

Dear Mr Jenrick

It was very gratifying to receive your letter of 30 April applauding the parish sector's work in supporting their communities during this COVID-19 pandemic.

I am proud to be Town Clerk to a Council who instantly stepped up to the mark and instigated a robust and ongoing network of support for the Stratford-upon-Avon community, enabling those who are isolating or vulnerable to receive the vital help they need and deserve. Willingly given, it has nonetheless, taken quite a significant toll on our financial resources, coming at a time when our income has dropped significantly with revenue from our markets and Town Hall/leisure facilities now non-existent.

It was therefore heartening to receive the news that the government has made allowance that some of the £1.6 billion of additional funding is to be allocated to the lower tier councils. As suggested in your letter, I was quick to make contact with our District Council to ascertain how and when we would receive a share of this funding to sustain our ongoing COVID-19 Support activities.

Our District Council has responded advising that what you really meant was *'this applies to only those Councils in financial distress. Far be it from me to point out that Parish Councils have no restrictions on the precept they can raise so why should any be in "financial distress."*

I do not have the time or inclination to fight a losing battle, but such a statement, particularly when we have always strived to keep the precept as low as possible, is irresponsible and cannot go unchallenged. Before I take this further with our District Council, I would be most grateful if you could set out in simple terms what you actually meant, for clearly the content of your letter is being interpreted very differently by the plethora of parish clerks in the Stratford-on-Avon district who, quite naturally, believe that it was sent in good faith to our sector and thus, have taken it at face value.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SS' followed by a horizontal line.

Sarah Summers
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