



## COUNCILLOR IAN WARD

### LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

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Dear Faith Leader

### **Re: Faith settings and communal prayer**

Firstly, the City Council would place on record its appreciation and thanks for the way faith groups and operators of places of worship have worked with the Council in trying to protect our communities.

In light of the growing rates of Covid-19 in the community we are asking faith leaders to consider carefully whether to continue communal prayer in these difficult times. We recognise the value of prayer during these difficult times, however we also recognise the pressure management committees and people responsible for running the places of worship are under to keep them open.

National policy remains to allow communal prayer, and faith settings have been incredibly proactive in managing safety in the prayer settings to protect congregations and participants. We are aware that some faith settings in the Country have decided to close for communal prayer and many in Birmingham are taking extra precautions, further reducing capacity for communal prayers.

At this time it is preferable for people to stay at home rather than attend places of worship, this will minimise the risk of further spread of infection. If faith settings wish to continue with communal prayer we are asking that all faith settings implement the following additional steps for covid safety and review their risk assessments:

- Maintain a minimum of 2m distance between individuals attending faith settings for prayer, even with face coverings
- Have systematic cleaning processes including regular ventilation of spaces between congregational groups
- Enforce strongly face coverings while inside the building and if clinical exemptions should have badge/lanyard
- Encourage better behaviours about social distancing and gatherings when leaving the place of worship

- Reduce the duration of time to a minimum people are inside the place of worship
- Encourage the use of home for prayer

One national organisation the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) made the statement below, which is a useful reference.

“London 'Major Incident' Declaration: More Dark Days Ahead

1 in 30 Londoners now has COVID, the highest it's ever been. Outside London, we must be ahead of the curve and anticipate the impact of hospitalisation and death that sadly will likely rapidly increase over the next few days and weeks. Unfortunately, these already appear likely to be far worse than the first wave.

The City Council would also endorse the recent statement from The British Islamic Medical Association (BIMA) in urging mosque and Muslim community leaders to

urgently re-assess mosque safety measures in consultation with local Public Health officials. It is further stated if mosque trustees are not confident in ensuring congregants' safety given the very high number of cases, to temporarily suspend congregational activities as soon as possible.

These sentiments expressed hold good for all faith groups and places of worship.

We welcome your support in fighting this terrible virus, which is harming too many of our community. Keep well.

Yours faithfully



**Councillor Ian Ward**  
**Leader of Birmingham City Council**



**Dr Justin Varney**  
**Director of Public Health**



**Paul Lankester**  
**Interim Assistant Director**  
**Regulation & Enforcement**

