

Dear Town and Parish Clerks

I thought I should write to you to let you know what Mid Devon District Council is doing in relation to the prevailing Coronavirus pandemic and how this might affect your thinking as you support your respective councils.

In the main, our activity has been focused on preparedness and business continuity planning – preparing for a range of different scenarios that may transpire over the coming weeks and months. In addition to MDDC business operations planning, along with many of my colleagues I am in regular contact with our countywide colleagues, Local Resilience Forum partners and national channels to ensure we are acting in a coordinated way as part of ‘normal’ operating procedures under the Civil Contingencies Act.

As a District Council, we have taken the view NOT to provide ‘Mid Devon specific’ local advice beyond what is required to advise people on impacts or changes to local services. This is to ensure there is no dilution of the message from either national sources, or from the Director of Public Health for Devon. As such, we are simply signposting people to the relevant local or national information. Our website will be regularly updated with all relevant information – please feel free to circulate the below link as far and as widely as possible:

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/coronavirus-advice/>

One specific area that I would draw to your attention; you may well have heard that there is consideration being given at a national level to asking all those over the age of 70 to self-isolate for an extended period. In addition to steps taken to try and maintain operational service delivery, one of the issues we are looking at for Mid Devon District Council is how any essential meetings can remain quorate in the face of a range of possible circumstances. This might be one area that you might wish to consider in relation to your own councils – what decisions have you got coming up over the next few months that cannot be deferred/postponed, and which are those that are going to need to be made? Other than that, there is likely to be a need to support isolated households within your parishes – I’m sure such support will need to come from a range of formal and informal sources, and I would welcome you continuing the excellent work you all do by way of community awareness, wellbeing and supporting those in need. There is going to be a need to look out for those that you know are most vulnerable in order to ensure they are supported, particularly if they don’t have their own family or other support networks. I believe there is also likely to be updated guidance issued nationally on how we can, alongside voluntary and community groups, best support those who will become isolated over the coming months. We will share this as soon as we become aware of it.

As I know you are aware, this is likely to be an ongoing situation and I would ask you to keep an eye on the local, regional and national guidance to ensure that all information is getting ‘out’ as effectively as possible to try and minimise rumour, speculation, panic or anxiety.

Please feel free to liaise with Sarah or Carole in the member services team in the normal way if you have any parish-specific queries, otherwise we will ensure that our communications and website are kept as up to date as possible on the latest situation. We will also continue to use the ‘all parish clerk’ distribution list for messages relating to important matters (in addition to our usual press channels).

Regards

Stephen Walford  
Chief Executive of Mid Devon District Council