

— OPEN LETTER TO ALL COUNCILLORS —

29 MAY 2020

RE: BUILDING BACK COMMUNITIES

Dear colleagues,

As we move to a new phase of the coronavirus pandemic, I want to express my thanks for all your hard work and dedication over the last few challenging months.

Our sector stepped up and acted swiftly to support residents and the most vulnerable in our communities by setting up volunteer networks, establishing emergency response groups, opening food banks or offering funding to local bodies. You can read more about your incredible work in our *Coronavirus case studies* publication, which has been shared widely with the government and stakeholders.

Just as impressive has been the alacrity with which many local (parish and town) councils have embraced remote working and online meetings to uphold democracy and continue vital work.

This crisis has demonstrated how important our sector is in building stronger communities, and we will continue to make the case to the government and others that we should be at the heart of building back communities as we move into the recovery phase.

If there are any positives to come from this, it is the greater sense of community spirit and civic action. Our task now is to harness this to support the work of our councils and encourage more people to stand at future elections.

I want to pay particular tribute to clerks and council staff, who have diligently kept the show on the road. They are working under immense pressure — having to not only cope with the anxieties we all share but additionally the difficult task of balancing home working with other responsibilities. It is crucial as councillors and local leaders that we recognise their challenge and support their efforts.

As the country moves forward, it is imperative as councillors we work closely with clerks and council staff. Maintaining our collective focus to ensure our local councils are well run and safe and that we continue to support our communities and play a pivotal role in leading our places and making the most of the opportunities that lie ahead.

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) will continue to keep you updated through the pandemic with our dedicated coronavirus webpage. The page has over 100,000 hits, and I'm delighted our resources have been so useful. We are pleased to make the latest edition of *LCR* magazine free online — it features a range of topical information to help you.

NALC and county associations are working on your behalf to ensure the government is aware of the financial constraints we face and their consequences. We are pressing them for a dedicated package of support, which includes funding. I would ask all councils and councillors to contact their MPs to seek their backing and ask them to lobby the government.

Thank you for everything you are doing to support your communities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Baxter." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Cllr Sue Baxter
Chairman of NALC