



# WEST SUSSEX ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS LIMITED

## Minutes from the Board Meeting of West Sussex Association of Local Councils Limited Held at Council Chamber, Billingshurst Community & Conference Centre, Roman Way, Billingshurst, West Sussex RH14 9QW at 10.00am on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2020

<b>Directors Present</b>	Cllr Terry Oliver	Horsham District Association and Chair
	Cllr Lilian Richardson	Arun District Association
	Cllr Mike Beal	Chichester District Association
	Cllr Phil Baxter	Horsham District Association
	Cllr Tony Steer	Mid Sussex District Association
	Cllr Rodney Jackson	Mid Sussex District Association
<b>Presidents and Vice Presidents Present</b>	Michael Chater OBE	President
	Cllr Alan Grant	Vice President
<b>Also in attendance</b>	Trevor Leggo	CEO SSALC
	Mandy Jameson	Sussex PCC's Senior Communications Manager
	James Ironside	Development Manager: Engagement, Advice and Information, Adult Social Care Improvement and Quality Team, WSCC
	Julie Holden	SLCC Representative
	Paul Richards	Clerk to the Boards SSALC

### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Nicklen, Cllr Ribbens, Cllr Warden, Lord Lyton, Alun Aylesbury and Anna Beams.

### 2. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019

The minutes were approved as a true record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

### 3. Matters Arising (not on this Agenda) and update on actions from the last meeting

None.

### 4. WSCC update on Health and Wellbeing (H&WB)

- The CEO advised that on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the NALC Spring Conference will feature H&WB. The Surrey ALC is sending 3 x representatives. The Chair will attend plus 2 other Board Members (to be notified to the CEO);
- The CEO reported that a Summer H&WB symposium is planned for the end of September;
- The next NALC study tour will be in Frome, Somerset which will focus on H&WB and Loneliness. Dr Richard Olliver from the Surrey ALC will be attending on behalf of SSALC;
- The Chair reminded Members that the WSALC H&WB survey achieved a 30% response rate and the emphasis will be to work with the willing. The Board confirmed its desire to drive this project forward and to identify key issues for local communities. The Chair will meet the WSCC Leader on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020 with an objective to re-establish joint working with the WSCC team given the recent departure of senior officers;

- The CEO advised that the H&WB Annual Review report will be revisited in the summer;
- Cllr Baxter advised that on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2019, a re-purposed HDC Health Partnership Board was established; and
- On 29<sup>th</sup> January 2020 the Chair and Clerk will meet Age UK WSCC in Littlehampton. Mandy Jameson suggested that she contact the Sussex Police Neighbourhood Watch team with an aim to introduce them as a potential partner to join with WSCC and Age UK. Chair asked Board Members to suggest additional potential partners to build the operational base.

**ACTION – Board Members to advise the CEO if they would like to attend the NALC Spring Conference.**

**ACTION – Board Members to advise the CEO with suggestion for suitable H&WB partners.**

## 5. Police matters

Mandy Jameson provided an update from the PCC's office that included: -

- A 2019 review that featured: -
  - A PCC programme of consultation that has gathered local feedback that is then used to inform the PCC 's discussion with the Chief Constable;
  - 20 focus group events attended by over 300 local residents and local police senior officers;
  - A Rural roundtable in Billingshurst;
  - The recruitment of an additional 100 PCSOs plus additional police officers; and
  - A Focus on speeding and other serious road traffic offences.
- More focus groups in the WSCC area planned in February and March;
- Focus on retail crime including shoplifting and anti-social behaviour;
- Operationally, Sussex Police are planning to increase engagement with communities, improve the identification of local issues and target/deploy appropriate resources. The Chair asked Mandy Jameson to work with the CEO to invite relevant senior Police Officers to Board meetings (Shane Baker was suggested as a speaker for the next meeting); and
- CEO has been asked by the Sussex PCC to host husting events for Sussex parishes to meet the PCC candidates. The CEO will advise on locations and potential dates.

## 6. Working Together Group (WSCC)

James Ironside (Development Manager, Engagement, Advice and Information, Adult Social Care Improvement and Quality Team, WSCC) presented details on the co-production work in WSCC Adult Social Services. This included: -

- In 2019, WSCC Adult Social Care (ASC) produced a 2019 vision and strategy paper. Their focus will be to work in co-production of solutions; a collaborative approach to create change and shared solutions. A Statement of Intent has been announced stressing WSCC's commitment;
- A Working Together Group (WTG) has been created that incorporates a wide range of partners and stakeholders. The WSALC Chair attended its first meeting. The primary piece of work will be around customer pathways and how services are accessed. An engagement model is now in place and James was to meet relevant stakeholders. He asked Members to share their experiences. The CEO advised on the military covenant which linked with 42,000 veterans in WSCC. He advised that grant money is available for appropriate initiatives and could be a good link for the WTG; and
- The hardest group to engage with is self-funders who have little contact with WSCC ASC services. One challenge is how to support this group.

The Chair thanked James and suggested that WSALC could help when engagement solutions have been developed. At that point, local councils can play a vital role in helping deliver them.

## 7. NALC matters

- The NALC Spring conference will be on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020;
- The CEO reported that the CEOs of the County Associations will meet on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2020. Sue Baxter (NALC Chair) will attend. He also advised that a recent SSALC survey drew attention to the lack of CIL engagement and training e.g. how to access CIL funds. There appears to be an inconsistent approach in how CIL is administered e.g. MSDC has not introduced a CIL scheme to date. He will raise this as a discussion point at the meeting;

- The Chair reported on the 2019 NALC conference at Milton Keynes. It was a very active conference where WSALC representatives met with many colleagues and exhibitors; and
- The Chair reminded members to send an email to CEO if any NALC issues need to be raised between meetings.

#### 8. Reports by District Associations

- Adur** – The CEO reported that Lancing and Sompting local councils have May elections in 2020. Election training for these councils will be provided centrally.
- Arun** – Cllr Richardson reported that their last meeting was held on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019. Sue Furlong from WSCC attended and presented on how to improve local place and services. The current issue is attracting enough local volunteers to help deliver these services. The Association Chair and Vice Chair had a productive and useful meeting with Arun District's CEO. The outcome of the meeting included the renewal of the ADC annual conference with the Association local councils and a commitment to continue to fund the Association.
- Chichester** – Cllr Beal advised that the last meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019 was very well attended. The local Sussex Police Chief Inspector provided an update on the new allocation of PCSOs throughout the CDC District. The local issue of the appointment of a CDALC representative to the Chichester Conservancy Board has now been resolved. The meeting saw better engagement with local councils in the northern CDALC area. The CDC All Parishes Conference included the CDC CEO, management team and cabinet members. This was very well attended and is a good example of working together.
- Horsham** – The Chair reported on a very good and well attended annual meeting in November 2019 with HDC. 20 HDC councillors attended together with cabinet members, the CEO and his Board. Presentations included an update on the new local plan and key issues related to planning enforcement in the district. Cllr Baxter advised that on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2019, HDC hosted an early local plan engagement session. As one of HALC's Parish Council Advisors to HDC's Standards' Committee, Cllr Baxter had attended a meeting of that Committee on 8th January 2020. It had been reported there that the government was expected to give legal effect to the Recommendations of the Committee for Standards in Public Life, probably in or by March. The Recommendations would form part of a new standard Code of Practice for Councils which would be mandatory. Parish Councils would need to act quickly to give effect to any changes that might need to be made to related policies and practices (such as Standing Orders). Guidance would be provided.
- Mid Sussex** – Cllr Steer reported that no meeting had occurred since the last Board meeting however the Association has been very active on issues such as resilience, volunteers, community payback, crime and H&WB. The Association has been pressing MSDC regarding grass cutting schedules across the District. The Association has now appointed a Vice Chair and Clerk and a Subgroup on Highways and been created. The next meeting is planned for April 2020,

#### 9. South Downs National Park Authority – no update.

#### 10. Update from the Society of Local Council Clerks –

Julie Holden presented her report that is attached at Appendix A.

The CEO reported that whilst most member councils are well managed and well behaved, there are a few where there can be persistent problems; often caused by councillors failing to treat each other with respect. This has an impact on the staff team, and it doesn't take long for the spiral of decline to become irrecoverable. Hardly a day goes by without the team hearing of another potential problem emerging. The question for the Board is how much time should SSALC officers spend trying to sort out councils with 'self-inflicted wounds'; the reality is that the silent, well run majority of councils are subsidising the few requiring a lot of help. The Chair suggested that this situation cannot persist as is too draining on limited resources and suggested that a mediation type forum could assist. Julie Holden reminded Members that not all Clerks were members of SLCC and therefore not all have access to SLCC resources. The CEO thanked the Board for their constructive comments and the Board agreed that he take this issue to the SSALC Board to agree the policy across all three Counties.

The Board thanked Julie Holden for her very informative presentation.

**11. West Sussex Civilian & Military Partnership Board**

The CEO provided an update on the Engagement Events Group which is now looking to VE events in July 2020. There have been very few requests from local councils (or District Council military champions) requesting military presence for both VE and VJ events. The next meeting of the Group is on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020.

**12. Strategic Review**

The CEO advised that on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019, the SSALC Board adopted the review framework that included Training, Overheads, Professional Services, Staff Structure, Governance & Constitution, and Income Generation. Training was agreed to be the key priority. Presentations by interested training partners will be made to the 3 Vice Chairmen and suitably qualified Clerks who will review each training requirement. The 3 County Vice Chairmen and three Clerks will review these applications.

The Chair will also meet other County Associations and they will share how each operate to provide a wider perspective across the Country.

**13. Staffing - No issues to report.**

**14. SALC Newsletter**

The CEO advised that a survey to all Chairs and Clerks had been circulated. Early responses suggest the newsletter is too frequent for updates to local councils. When all survey comments have been analysed, the update frequency will be assessed.

**15. SERCAF**

The CEO reported that no meetings had taken place since the last Board meeting. The next meeting will be on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020 at Sackville House, Lewes.

**16. Reports from Representatives on Outside Bodies - none.**

**17. St Catherine's Hospice**

The CEO reported that the Hospice is moving from a very restricted site to a new facility at Pease Pottage. The CEO will provide public domain local council details to the St Catherine's team in order that they could make a donation application.

**18. A27 Arundel Bypass Scheme Update – no further update since the last meeting.**

**19. Chairman's update on relevant issues - none**

**20. 2020 Conferences**

The CEO circulated a list of likely venues. Board Members agreed that the Avisford Park venue on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020 would be the date for the 2020 conference.

**21. Any other urgent matters to be raised by Board Members**

The CEO reported that tickets for Chairs (or past Chairs) for the Royal Garden Party might be available. The Board agreed that Cllr Richardson represent the Board for this event.

The meeting closed at 12:40pm

**Next Meeting Dates – 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020 at Billingshurst**

Signed (Chairman) \_\_\_\_\_

Dated \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX A

### **Society of Local Council Clerk update for the West Sussex Association of Local Councils Board**

Unitary Councils are back on the agenda with Somerset looking to combine 5 councils (Mendip, South Somerset, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton). Options include a full Merge which could bring savings starting at £32million or closer working arrangements that would show savings of at least £10m. This is interesting on the back of West Sussex CC now sharing a Chief Executive with East Sussex CC and of course the existing joint governance at Adur and Worthing Councils.

The National living wage has been announced to be increasing by 6.2%. where adopted by local councils this usually affects the lower paid staff in a local council such as the caretakers and ground staff, however in the smaller councils this could affect all staff. From 1st April £8.72 per hour is the UK living wage for over 25's. It is important that councils appreciate this, the role of the Clerk (especially where combined with staff management or the role of Responsible Finance Officer) should be accurately graded. It was interesting at our December meeting we had a Clerk advising that she was leaving and seeking an idea as to the hourly rate to be offered for her successor. The round table discussion showed that market forces as well as the Living wage and minimal wage were factors with one Council advising that they could not recruit cleaners at less than £15 per hour which in turn has knock on effects to administration and managerial posts.

In addition, Unison are back around the table having submitted a request for 10% increase for NJC salaries. Most Councils are concluding their budget setting at this point and many have put a 2-3% increase for staff salaries in their budgets. A 10% boon (unlikely) would cause significant issues for Councils as the staff salaries are of course the lion share of the budget. Councils who do not follow the NJC are not affected directly but will need to have a mind to the national picture as this will dictate expectation from Clerks. Clerks who feel undervalued will ultimately leave their post, and recruitment is an expensive pastime.

Councils are setting Budgets and there seem to have been a wide range of Council Tax Base changes and draft budgets are suggesting a wide range of increases in the Band D. The Local Councils at present are not included in capping and increases up to £5 per Band D are generally seen to be acceptable by Government, figures from 0% to 10% have been banded around.

SALC gave some advice as to membership of Lobby Groups (CPRE /CAGNE etc) and while Councils may belong to groups, they need to be mindful that this could be a predetermination of the Councils stance. Where subscriptions for membership are paid and the group then organise lobbying the members may be complicit in this campaign. Councils are therefore urged to be careful about subscription membership and should report the activities of the groups to the Councils so that Council can state its position if necessary.

Many Councils have considered new Environmental policies and declarations of Climate Emergencies, Local Councils are looking to see where they can reduce emissions, become carbon neutral, remove plastics etc. This has gained a lot of publicity, but the proof of effectiveness will be measured in the longer term. However, it is clear that local councils do have a role that they can play. The Clerk magazine in December, focused on initiatives that have started in local councils.

J Holden

January 2020