

Julie James AM  
Minister  
Housing and Local Government  
Welsh Government  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ

**Robert Smith**  
Chief Executive Officer

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22 April 2020

Sent by email to Julie.James@assembly.wales

Dear Minister,

### **Coronavirus Pandemic: Financial Support for Community Councils**

The SLCC is the professional body for approximately 4,000 clerks and chief officers working for over 5,000 town, parish and community councils in England and Wales known generally as 'local councils' – the first tier of local democracy. I write on behalf of our membership – those hard-working clerks and chief officers of local councils who are, going the extra mile for their communities during this national crisis.

In recent years, community and town councils in Wales have diversified their responsibilities and taken on assets and services which principal authorities have felt the need to shed because of financial constraints. Without the first tier of local democracy assuming responsibility – operational and financial – for services such as cemeteries, parks and play areas, public conveniences, markets, arts/culture venues and leisure centres, many communities would now be without them. The coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on these operations. In compliance with government guidelines, many of these facilities have been closed and so the revenues which they generate have been lost while some costs remain. This has created significant financial jeopardy for the services and, in some cases, the councils running them.

Community and town councils are frequently excluded from central government funding which is made available to "local government" and which routinely goes to principal authorities. The reliance on those bodies to pass on such funding to community and town councils often means the funding does not reach them.

We welcomed the UK Local Government Secretary's announcement of a further £95m to support the devolved administration in Wales in tackling coronavirus just as we welcomed his original package of support last month. We are concerned, however, that without some formal mechanism by which money can be channelled specifically to our sector, community and town councils may see none of it at all. I write to seek your assurance that some of that funding will be set

aside specifically for community and town councils who are experiencing significant financial pressure as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

I know that you are aware that community and town councils have been very much at the vanguard of the coronavirus pandemic response. Throughout Wales there are examples – too numerous to list – of community and town council clerks, their colleagues and their volunteer councillors stepping in to ensure that community support is there for those who need it and to provide help, advice and care to the vulnerable members of their communities. I hope you will recognise this outstanding work by ensuring some of this critical package of funding makes its way to support those councils as they continue to provide frontline support while striving to remain financially sustainable in the months ahead.

Thank you for considering this matter. If it would help your consideration, I and senior members of SLCC would be pleased to join other local council representatives in meeting you at any time to discuss these issues further.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style. The first name "Rob" is written with a large, looped 'R' and a small 'ob'. The last name "Smith" is written with a large 'S' and a cursive 'mith'.

Rob Smith  
Chief Executive SLCC

cc Lyn Cadwallader, CEO, One Voice Wales