

# **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 10am on Friday 30th October 2020**

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| **Directors Present** | Cllr Terry Oliver | Horsham District Association and Chair |
|  | Cllr Lilian Richardson  Cllr David Ribbens  Cllr Phil Baxter | Arun District Association  Chichester District Association  Horsham District Association |
|  | Cllr Rodney Jackson | Mid Sussex District Association |
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| **Presidents and Vice**  **Presidents Present** | Michael Chater | President |
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| **Also in attendance** | Emily King  Supt Miles Ockwell  Mandy Jameson  Trevor Leggo  Anne Bott | WSCC Director of Communities  Sussex Police  PCC’s Office  CEO SSALC  Deputy CEO SSALC |
|  | Anna Beams  Julie Holden  Alun Alesbury | Office, Training & Events Manager SSALC  SLCC representative  SDNPA representative |
|  | Paul Richards | Clerk to the Boards SSALC |

1. **Apologies for absence.**

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Beal, Cllr Steer, and Cllr Warden.

1. **To approve the minutes of meeting held on 28th July 2020.**

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

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

* Item 4 – Covid – agenda item;
* Item 6 – Communication with Sussex Police – agenda item 4; and
* SSALC update – CEO to provide at agenda item 11.

1. **Presentation from Supt. Milles Ockwell, Sussex Police**

Supt. Ockwell welcomed the opportunity to address the Board and advised that his current role is as Divisional Commander for West Sussex responsible for police response, neighbourhood policing and operational command. His update included: -

* **Covid-19** – he advised that this had been a challenge for the Force to ensure that enough fit and healthy officers were available for duty. No significant issues were encountered over the spring and summer however, as infection rates rise, challenges to police response remain;
  + **Resources** – Covid-19, Brexit and the winter period will combine to have a significant impact on policing in Sussex;
  + **Trends** – whereas reported crime reduced during the Covid-19 lockdown, domestic abuse cases rose. Anti-social behaviour, breaches of the peace and other activity related to late night gatherings also altered the timing of reports reflecting a night-time economy;
  + **Covid-19 second wave** – as the Force prepares for an increase in lockdown measures, additional funding has been received from Government to help enforce Covid-19 regulations. Dedicated resources could be deployed, and the approach will be continue to advise, explain and engage before formal enforcement.
* **Chief Constable** – Supt. Ockwell reported that the new Chief Constable, Jo Shiner, has reset the direction of travel for the Force and has three key priorities namely, protecting communities, catching criminals and public service; and
* **Policing Models**.
  + Additional investment has made in Rural Crime Teams, Tactical Enforcement Units and Special Enforcement Units;
  + Investment, via an increase in precept, has also seen the deployment of additional named PCSOs across local council areas;
  + The establishment of a Violence Reduction Partnership is part of a funding programme aimed at the reduction of violent crime particularly with youth offenders. The West Sussex partnership is chaired by Supt. Ockwell and is focussing on reducing school exclusions. Such exclusions can lead to the more vulnerable being open to exploitation e.g. County Lines, drugs and violent crimes; and
  + Operation Downsway is a new initiative to address anti-social driving and behaviour in rural areas.

The Chairman thanked Supt. Ockwell for his comprehensive presentation and reported that, with reference to Operations Downsway, the named PCSO and Clerk at his parish have worked very well together leading to a big improvement in the effectiveness of this relationship. The Chairman also asked for an update on the Sussex Resilience Forum. Supt Ockwell advised that ACC Miller was the Gold Commander with Supt. Julia Pope appointed to the Silver Command lead. Mark Clothier was also embedded into the Forum to represent the Force.

The Chairman invited Mandy Jameson to provide an update from the Sussex PCC’s office. Her update included:-

* That she is working with the CEO to schedule follow-up sessions in November and December on the 32 engagement events held previously across Sussex. With the PCC, she is also meeting the NFU, CLA and farming community to discuss rural crime and the impact of the Rural Crime Team. Finally, she advised that she is working with the CEO and Supt. Ockwell on ways to continue to improve police engagement with local communities. She also referred to the CEO’s podcast that has been made available to all new PCSO recruits. **ACTION** – CEO to circulate the podcast to the Board;
* A pilot Equine Ranger initiative had been launched the Mid Sussex District to support the Force in rural areas;
* Business crime remain a priority for the PCC with a current focus on abuse and violent crime on small retailers;
* With 275 schemes in place across Sussex, the Community Speedwatch campaign is growing successfully. A change in the enforcement regime (after the third warning) will now mean that offenders will be visited by a police officer or PCSO at their home to give formal advice; and
* The REBOOT scheme continues to be successful with over 100 young people diverted away from crime.

1. **Presentation from Emily King, WSCC** **Director of Communities.**

The Chairman introduced the Director of Communities and thanked her for attending. She described her current activities that included: -

* As part of the Sussex Resilience Forum, the Council has treated the Covid-19 epidemic as a major incident. As infection rates are rising, the Council is preparing for a second wave of restrictions over the winter period;
* The Council is taking a holistic approach to both Covid-19 and Brexit as both key issues will have a significant impact on services;
* The WSCC website contains details on infection rates, advice, and contacts. Current infection rates are lower than the national average but the major urban areas in the County have seen a significant increase over the past few days;
* Significant work has been carried out with the care homes to help protect the most vulnerable in the community as winter approaches. There are 235 care homes in West Sussex with over 8,600 beds. Admissions from these homes to hospital are low currently. Hospital capacity remains good and elective surgeries continue to be made;
* The community hubs will continue to operate from 8am to 8pm, seven days a week. Outbound calling to those in need will continue. Those requiring free school meals will be directed to the hubs for assistance. The CLEO2 library system has been modified to be a useful information resource for the hubs and the Covid-19 web page is the most visited on the WSCC site;
* Libraries will open during the winter but with restricted opening hours; and
* The WSCC Communities team, led by Sue Furlong, continues to liaise with local councils and provide advice and signposting services.

Cllr Richardson enquired about help for young carers. Emily reported that the County has put a significant amount of effort in working with the contract provider for this service. They are looking for a more joined up relationship between social workers, children, adults and advocacy support. Emily agreed to provide more information. The Chairman thanked Emily for her excellent presentation and, on behalf of the Board, extended thanks to her and the WSCC staff for their efforts now and in the future.

1. **South Downs National Park Authority –** Alun Alesbury updated the Board and advised that:-

* Following the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, limited face to face meetings by officers, rangers and some Members had recommenced. Planning officers had been unable to visit sites, but visits are now operating at a local level;
* A supplementary guide relating to the design of new developments appears to be more weighted toward local comments being invited at the local plan formulation than at the individual application stage;
* The Authority has responded to the various Government Planning White Papers;
* The decision to select the ‘grey’ route for the A27 Arundel by-pass is seen by the Authority to be helpful in that it outside the National Park area. He noted that local comments have pointed blame at the Authority for the decision made by Government but he advised that current regulations did not allow for such developments in National Parks.

The Chairman thanked Alun for his presentation.

1. **Society of Local Council Clerks –** Julie Holden presented an update to the Board. She advised that: -

* The last meeting of the branch had a presentation from SLCC central as to the need for CPD and the membership routes to the Society. There is discussion currently about reduced 2nd memberships for other senior officers (Assistant Clerks / RFOS etc). As most Clerks’ membership is paid for by the Council, it is not a given that the others will b. Therefore a reduced fee will make it more attractive if the officer has to pay themselves in full or part;
* The last meeting focused on Covid and the continued disruption. Many clerks have adjusted to this being the norm for the next few months and, although they have manged with electronic meetings and working more from home, the work of the Council has continued. Budget season has commenced and the true effect of Covid on income and expense will now be brought to the fore to establish budgets for next year;
* SLCC held a very successful online conference with break out rooms and even a virtual coffee lounge/ bar for some social events including a wine tasting. Topics at the conference included the green agenda, finance, code of conduct, planning, bullying and employment law;
* Most Councils have replied to the White Paper on planning, with thanks to SSALC for some guidance on this, although this came too late for some Mid Sussex Councils who dealt with all of the submissions at the same time as the response to the MSDC Site Allocation Document;
* The Standards Matter 2 consultation is being encouraged to be replied to;
* There has been a significant amount of consultation this year but whilst local councils have not necessarily been involved in delivering community events, the Covid response and consultation responses have kept Clerks all very busy.

The Chairman thanked Julie for her presentation. Cllr Jackson asked if issues with Covid-19 have led to resignations amongst Clerks. Julie advised that no significant increase in Clerk resignations had been reported however, recruiting sufficient, experienced Clerks remains difficult. The CEO reported that most local councils seek an experienced Clerk, but these continue to be difficult to source. He has also noticed an increase in applications from candidates without relevant experience due, partly, to Covid. The Chairman asked if Julie could present her thoughts on Clerk development initiatives to the next Board meeting.

1. **A27 update**

The CEO updated Board members on the decision to select the ‘grey’ A27 bypass route. The route is not in the SDNPA area however it will impact the communities of Walberton and West Binsted. Formal consultation will take place however it is anticipated that those parishes impacted by the preferred route may seek legal action. The development is suggested to commence in 2023.

1. **Reports by District Associations**
2. **Adur** –no update.
3. **Arun** –no update**.**
4. **Chichester** –Cllr Ribbens reported that 3 virtual meetings have been held regarding the WSALC value for money proposal and a ChiDALC meeting related to the proposed Planning White Paper had also been held.
5. **Horsham –** Cllr Baxter advised that HALC had met with HDC for their annual meeting where the implications of the Planning White Paper were discussed. The Chairman reported that HDC face significant financial shortfalls of circa £2m due to Covid.
6. **Mid Sussex** –Cllr Jackson reported that no meeting had been held but concerns were raised that MSDC had submitted a response to the Planning White Paper without discussing the implications with District Council Members. Due to the AONB and National Park areas in the District, pressure for housing development centres on the lower Weald area. Cllr Jackson confirmed that no Mid Sussex ALC meeting had taken place in the last 18 months.
7. **AGM**

The CEO advised that the WSALC AGM will be held on 10th November 2020. A preliminary agenda has been circulated. The AGM will be a virtual meeting and the 138 local councils will be asked to only send two delegates to the meeting due to the technical capacity of the Zoom system. 60 delegates have registered so far. The Chairman asked how the records of voting and the meeting will be managed. The CEO advised that the AGM will be recorded and that Zoom polls will be used for delegates to record their votes. The Chairman asked the CEO to provide the list of delegates before the meeting and reminded him that such a list was available at past AGMs. The CEO agreed to discuss this with his team. The Chairman asked that the process and procedure for voting be circulated to delegates before the AGM. The CEO advised that such details would be sent out before the AGM. Cllr Baxter asked if a WSALC Board Member can also represent their own local council. The CEO confirmed that this would be acceptable.

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

Cllr Jackson referred to the recent SSALC Board meeting and asked for an update. The Chairman advised that the draft minutes would be circulated. The CEO reported that an Extraordinary Meeting of the SSALC Board will take place on 5th November 2020 to discuss the legal advice received relating to the possible reorganisation of SSALC. The CEO agreed to share the outcome of this meeting, and the legal advice, with the Board before the WSALC AGM.

**Next Meeting Dates**

* **10th November 2020 –** a virtual WSALC AGM commencing 10am.

The meeting closed at 12:29.

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

Dated \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_