

Dear Nadhim

I hope this finds you safe and well. I am pleased to say that all those involved with Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council have so far escaped unharmed.

You are no doubt aware of the directive from Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP which was sent to all who serve on Parish and Town Councils regarding the additional funding that was being made available by the Government. This included, in the second tranche of £1.6 billion, a larger share for the lower tier councils – ‘music to our ears’. Doubtless you will also have received correspondence from other Council Clerks in Warwickshire, for this issue has caused much consternation within our sector, to say the least.

Following a letter from the Leader of Stratford-on-Avon District Council, I wrote to Mr Jenrick on 11 May requesting that he clarifies the position, for the District Council has advised that we have misinterpreted his intent. I attach my correspondence for your information.

We have a virtual Town Council Meeting on Tuesday 26 May and this issue is an agenda item. Unfortunately, I have not heard from the MP and wonder if it would be possible for you to speak to him personally to ascertain the government’s real intention, for I cannot and will not believe that it was a meaningless directive sent purely to placate the parish sector. Nationally, a good many local councils have seriously ‘stepped up to the mark’ to provide much needed support for their communities during these unprecedented times, and many have incurred significant additional costs. For completeness, I attach my report to Town Council on this issue, and the response we received from the District Council, although you may have already had sight of the letter from Councillor Jefferson.

Please be assured that although Clerk to an almost entirely Liberal Democrat Council, I am totally non-partisan, and am not trying to score political points from a largely Conservative District Council. However, I have to admit that I find the District Council’s response demoralising, dismissive and quite frankly, offensive, as have other parish councils, whatever their political persuasion. Although I fully understand and sympathise with the District Council’s financial position, we are ‘all in this together’, which is precisely my point. When we get through this, it is vital that at all levels of local government, we work together to ensure

vital services are not lost to the community as we all endeavour to recover amidst a hugely damaged economy.

I am convinced that the District Council will look to the parish sector to share the financial burden of recovery, and in Stratford-upon-Avon that burden will not be insignificant as our town is so reliant upon tourism and is largely hospitality sector led . If that is the case, and I have to say I would put money on it, I feel that the District Council is being short sighted in neatly side-stepping our sector now. 'We are all in this together' when it suits. However, I am the first to accept that I may have misinterpreted Mr Jenrick's connotation. It is to fully understand exactly where we stand that I request your help please.

Finally, although I am sure you will be well aware of Stratford Support which we have put in place in association with Stratford Town Trust, a visit to our website is worth a minute of your time if you have not already seen it, and will give you a better understanding of the vital service we are currently providing – www.stratfordsupport.org.uk .

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely

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

Sarah Summers
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