



# WEST SUSSEX ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS LIMITED

## Minutes from the Board Meeting of West Sussex Association of Local Councils Limited held via a Zoom video/audio conference at 11am on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2020

<b>Directors Present</b>	Cllr Terry Oliver	Horsham District Association and Chair
	Cllr Lilian Richardson	Arun District Association
	Cllr Michael Warden	Arun District Association
	Cllr Tony Nicklen	Adur District Association
	Cllr Mike Beal	Chichester District Association
	Cllr David Ribbens	Chichester District Association
	Cllr Phil Baxter	Horsham District Association
	Cllr Tony Steer	Mid Sussex District Association
	Cllr Rodney Jackson	Mid Sussex District Association

**Presidents and Vice Presidents Present** None

<b>Also in attendance</b>	Trevor Leggo	CEO SSALC
	Mark Mulberry	Company Secretary
	Anne Bott	Deputy CEO SSALC
	Anna Beams	Office, Training & Events Manager SSALC
	Paul Richards	Clerk to the Boards SSALC

### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Mandy Jameson (PCC's Office). The Chairman thanked the SSALC Team for their hard work and fortitude ensuring that the SSALC office and services coped well during the Covid-19 epidemic.

### 2. Reports by District Associations

The CEO advised that local councils seemed to have coped well during the Covid-19 epidemic. Most SSALC local councils had held virtual meetings save for two that had refused to do so. The Regulations allow for virtual meetings to carry on until May 2021 and there is thought that Government might extend the arrangement to make it more attractive for people to stand as councillors and the public to become more involved from their living rooms. This being the case, a Working Party of NALC staff and County Officers is being established comprising people with sound knowledge of meeting procedures, governance and accountability. Anne Bott has kindly agreed to be put forward as the SSALC representative.

*11:15am Cllr Steer joins the meeting.*

- (a) **Adur** – Cllr Nicklen advised that issues of co-opting new councillors and the signing of the appropriate Code of Conduct and Register of Interest forms may have created constitutional concerns. Some local councils may have co-opted new councillors without the necessary acceptance forms having been completed and these new Members have then voted on council business.

- (b) **Arun** – Cllr Richardson reported that the key issues reported related to poor broadband coverage to run video conferences and the physical signing of minutes.
- (c) **Chichester** – Cllr Beal advised most local councils were following the good advice received from WSCC and CDC.
- (d) **Horsham** – Cllr Baxter advised that the Covid-19 volunteer hubs had been established by HDC and were running well. The Chair reported that HALC are planning their first virtual meeting in September 2020.
- (e) **Mid Sussex** – Cllr Steer reported that their local Covid-19 volunteer hubs were also running well. They had provided a wide range of services including information leaflets to all houses, prescription collection, food shopping and the issue of red/green/amber cards for residents to display in their windows to bring attention to a need for a degree of assistance.

**3. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

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

Cllr Warden referred to the appendix to the minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2020 relating to membership of lobby groups. He, and others, were concerned that the SSALC advice was incorrect and they would be preparing a formal response to the SSALC stated position. He asked that these concerns be noted in the minutes.

**4. To identify communities where the local council is providing support for its residents**

The CEO advised that the Lord Lieutenant's office had asked to see examples of good/best practice from local councils during the Covid-19 epidemic. Directors described the various approaches taken by their local councils in conjunction with their principal authorities. The CEO asked for feedback on such good examples.

**5. To receive an update on subscription income received**

Anna Beams described a positive position with 76% of subscription income received to date. Mark Mulberry confirmed that income receipts were in line with forecast.

**6. WSALC current financial position and possible implications for member councils**

Mark Mulberry reported on the current financial position and referred to the step change in WSALC annual subscription income. Income for the period was £86,000 (£83,000 in 2019) with NALC affiliation fees at £29,000 (£28,000 in 2019). The SSALC cross-charges are higher in 2020 (£74,000) than compared with 2019 (£53,000) as in 2019 the external auditor advised that the reserves to the individual Associations be increased. The surplus for WSALC is currently £12,000. The Balance Sheet shows £46,000 in the bank and, after planned expenditure, the year-end reserves are £21,000. He requested permission to send the accounts to the external auditor. The Chair advised that he would like the financial and accounts report circulated to all Directors. After review and discussion, Directors agreed that the accounts can be submitted.

The CEO referred to recent debate and discussion related to the recovery of Council Tax by principal authorities and their under-recovery process. It had been suggested that such under-recovery percentages be passed on to local councils. The CEO will keep this issue under review and report back when more information is available.

**7. To discuss proposals for remote training**

Anna Beams advised that a reduced online training programme was now available. It included courses for new Clerks, Planning and Councillor training. Training for Chairman will be looked at next. All face-to-face events have been cancelled.

**8. Sussex Local Resilience Forum (SLRF), to receive a report on the work of the LRF and what SSALC has learned**

The CEO reported on his participation with the SLRF. He explained the role of the Forum, the participants and the action taken to date. Over 100 representative organisations attend from across Sussex and their current work includes how to manage the easing of lockdown restrictions across the County. Directors queried why the work and role of the SLRF was not more prominent as they, and the public, were unaware of the good work that the Forum perform on behalf of the communities across Sussex.

The Chairman asked the Clerk to write a letter of thanks to the SLRF on behalf of the Board.

9. **To receive any response from the Secretary of State to the CEO's request for clarification on how towns and parishes may claim compensation from the £1.6bn allocated to principal authorities for this purpose**

The CEO referred to the response from the Secretary of State, circulated previously, on how local councils could claim the necessary compensation from principal authorities given the additional costs incurred by them during the Covid-19 epidemic. It appeared that no clear guidance had been given to principal authorities on how they can authorise appropriate additional funds to local councils. The CEO has forwarded this to NALC asking for it to assist.

10. **Report on Police /PCC Focus Groups with West Sussex towns and parishes**

The CEO referred to the report, circulated previously, and updated Directors on the latest PCC consultation group activity across West Sussex. The groups had reported varying levels of police engagement across many local council areas. The report on rural policing was reviewed with Directors pleased to note the establishment of a new Rural Policing Team comprising an Inspector, two Sergeants, eight PCs and the existing six PCSO.

The CEO also reported that the current Chief Constable would retire in June and suitable candidates will be interviewed for his replacement.

11. **Arrangements for future meetings**

The CEO asked that Directors reflect on the suitability of the Zoom virtual meetings for future meetings. The Chairman suggested that for future meetings, any guest speakers be given a timed slot for their agenda item.

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

Cllr Beal asked that the formal roles of SSALC and WSALC be explained. The CEO advised that SSALC is the 'holding company' and manages all payments (staffing, offices, expenses etc.) and that he would provide a detailed report to the Board containing the necessary information.

The CEO asked the Board if it was the intention to investigate separation from the SSALC three county arrangement, in which case the report should contain all the information needed to assist the Board in the pros and cons of separation; this would include implications for leases, agreements and staffing.

It was agreed the report would be available by the end of July and at least 14 days prior to the next WSALC Board Meeting.

The meeting closed at 1:27pm

**Next Meeting Dates – to be advised**

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

Dated \_\_\_\_\_