 312, just over 97%, of Parish, Town and Community Councils and Parish Meetings (Local Councils) representing an electorate of over 700,000 across suburban, rural and urban Kent.

You may recall that I wrote to you on 18 May seeking a financial support package for Local Councils who have been providing essential support to their local communities and who have also been affected by additional costs and loss of income as a direct result of Covid-19 and Government restrictions.

The lockdowns have impacted greatly on many of those Local Council activities. For instance, parks remain open whilst social distancing rules apply, and cemeteries continue to be special places for the communities. But lockdown meant that play areas and sports facilities closed; events in parks were cancelled; community centres, village and town halls closed and bookings cancelled; and decline in town centre footfall meant that carparking income for those Local Councils with carparks dramatically reduced. The Local Councils remain very pessimistic about any quick return in income streams, as the necessary restrictions to maintain social distancing will mean that much of the activity that Local Councils provide are not likely to return any time soon.

We recognise that you and your Ministers have made clear to principal authorities that the £7.2 billion funding that Government has already provided to Local Government should also cover the Covid-19 costs for Local Councils and that Local Councils should therefore liaise with the relevant authorities on how this money is allocated in their area. The Local Councils have liaised with their principal authority and their response is that they are not in a position to pass on any of the Government funding to Local Councils in Kent. Hopefully, you will have seen the letter from the Leader of Kent County Council to you dated 12 October who supports our request for Government funding to be made available to our sector.

We would strongly urge you and Ministers to provide further funding specifically for Local Councils to ensure the sustainability of Local Councils, who are continuing to

provide essential support to their local communities. We would also urge you and other Government Ministers to:

- Extend the Income Compensation Scheme to Local Councils (Parish, Town and Community Councils) who have lost income from fees and charges.
- Enable Local Councils (Parish, Town and Community Councils) to be able to apply for funding under the Government's Levelling-up Fund which was announced in the Spending Review.

We welcome the announcement of a new £100m National Leisure Recovery Fund which has been launched by Sport England and that Local Councils are eligible to apply. However, we are disappointed that the application must come from the eligible local authority with the Local Council identified as an outsourced operator to the local authority. We are also disappointed that Local Councils that own and operate the leisure facility are unable to apply and that the fund is only open for applications from 14 December 2020 to 8 January 2021, with expressions of interest until 21 December 2020. This gives those Local Councils that are eligible very little time in which to approach the local authority and encourage them to submit an expression of interest.

As we said back in May, our sector needs your support. We would be happy to discuss this further with you and your officials.

We have copied this letter to Luke Hall MP (Local Government Minister), Baroness Barran MBE (Minister for Civility Society), Baroness Neville-Rolfe, Kent MPs and our national association (NALC).

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Barker

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