

Mid Sussex District Association of Local Councils (MSALC)

Chair: Cllr Douglas Denham St Pinnock (West Hoathly Parish Council)
Clerk: Anna Beams, Mulberry & Co, 9 Pound Lane, Godalming, GU7 1BX
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Minutes of the AGM of Mid Sussex District Association of Local Councils held on Wednesday 21st September 2022 at 6.30pm by Zoom.

Present:

Cllr Jenny Forbes	Ashurst Wood Village Council
Cllr Alison Stevenson	Balcombe Parish Council
Charlotte Jim	Balcombe Parish Council
Cllr Annabel Moir	Bolney Parish Council
Cllr Martin Sheldon	Cuckfield Parish Council (Vice Chair)
Cllr Julie Mockford	East Grinstead Town Council
Cllr Lucy Mehta	Fulking Parish Council
Cllr Kristian Berggreen	Hassocks Parish Council
Cllr Matt Jeffers	Haywards Heath Town Council
Cllr Allan Brown	Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council
Cllr Rodney Jackson	Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council
Cllr Douglas Denham St Pinnock	West Hoathly Parish Council (Chairman)
Cllr Martin Robinson	West Hoathly Parish Council
Cllr Ian Gibson	Worth Parish Council
Trevor Leggo	West Sussex Association of Local Councils, CEO
Anna Beams	Secretary

1. Welcome & Apologies

In the absence of the current Chairman and as Chairman of WSALC, Cllr Denham St Pinnock took the Chair, welcomed members and opened the meeting. Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor Bruce Forbes (Turners Hill Parish Council).

2. Election of Officers of MSALC:

- **Chairman** – Cllr Jeffers proposed **Cllr Douglas Denham St Pinnock**, seconded by Cllrs Robinson and Gibson, unanimously **AGREED**
- **Vice Chair** – Cllr Denham St Pinnock proposed **Cllr Martin Sheldon**, seconded by Cllrs Jeffers and Berggreen, unanimously **AGREED**
- **Secretary & Treasurer** – These are executive posts and were appointed at a previous meeting

3. Election of representatives to the WSALC Board

Cllr Robinson proposed **Cllr Douglas Denham St Pinnock**, seconded by Cllr Jeffers, unanimously **AGREED**

Cllr Denham St Pinnock proposed **Cllr Martin Sheldon**, seconded by Cllr Brown, unanimously **AGREED**

4. Approval of Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24TH February 2022

The Minutes were approved as a true and correct record of the meeting held on 24th February 2022.

5. Finance report:

- Anna Beams explained that the MSALC bank account had been frozen in September 2021 due to inactivity and had subsequently been closed by the bank. A cheque has been received for the balance of £1,195.37.
- After an open discussion it was **AGREED** that Anna Beams and Trevor Leggo would research and open a new bank account as soon as possible.
- **Cllrs Annabel Moir, Matt Jeffers and Rodney Jackson** were **AGREED** as signatories.
- It was **AGREED** that the annual subscription rate would remain at £20.

6. To receive an update from Trevor Leggo, CEO of WSALC

Trevor Leggo provided an update on the following:

- a) Resilience Plans: Trevor continues to encourage all parishes to produce a robust resilience plan. He is piloting a support scheme in West Sussex with the use of a professional who can be appointed by a member council to draft a plan on their behalf at a cost of £50 per hour.
- b) Warm Hubs: Trevor is encouraging Village Halls to provide warm hubs for members of their community facing a cost-of-living crisis. He suggests that parish councils could provide grants to the halls to cover costs over the winter. He appreciates that it may not be possible for all halls to be able to accommodate this due to ongoing regular bookings.
- c) Elections: WSALC plan to run promotional 'Becoming a Councillor' sessions in early 2023. Clerks will be asked to promote the sessions in their community through their regular channels and the District Councils will also be approached to assist in promotion of the events.
- d) Police Briefing: An MS Teams briefing for Mid-Sussex parishes on the strategy and priorities for policing the district will be delivered by Chief Inspector Nick Dias on Tuesday 11th October at 2pm. It will be followed by a Q&A session and members are encouraged to attend.
- e) Police Focus Groups: The next round of Police Focus Groups will be held on 24th November, invitations have been sent to clerks.

The Chairman thanked Trevor for the work he has undertaken to build a good relationship with the Police to the benefit of member councils. He added that WSALC has been nominated for a NALC award in recognition of the arrangements and joint ventures with the Police.

- f) Conference: In line with other district associations, Trevor hopes that WSALC and MSALC can facilitate a joint conference with the District Council. He suggested that the Leader and Chief Executive MSDC could be invited to talk at MSALC meetings to establish a relationship between the two.

7. Services by WSALC & NALC

Trevor Leggo reported that the WSALC Board has approved a schedule of WSALC functions (*APPENDIX A*). There were no further comments.

8. To consider any items raised by member councils

No further items were raised.

9. Date and format of the next meeting

Wednesday 18th January 2023 @ 6.30pm

Meeting closed at 19:14

Signed:

Date:

DRAFT

APPENDIX A

CEO's report to the WSALC AGM

In reflecting upon the year from April 2021, we started in the aftermath of a period of confusion and uncertainty over the future of WSALC which quickly settled down to the arrangements we now have in place. This has been achieved through the loyalty and understanding of member councils, the guidance and direction of the WSALC Chairman and the Board but on a day-to-day basis with the excellent support of Anna Beams and Mark Mulberry.

As we approach the end of the four-year term and seek new candidates for local councils, I believe it might be useful to remind existing councillors of the wide range of activities and involvement WSALC undertakes on behalf of its membership.

What we do in West Sussex

Advice up to 7.30pm each day when required and for urgent matters outside the normal working week, principally

- General procedural, governance and employment matters
- Legal support, either referred to NALC or for urgent matters to a firm of solicitors under a retainer arrangement as part of Mulberry & Co's service contract
- Finance advice from Mulberry & Co.
- Planning guidance, available from our Planning Associate by arrangement

Training – full programme to cover needs of Chairmen, Councillors and Clerks

- Programme set out on WSALC website, available as open sessions or bespoke for individual councils
- Preparation for new councillor induction in May 2023 [In 2019 post-election over 40 sessions took place across Sussex]

Communications

- Website – our main method of conveying information from Government, NALC and other agencies
- Newsletter – electronic, sent out for Clerks to share with councillors containing matters of local and national interest
- Forum sessions for Clerks and Chairmen to discuss matters of concern and be briefed on current issues.

District Associations

- To facilitate an effective DALC in each District Council area and aim for a consistency of approach through a common approach to the Secretariat.

Collection of income

- Subscription income is the life blood of WSALC and its receipt ensures we can continue to provide the services our member councils require; unlike some County Associations WSALC does not take any contribution from County or District Councils thus ensuring independence

Conflict resolution

- It is an unfortunate fact that many of the issues encountered by parishes result from councillors in dispute with each other or with the Clerk. A pragmatic approach to resolving tensions can often be achieved by the CEO working with councillors, drawing on HR advice as required.
- Grievance and Complaints investigation – the CEO can arrange for a suitably experienced independent person to work with a council to ensure procedures are adhered to.
- WSALC supports the NALC / SLCC 'Civility and Respect' programme designed to assist councillors to behave in a way that does not offend others.

Recruitment

- WSALC has built up a knowledge base to assist councils with the recruitment of staff; detailed records are maintained of the level of interest around each vacancy and the number of applications received. Pay levels for vacancies are retained and assist councils to recognise market forces when a vacancy arises.
- When a council has agreed the terms of appointment WSALC will advertise the vacancy on its website
- If requested the CEO will produce a critique on the applications received and attend interviews to assist the recruitment panel with the terms and conditions of appointment.
- When an appointment has been made, WSALC can take up references and draft the Contract of employment.

Business Planning

- Visioning and objective setting, this process assists councils to engage with residents and share thoughts on future direction of council priorities. Having agreed objectives makes it easier to monitor performance and undertake staff appraisals.

Borrowing for capital projects

- If a council wishes to seek Borrowing Approval from the Secretary of State the application must be submitted via WSALC CEO who will provide guidance on the process with 'hints and tips'.
- The CEO will monitor the progress of an application, currently taking up to 6 months before the SoFS makes a decision.

Engagement with principal authorities

- Where a council might be in dispute with the County or its District Council, WSALC CEO will discuss it with the Chairman and if appropriate arrange to speak to the CEO of WSCC or the DC.
- A constructive dialogue exists between WSALC and the principal authorities in West Sussex and improvements in relationship between DALCs and DCs is emerging.

Advice on creation of new councils or merging existing councils

- From time to time a community will petition for a Community Governance Review and WSALC CEO is required to advise those who might make an approach.

Engagement with Sussex Police and the PCC at all levels

- Regular engagement with the Chief Constable and District Commanders helps ensure that operational policing concerns of member councils are dealt with at the highest level.
- PCC / WSALC / ESALC Focus Groups with local councils and communities attended by the CEO is a way of providing those communities with a means of getting their concerns to the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable. CEO also attends the Business Crime Group with the aim of protecting vulnerable rural and farm shops across Sussex
- The CEO sits on the Police Engagement Group, set up to ensure all communities receive equal attention from PCSOs who need to show how / when they contact local council Clerks through agreed Patrol Plans.
- The CEO is currently Chair of the Police Contact Improvement Group, a team of 20 people from all sectors across Sussex including local councillors and clerks, established to advise on the effectiveness of public contact with the police. It is intended to ensure that everyone receives the same satisfactory outcome irrespective of their ability / disability or the method used.
- The development of this relationship means that requests from WSALC for attention in a particular community is taken seriously by the police.

Support for the Board

- Preparation of agendas and reports
- Production of minutes and action arising from decisions
- Attendance as required at District Association meetings

Engagement with NALC

- CALC Chairmen attend NALC Assembly once a quarter, the CEO meets with NALC staff and colleagues around the country twice a month to share concerns and learn from each other.

Engagement with West Sussex Civilian & Military Partnership Board

- With 42,000 military veterans in West Sussex, the County Council has the CMPB where a representative of each Borough or District, Regular and Reserve Forces, Cadet Forces, NHS, Service Charities meet to uphold the Military Covenant; WSALC CEO also has a seat on the Board. Maintains awareness of grant availability for local groups and parish councils.
- The CEO Chairs the Events and Engagement Group which monitors commemorative events and if a local council requires a uniformed presence, this is secured by the CEO using military contacts.
- The CEO has held an Army Reserve Commission, albeit many years ago and invited by South East Reserve Forces and Cadets Association to represent East and West SALC on the Sussex Reserve Forces & Cadets Committee

Resilience Plans

- Encourage all local councils to develop a plan designed to assist with the preservation of local critical services at times of need.
- This will not be a substitute for plans the District or County may implement but address very local issues.

Organise the election of parish representatives to the National Park

- All parishes wholly or partially within the SDNP are entitled to nominate representatives to serve on the NP Board, elections every four years and possible bye elections in between; SSALC manages the process for SDNP in calling for candidates and conducting the postal ballot election.

SERCAF

- A group of nine counties in the south east containing 1600 local councils, CEO coordinates its activities by agreeing content for discussion and arranging meetings.

Arrange locum Clerk to support councils at times of need

- A database of those willing to locum as Clerks in West Sussex is maintained and, when required names are offered to councils with a need.

Trevor Leggo

CEO, West Sussex Associations of Local Councils

August 2022