



West Sussex ALC Ltd.
Minutes of the Virtual Board Meeting of West Sussex ALC Ltd. held on
Thursday 9th February 2023 at 2:30pm by Zoom

Attendance

Cllr Douglas Denham St Pinnock, Chairman, Mid Sussex District Association
Cllr Michael Tu, Arun District Association
Cllr Alison Cooper, Arun District Association
Cllr Tim Russell, Chichester District Association
Cllr Charles Britton, Chichester District Association
Cllr Malcolm Eastwood, Horsham District Association
Cllr Martin Sheldon, Mid Sussex District Association
Mark Mulberry, Company Secretary
Trevor Leggo, CEO WSALC Ltd.
Sarah Norman, Clerk's Representative, Society of Local Council Clerks (Sussex Branch)
Anna Beams, Secretary to the Board

Cllr Andrew Shaxson, SDNPA Representative

1. Apologies for absence

Received and accepted from Cllr Donald Mahon and Julie Holden. Not present, Cllr Mike Mendoza.

2. To approve the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 13th October 2022

The Minutes were **APPROVED** as a true record.

3. Financial update

Mark Mulberry referred to his report circulated with the agenda [appendix A](#)

The Chairman **PROPOSED** that a sum of reserves is allocated to a subsidised training programme for Councillors following local elections in May.

It was **AGREED** that discussions in respect of the above proposal are delegated to the Chairman, Trevor Leggo and Mark Mulberry.

It was **AGREED** to accept a proposal received from Mulberry & Co to continue support services to WSALC for the financial year 2023-24.

4. CEO update

The CEO updated the Board in the following matters:

- a) Trevor notified the Board of the sad news that Pauline Whitehead has passed away after a short illness. Pauline was a well-respected clerk to North Horsham Parish Council and CiLCA and Community Governance trainer and mentor and will be greatly missed by her colleagues and friends. The Board and Officers of WSALC send their deepest condolences to Pauline's friends and family.
- b) Clerk vacancies
The following clerk vacancies have recently been filled or become available in West Sussex:
 - East Wittering Parish Council, 3 candidates, 2 interviewed, appointment made
 - Lynchmere Parish Council, 17 applicants, 5 interviewed, appointment made
 - Graffham Parish Council, one candidate and appointed
 - Petworth Parish Council, Clerk vacancy, existing Clerk remaining as part time RFO
- c) Police
Focus Groups will resume on 15th May until 1st June, they will be face to face.
Dates for clusters will be agreed with host location and invitations to parishes will be sent shortly.
The PCC Annual Report has been published and is available on the website.
- d) Forums
WSALC Clerk and chairmen forums still remain popular. The Clerks forum took place on 16th January and Chairman's on 25th January. The main topic of discussion was election arrangements for May 2023.
- e) Resilience Planning
Dee Thornton has sent an executive summary to all clerks outlining the contents of the Resilience Plan template available to purchase at £120, content can be customised for each parish. Since becoming available on 24th January, 8 councils have purchased a plan.
- f) Code of conduct
In the majority of CALCs there is disquiet that NALC seems to be doing very little to persuade government to restore sanctions, there seems to be no actual strategy, simply 'mentioning' it to ministers and civil servants when the opportunity arises. Extreme poor behaviour by a few councillors creates reputational damage and will dissuade candidates.
- g) Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)
LNRS is a statutory requirement contained in the Environment Act 2021. Trevor recently met with a firm who have been commissioned by East & West Sussex County Councils to develop a strategy on who to involve across Sussex. He has been asked to suggest the best way to engage with local councils and gain their participation. He explained to the firm that with elections looming there needed to be careful thought about timing. Discussions are ongoing.

5. Councillors Video Creative

The CEO advised the Board that good progress has been made in producing a video for attracting prospective Councillors as delegated to himself and the Chairman.

A Social Media company based in Brighton, 'Wild Stag', have been appointed to undertake the project at a cost of £9,940. The cost will be shared with ESALC.

A Working Group consisting of the CEO, the Chairman, Cllr Malcolm Eastwood (Vice Chair), Julie Holden, Steve Trice (Clerk to Haywards Heath Town Council) and Anna Beams met with Wild Stag in January when detailed discussions were held and a clear brief was provided.

Three Councillors have agreed to be filmed on location in their towns or villages illustrating what motivated them to become Councillors and their achievements. The Councillors consist of the youngest Councillor in Sussex (Bexhill-on-sea Town Council), the Deputy Mayor of Newhaven who is an advocate for mental health awareness and a young mother from Storrington Parish Council.

The first cut of the video will be available to view on 22nd February and will be shared with Board Members.

The intention is that the video will be posted on YouTube and other social media platforms appropriate to the target age groups from 1st March 2023. The video will be available beyond the elections in May for use during co-options for example.

6. Reports by District Associations

a) Adur:

The CEO explained that he recently undertook a visioning exercise at Sompting Parish Council and the main issues at both Sompting and Lancing Parish Councils are increasing youth crime. Discussions are being held with Sussex Police on ways to combat this.

b) Arun:

Cllr Michael Tu reported that a members' conference is being hosted by ADALC on 2nd March at Arundel Town Hall. Three senior Directors from Arun District Council and Emily King (Assistant Director of Communities, WSCC) will be speaking at the conference. Members have been invited to attend the event free of charge.

c) Chichester:

Cllr Charles Britton advised that the main focus for parishes within the district is elections and how the town and parish councils can retain the Councillors that they have.

He added that he would like to encourage parishes to engage with the CDALC Steering Group proposal put forward by the Vice Chair of CDALC, Cllr Andrew Shaxson. No further progress has been made in the formation of a Steering Group.

A third representative to the WSALC Board has not yet been appointed.

d) Horsham:

Cllr Malcom Eastwood updated the Board on the following:

- Two Climate Change Workshops took place before Christmas.

- A WhatsApp group and a group on the WSCC Knowledge Hub have been established following the workshops and it is encouraging that there has been good dialogue within the groups.
- Two Wilder Horsham Ecology Workshops have taken place recently, 80% of member councils within the district attended.
- HALC and HDC are sponsoring both initiatives together.
- HDC has appointed a third Leader in 18 months.
- HALC will hold its next meeting on 22nd February.
- A meeting of an inter parish group will take place next week. The group consists of parishes on the boundary of Horsham and Mid Sussex and the meeting is being held to discuss the dual threats of the Local Plan.

e) **Mid Sussex:**

The Chairman advised that he was appointed as Chairman of MSALC in September last year and that activities are mainly suspended until after the elections in May. He added that Center Parcs have withdrawn their application to develop a holiday park in Worth Forest.

f) The Chairman invited the Clerks representative, Sarah Norman, to report any matters to the Board.

Sarah advised that Clerks are concerned that they will be unable to recruit sufficient Councillors at the elections. She added that it is imperative that the correct people are recruited and that they receive training as soon as possible following their appointment.

15:27 Mark Mulberry left the meeting

7. **Planning Associate**

The CEO explained that WSALC have always appointed a Planning Associate in the past who was available to call upon as required to provide guidance and advice.

Steve Tilbury has submitted a proposal to provide such services at a retainer cost of £250 per year plus £60 per hour for work undertaken on behalf of local councils. Steve has an extensive background within the sector and currently provides planning training to WSALC members through Mulberry & Co.

Additionally, the Chairman of Aldingbourne Parish Council has requested that Steve Tilbury is appointed by WSALC to produce a paper of draft responses to the Government National Planning Policy Consultation to be shared amongst member councils.

The CEO advised that he has received a quote from Steve Tilbury to produce the requested paper of c.£1,400, equating to approximately three days' work.

Following discussions it was **AGREED** to appoint Steve Tilbury at the terms within the proposal.

It was further **AGREED** to appoint Steve to produce a paper of draft responses to the Government National Planning Policy Consultation based on the following:

- Steve to provide responses only to the generic questions within the consultation and not those questions which are individual to each council. Steve will be asked to identify which questions he deems to be generic.
- The cost of producing the paper is not to exceed £1,400.

8. SDNPA Report

Cllr Andrew Shaxson began by explaining that a third CDALC representative has not yet been appointed as a meeting of CDALC has not taken place since October last year. He added that he has proposed that a CDALC Steering Group is formed and, although he has consulted member councils he has had little response. He will circulate a reminder.

Cllr Andrew Shaxson then referred to his report previously circulated ([appendix B](#)).

He added that plans should be put in place now for the forthcoming SDNPA elections. The CEO advised that, in the past, WSALC have facilitated the elections with Ian Davison acting as the Returning Officer. WSALC have not yet been approached and the CEO suggested that he contacts the Authority to discuss.

9. Matters for discussion not on the agenda

No matters raised.

10. Future meetings

To be confirmed but expected approximately one month after elections in May.

16:09 Meeting closed.

Signed (Chairman) _____

Dated __APPROVED AT MEETING HELD ON 21st APRIL 2023_____

APPENDIX A

WSALC Limited – Management Accounts Reporting for the quarter to 31st December 2022.

The association continues to move forward through 2022/23 with a strong financial footing with closing reserves anticipated to be circa £81k after a £24k surplus for the year. Our subscription income is £93.6k per annum so reserves will be a little high at the year-end date when comparing to the rule of thumb (50% income) we ask our members to operate at.

I don't anticipate any significant costs for the remainder of the year unless the board makes other plans.

Looking to the future I continue to propose only 2% nominal increase in subscriptions, which politically our members will appreciate in these times of rising costs and financial uncertainty.

I know in the past the board has muted the point of subsidising training for councillors – with our increasing reserves the association is certainly in the position of being able to implement some top down project work.

Income

Subscription income is £93,660 of which £545.09 remains unpaid as at the management accounts date. The original budget was for £81,083.

Expenditure

The costs incurred to date are £78,223 against a total year end budget of £95,165.

All costs are listed within this pack.

Bank & Cash Balances

At the 30th December there was £53,590 in the current account and £50,086 in the deposit account.

Year End Forecast

It is anticipated that there will be a surplus of £24,445 at the year-end date. This will be subject to change as the year progresses and depending also on board decisions re future spending.

Future Forecasts

Based on an annual 2% increase, the surplus would be circa £25k-£30k each year after allowing for £5k = £10k on special projects spending for the benefit of the membership.

I would therefore propose the following charges per elector

2023/24 £0.3122 per elector	{income circa £95.3k}
2024/24 £0.3185p per elector	{income circa £97.2K}
2024/25 £0.3248p per elector	{income circa £99.1K}

Reserves

The associations reserves position is as listed below:

31-03-22	£56,119 (actual)
30-06-22	£163,607 (actual)
30-09-22	£118,474 (actual)
31-12-22	£103,696
31-03-23	£80,565 (forecast)

APPENDIX B

SDNPA report for WSALC 9th Feb 2023

My apologies for the lateness of this report – I have a planning committee meeting in the morning of your WSALC board meeting but will aim to be with you to answer any points you might raise. As I have previously reported, the SDNPA has reacted quickly to both the flat-cash grant received from its paymasters DEFRA for the past four years and the more recent inflationary pressures. DEFRA had said that we would by now have clarification of what our grant for 2023-24 will be – but as I write this they are silent. We are assuming that there will be no change this year and that there will be an appreciable reduction next year.

We have no mature sources of income such as car parks, either to maximise income, or as some NPs have been forced to do, sell. As I previously reported the staff have been reduced by about 15%, and consequently we can neither facilitate or support as many projects as we would have liked. We had a budget workshop on 31st January and it indicated that as a result of forethought we can work through a limited downturn. If the rate of grant is on a long-term downward slope there will have to be some further serious thought about what has to be done. We have a trading arm that currently consists mostly of the facilities at the Seven Sisters Country Park (SSCP) but as it is still being set up, a positive income stream is for the future.

The SSCP is a prime location for getting people into, enjoying and appreciating the SDNP. Situated on the A 259 between Newhaven and Eastbourne it can not only provide an enjoyable experience for a local large population but its sheer size can absorb a lot of people without it appearing crowded. It provides the SDNP with the opportunity to fulfil one of its major requirements to be a 'National Park for All'. We aim to encourage people who wouldn't normally visit such places to not only enjoy but to understand the ethos of the SDNP, positively appreciate it, and come back many times.

Back to the real world, and planning delivery gets no easier. Whilst the SDNP doesn't have the worry of trying to find half-suitable locations for the thousands of new homes our neighbours are faced with, we have our own issues, not helped by the long-standing and worsening shortage of planning - and enforcement – officers. This shortage is a major reason for the 5 year review of our Local Plan having to be delayed, though fortunately we are not required to have a five year land supply.

The West Sussex parishes have been circulated to make them aware of the parishes meeting that will be held at Midhurst on 15th March. I have to report that the turnout at the last meeting was very poor – potentially each of the 87 parishes wholly or partially in the West Sussex part of the SDNP could send 2 delegates but fewer than 30 turned up. It wasn't a distance issue as a number of those who were there came a long way, whereas as a graphic example Midhurst Town Council was notable by its absence. This might indicate that parishes are content, or are they complacent and prepared to remain uninformed? It isn't only CDALC that have attendance issues.

Andrew Shaxson