



WEST SUSSEX ALC LIMITED

2nd Floor Sackville House, Brooks Close, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 2FZ
Company No. 08500937 Registered in England

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the
West Sussex Association of Local Councils Limited
held on Friday 20th October 2023 at 09:30am
Billingshurst Community Centre, Roman Way, Billingshurst,
West Sussex RH14 9QW**

Attendance:

Presidents:

The Rt. Hon. Earl of Lytton DL

Directors:

Cllr Douglas Denham St. Pinnock (Chair), Mid Sussex District Association
Cllr Alison Cooper, Arun District Association
Cllr Charles Britton, Chichester District Association
Cllr Andrew Shaxson, Chichester District Association
Cllr Val Court, Horsham District Association
Cllr Martin Sheldon, Mid Sussex District Association

Officers:

Trevor Leggo: CEO
Anna Beams: Clerk to the Board

Members – There were 37 representatives present and 34 appointed voting representatives (including 5 proxy) - full list available on request.

1(a) Election of Joint Presidents

Cllr Denham St. Pinnock took the Chair and opened the meeting by explaining that under the WSALC Articles of Association the AGM should be chaired by one of the two joint Presidents; he then proposed the re-election of the two Presidents.

The motion was **CARRIED BY ACCLAMATION** and the Rt. Hon. Earl of Lytton DL duly took the Chair.

1(b) Welcome by the Joint Presidents

The Rt. Hon. Earl of Lytton DL shared that it was his pleasure to welcome all those member council representatives in attendance and added that he remains committed to the first tier of Local Government. He expressed his disappointment in the recent decision by the House of Commons to decline an amendment to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill to allow town and parish councils to hold remote meetings.

2. Apologies for absence

Received and accepted from, Dr John Godfrey DL (Joint President), Cllr Mike Mendoza (Director), Cllr Amanda Tait (Director), Mark Mulberry (Company Secretary) and representatives from Turners Hill, Barnham & Eastergate, West Grinstead, Pycombe, Shermanbury, Twineham, Bersted, Bramber, Southbourne, Steyning & Kingston Parish Councils and Littlehampton Town Council.

3. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 29th October 2021

The minutes were **APPROVED** as a true record of the previous meeting.

Total votes: for – 33; against – 0; abstain – 1 (by proxy)

4. Report from the Chairman of West Sussex ALC Limited on the Annual Report for 2021/2022.

Cllr Denham St, Pinnock, Chairman of WSALC, presented a verbal report to members ([appendix A](#))

5. To Adopt the Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2022.

In the absence of the Company Secretary, Cllr Denham St. Pinnock presented the accounts and moved that they be accepted.

Following a question from the floor Cllr Denham St. Pinnock advised that there are long-term plans to extend the training and to offer help and support to the District Associations using reserves. He reported that WSALC had commissioned a professional company to produce a promotional video for member councils to use in their campaigns to attract new councillors.

The accounts were **APPROVED** and **ADOPTED**.

Total votes: for – 34; against – 0; abstain - 0)

6. To note the current Directors appointed by the District Associations.

The Chairman referred to the list of WSALC Directors, circulated with the agenda and noted that the current Directors are:

Mike Mendoza	Adur District Association
Alison Cooper	Arun District Association
Michael Tu	Arun District Association
Charles Britton	Chichester District Association
Andrew Shaxson	Chichester District Association
Amanda Tait	Chichester District Association
Malcolm Eastwood	Horsham District Association
Val Court	Horsham District Association
Douglas Denham St Pinnock	Mid Sussex District Association
Martin Sheldon	Mid Sussex District Association

7. Election of Representatives to the National Association (NALC) for 2023/2024

Cllr Douglas Denham St. Pinnock, Cllr Malcolm Eastwood and Trevor Leggo were proposed as representatives to NALC.

Cllr Douglas Denham St. Pinnock, Cllr Malcolm Eastwood and Trevor Leggo were duly **ELECTED** as representatives to NALC for 2023/2024.

Total votes: for – 34; against – 0; abstain – 0

8. Any other matters

No other matters raised.

The Rt. Hon. Earl of Lytton DL thanked all those that attended and closed the meeting by extending his gratitude to Cllr Denham St. Pinnock, the Board of Directors, all Officers and Councillors within town and parish councils, Trevor Leggo, Anna Beams, Mark Mulberry and the team at Surrey Hills for their hard work and dedication to the sector.

10:13 meeting closed.

Signed

Name

Date

Appendix A

WSALC Chairs Report

Trevor has submitted a full annual report accompanied by an extensive synopsis of all the services and training offered by WSALC. I would like to thank Trevor on behalf of everyone here for the tremendous work he does for all our Town and Parish Councils. Trevor acts in a similar capacity for the Town and Parish Councils across East Sussex and I am pleased to say I will attend the East Sussex AGM on 14th November in the spirit of many shared interests. My counterpart in East Sussex, Keith Stevens, who is also the Chair of the National Association, has covid so is unable to attend today. He caught covid at the Labour Party Conference having previously attended the Conservative Party Conference. Keith has worked tirelessly with government throughout the year lobbying in our interests. At present he is the only candidate for re-election to the NALC Chair. We wish him success and a speedy recovery. Whilst I am referring to the National Association, where I have attended most of its meetings during the year, we have just lost one of the battles we have been fighting.

I was not surprised to see the House of Commons vote on Wednesday night to support a government motion to overturn the House of Lords amendment to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill on remote meetings. Peers had previously voted in favour of a new clause in the Bill at the Report Stage, giving councils the flexibility to hold remote and hybrid council meetings. This is among the many issues NALC's president, Baroness Scott of Needham Market, has been championing throughout the Bill's passage. Ahead of yesterday's debate, NALC had briefed MPs to make the case again for why councils should be given this power, with several Conservative MPs, including Greg Smith MP, Buckingham, and Sir Peter Bottomley MP, Worthing West, speaking in favour of the move, citing our briefing and evidence gathered during our survey of councils last year. Speaking for the opposition, Matthew Pennycook MP, Greenwich & Woolwich, also voiced their support. In her reply, Rachel Maclean MP, Redditch, a parished constituency and minister of state for housing and planning, said, "It is our strong view that one of the core principles of local democracy is that citizens can attend council meetings to interact in person with their local representatives. There are no limits placed on authorities broadcasting their meetings online, and we disagree that councillors should be able to attend those meetings and cast their votes remotely. It is important that they are present, active participants in local democracy. Therefore, the government are not able to support Lords amendment 22".

I am not going to take much time on the other subject on which we continue to lobby government – the lack of sanctions for poor behaviour by Town and Parish Councillors. Trevor has devoted part of his report to the subject and suffice to say work continues at National level. I will say that it depresses me that we should even have such problems and I am aware just how much time is spent on this issue by Trevor, myself, by Malcolm Eastwood our Vice Chair and by Keith Stevens in East Sussex. The financial costs incurred by District Council Monitoring Officers is beyond belief and yet they are powerless without enforcement of any sanction. Usually it is our Clerks who bear the burden of poor behaviour and for them it is often personally destructive and for their Councils likely to result in either the expense of replacing a resigning Clerk or facing an Industrial Tribunal.

When I was first elected Chair of WSALC 30 months ago I made it my priority to ensure that Clerks were acknowledged and represented as the most important people in Town and Parish Councils. The Board is

attended by either Julie Holden from East Grinstead or Sarah Norman from North Horsham and we value their attendance and contribution. I am delighted to announce that the Society of Local Council Clerks has nominated West Sussex Association of Local Councils for National Association Council of the Year Award. Trevor and I will attend the Ceremony in the House of Lords on 29th November and if we are fortunate enough to win I will use my acceptance speech in front of assembled MPs and Peers to highlight the issue of Lack of Sanctions.

I want to turn to the District Associations. As far as I am concerned these should be the beating heart of the County Association. But with one exception they are not. Credit should be given to the West Sussex Association Vice Chair, Malcolm Eastwood, for transforming the Horsham Association over the last two years. Every Parish in the District is a member and attendance at meetings is overwhelming. The District is embedded in the Association and the Association in the District. Officers and Members of Horsham District are in regular contact with each other and attend meetings together. I am told the Chief Executive calls Malcolm and asks how the Parishes will react to proposals. In short it is a win, win relationship.

At this meeting last year members agreed to change our Mems and Arts to give Chichester Association a third Board member on West Sussex Association to reflect nearly 65 Parishes, the vast area and its great differences in geography. I am pleased that Chichester Association has elected a third member and the Association is once again starting to rise to the challenges unique to the District. Arun District is another story. I attended the Association AGM late last year and the morning's promise when the Chief Executive offered all sorts of engagement was dashed when, in the afternoon, he resigned. Arun District is still currently without a single Chief Executive and has mounting problems many of which impact on the Parishes. Our Board member and Arun Association chair, Michael Tu, is rebuilding relationships with support from Trevor.

This Wednesday Trevor and I attended the first meeting with Mid Sussex since before the elections and met a chief officer, new in post, who has come from the London Borough of Waltham Forest, where there are no Parish Councils. Whilst I wouldn't say we were pushing at an open door, at least the door was ajar. There is still much to be done before we can restore the good practices I understand existed at least four years ago.

If every Parish in all four District Associations was to attend its Association meetings and work to gain the confidence and the trust of the District Council the Associations would become much stronger and act collectively on issues that impact upon each Parish individually whether it be planning, recreation, waste collection and at County level roads, education and library services.

At the July Board meeting it was agreed to increase the County Association's funding of District Associations to £1,000 per annum, on top of retained balances and subscriptions levied by some. The purpose of this is to give the District Associations the ability to host in person events and bring the District Councils along too. Please always include your Clerks in these District Association meetings. There is nothing worse than a Clerk receiving a notice of an Association meeting and simply acting as a post box to the elected Association reps yet knowing that as Clerk it is not their business ... take it from me it is absolutely their business and they should be heard.

Finally, as you will shortly see, West Sussex Association is in a good position both financially and with some active and dedicated Board members. It plays its part in supporting its members from the smallest rural parishes to the largest Town Councils, it is actively supporting a renaissance of its District Associations and

it is working both with 40 plus County Officers around the country and with the National Association to do its best for all its members. I thank you all who have taken the time to attend today; spread the word amongst your neighbours that once a year it is worth coming to the West Sussex Association AGM.

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