



West Sussex ALC Ltd.
Minutes of the Virtual Board Meeting of West Sussex ALC Ltd. held on
Friday 16th July 2021 at 2:30pm by Zoom

Attendance

Cllr Douglas Denham St Pinnock, Chairman, Mid Sussex District Association

Cllr Tony Nicklen, Adur District Association

Cllr Tim Russell, Chichester District Association

Cllr Charles Britton, Chichester District Association

Cllr Donald Mahon, Horsham District Association

Cllr Jon Millbanks, Mid Sussex District Association

Mark Mulberry, Company Secretary

Trevor Leggo, CEO WSALC Ltd.

Julie Holden, Chairman, Society of Local Council Clerks (Sussex Branch)

Mandy Jameson, Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner

Anna Beams, Mulberry and Co (clerk)

1. Apologies for absence

Received from John Godfrey DL, John Lytton DL, Cllr Martin Beaton, Cllr Malcolm Eastwood and Cllr Alison Cooper.

2. To approve the minutes of meeting held on 30th April 2021

The minutes were approved as a true record of the meeting held on 30th April 2021.

3. WSALC, ESALC & Surrey ALC update

WSALC: The CEO referred to his report previously circulated. He aired his concern that he believes that the Association risks losing members at the end of the current year due to lack of networking opportunities and face to face contact by the WSALC team and Board. He is particularly concerned that newer members will not understand the function of the Association.

He suggested three examples of tangible services and projects that could add value to membership:

- Engagement with Sussex Police and Police Focus Groups
- To re-visit the WSALC Health & Wellbeing Report commissioned in 2017 post-Covid
- Encourage member parishes to facilitate Armed Force Covenant Breakfast Clubs

The Chairman requested that the CEO bring some suggestions to the Board regarding developing the Health & Wellbeing Report in partnership with the County and District Councils and with particular emphasis on mental health. He further suggested that the report could be developed in association with ESALC.

ACTION The CEO to prepare a report for the Board to include his suggestions to re-invigorate the Health and Wellbeing Report.

ESALC: The CEO reported that there are several common initiatives emerging between WSALC and ESALC including a joint meeting with the Chief Constable of Sussex Police which took place on 5th July, engagement with the Chief Executive of Ashdown Forest and coastal town and High Street regeneration and funding. The Chairman added that he would like to engage with the Chief Executive of Ashdown Forest along with the CEO and Chairman of ESALC.

ACTION: Jamie Adler (Ashdown Forest), CEO and the Chairmen of WSALC and ESALC to meet to discuss levelling up funding and future joint working.

ACTION: CEO to prepare a list for the Board of those coastal towns in need of funding.

Surrey ALC: The CEOs of WSALC and Surrey communicate regularly and share information.

4. Financial update

Mark Mulberry referred to his report previously circulated. He reported that WSALC is in a good financial position with reserves remaining adequate. The majority of debts have now been paid and WSALC currently have circa £98,000 in the bank. He anticipates that the Association will close the financial year in March 2022 with circa £67,000 in the bank with a surplus of circa £20,000. He recommends a maximum subscription increase for 2022-23 of 2% which allows for an ongoing surplus of approximately £17,000 to £20,000 available to use for projects.

It was **AGREED** to include an item on the agenda for the next Board meeting recommending a 2% subscription increase.

At the Chairman's discretion, agenda item 7 was discussed next.

7. Recruitment

The CEO advised that Clerks are in short supply and referred to a paper written by the Vice-Chair of WSALC, Cllr Martin Beaton, offering suggestions as to how to increase the supply of applicants. The CEO reported that there is a lack of awareness of the role of Clerk and the function of a Parish Council. He suggested that WSALC could record briefing sessions or webinars in association with the local SLCC branch and ESALC, delivered by the CEO.

A WSALC academy was also suggested at no extra cost as it would be delivered by the CEO as part of his current role.

Cllr Nicklen suggested vacancy leaflets and employment services such as job centres in order to increase awareness of vacancies. He further suggested that school leavers could be appointed by councils and stated that he would like to explore apprenticeships.

The CEO explained the role of apprenticeships and pointed out that apprentices cannot work alone which could prove problematic for councils that are employers of a single member of staff.

Cllr Donald Mahon added that he believes that recruitment of clerks should be an ongoing Board agenda and that it is reasonable to use some WSALC funding towards it.

It was **AGREED** that a Working Group will be formed comprising of Cllrs Martin Beaton, Tony Nicklen and Donald Mahon to take the matter forward.

5. Service delivery arrangements

The CEO reported that he is pleased with the service provided by Mulberry and Co which is being delivered in a very professional manner and that all telephone calls and emails are responded to promptly.

6. Training update

Anna Beams referred to the training report previously circulated to members, highlighting that Breakthrough Communications have been appointed to deliver social media, data protection and communications training. Booking numbers continue to rise, there is a high demand for bespoke training for individual councils and feedback has been excellent.

Following a query from Cllr Nicklen it was explained that bookings are being received from smaller as well as larger member councils although bespoke training tends to be requested by larger councils. It was further explained that neighbouring councils can cluster together to book bespoke training, although it was suggested that this may not be clear on the WSALC website. Anna Beams agreed to update the website to reflect this.

It was further suggested that face to face training should begin to be introduced to the programme to encourage networking.

ACTION: Anna Beams to update the WSALC website to reflect the ability of neighbouring councils to cluster together to book bespoke training.

15.20 Julie Holden joined the meeting

8. NALC engagement

The CEO advised the Board that he continues to attend fortnightly remote NALC meetings and provided the following updates:

- NALC have recommended a 1% subscription increase for 2022-23
- Discussions have been held regarding the implications for local councils after the relaxation of restrictions on 19th July
- Discussions have been held on the implications for councils that continue to hold remote meetings
- NALC have appointed Breakthrough Communications as GDPR and Data Protection advisors
- NALC have advised that the LGA are calling for evidence of incidences of harassment from members of the public towards Parish Councillors
- NALC currently have no plans to hold meetings in person

Following a query from the Chairman, the CEO advised that NALC pay expenses to those that attend face to face meetings, including rail fare and accommodation. He was unsure of the current mileage travel rate paid by NALC.

The Chairman added that he finds the information received from NALC very useful and that they do an excellent job.

9. Reports by District Associations

- a) Adur: Cllr Nicklen advised that no meeting has taken place since the last Board meeting however Lancing Parish Council have endorsed that Cllr Nicklen continue as a Director on the WSALC Board and that any matters are raised directly with him. He had no matters to report other than training which was raised under item 6.
- b) Arun: The CEO explained that three of the District Associations are currently in the process of appointing Mulberry and Co to provide secretariat services. Horsham DALC have completed the appointment and have a meeting scheduled for 4th August, Arun DALC are in the process of completing the appointment and Mid Sussex DALC have not yet started the appointment process.
- c) Chichester: Cllr Russell reported that a meeting is scheduled for 26th July to introduce and agree the new constitution. Cllr Britton added that much of the information received from Chichester District Council was not relevant to those not within the National Park other than Planning. Following the introduction of the Local Plan, properties within the National Park can only be replaced with properties of the same size. A design guide has also been introduced to ensure that new developments are based on designs similar to those currently within the Park.

The matter of Parish Online was raised by Cllr Tim Russell following his attendance at the recent WSALC Clerks Forum where a representative from Parish Online discussed future funding by WSALC towards member councils' licenses. The CEO explained that he has approached the Chichester District Association with a view to CDALC funding the licenses on behalf of their members. The licenses would be discounted by 50% by Parish Online if this option was taken. The options in full are:

1. WSALC to purchase the licenses on behalf of all member councils across West Sussex at a discounted rate and recoup the fee
2. The District Associations to purchase the licenses on behalf of all member councils within the district and recoup the fee
3. The parishes themselves to pay for the licenses directly

The Board **AGREED** that option 1 is the preferred option and, as there is a deadline for renewing the agreement, it was further **AGREED** that the CEO would prepare a report to issue to the Board as a matter of urgency.

ACTION: CEO to prepare a report regarding Parish Online to circulate to the Board

- d) Horsham: Cllr Donald Mahon advised that under new Chairmanship post 8th April, an action list for Horsham DALC has been drawn up which is currently on course to be completed within the timescales set. The Chairman of HDALC, Malcolm Eastwood and Vice-Chair, Graeme Acreman, met with the Leader of Horsham District Council to discuss Neighbourhood Plans where the District Council agreed to improve communication with Parish Councils.
- e) Mid Sussex: Nothing to report.

15.40 Mark Mulberry left the meeting

10. PCC/WSALC Focus Groups

Mandy Jameson introduced herself as the Senior Communications Manager working in the Police and Crime Commissioners office. She explained that the function of the PCC/WSALC Focus Groups is to consult and engage with Clerks and Councillors in both West and East Sussex to receive feedback on policing within the local communities and that all information collected is then fed back to the Police Force.

Mandy and the CEO have held 2 consultations with 16 groups in West Sussex over the past year, the groups are comprised of neighbouring parishes resulting in a total of 44 parishes being consulted across West Sussex. A number of issues have been raised and fed back to Sussex Police as a result of the consultations with positive action now being taken leading to an increase in confidence in the Police Force.

Targeted online surveys are now being held to include those communities that do not fall within the 16 Focus Groups, including those that are not parished such as Worthing.

The CEO added that the Chief Constable of Sussex Police indicated at the recent meeting with WSALC and ESALC representatives that she values the feedback received from the Focus Groups as a useful way of engaging with local communities.

11. Armed Forces Covenant

The CEO reminded the Board that the Civilian and Military Covenant exists and that funding can be sought from the Covenant Grants Fund. Thorney Island are currently in the process of seeking funding to provide a minibus to transport veterans. The CEO further suggested that a working group may be formed to develop schemes such as Breakfast Clubs within West Sussex.

At the Chairman's discretion item 13 was discussed next

13. Dates of future meetings

Board meeting: Friday 1st October @ 2.30pm

AGM: Friday 29th October – time to be confirmed

12. Other matters not on the Agenda

Julie Holden advised the Board that the three unparished Neighbourhood Councils within the Horsham District are considering becoming parished subject to Community Governance Review. The CEO advised that they have honorary membership of HDALC.

The Chairman noted items for inclusion at the AGM in October:

- Resolution to appoint the two Vice Presidents of WSALC as joint Presidents.
- Nomination of a second Clerks representative to attend WSALC Board meetings.
Julie Holden advised that an official nomination will be made at next SLCC Sussex branch meeting along with a deputy. The nominated representative is Sarah Norman of Bognor Regis Town Council. The Chairman noted the nomination will require an amendment to the Articles of Association to be ratified at the AGM.
Cllr Nicklen raised concerns about Clerks having voting rights.

The Chairman raised the matter of succession planning and advised that an appointment should be made within the next year to enable a potential successor to shadow the current CEO. The Chairman requested that the CEO bring a formal proposal to the next Board meeting including some nominations of individuals to consider for the role.

ACTION: The CEO to prepare a report for the next Board meeting to include nominations for a potential successor for the role of CEO.

The Chairman advised the Board that two issues of note were raised at the recent WSALC Chairman's Forum:

- The dissatisfaction with Neighbourhood Plans was a particular issue and a survey has been circulated to all WSALC member councils requesting information regarding their experiences of the process. Two responses have been received since the previous day. The CEO is liaising with the WSALC planning associate, Flo Churchill on the matter.
- Member councils have been asked to submit details regarding issues with Southern Water following feedback from members attending the forum.

The Chairman added that he would like to take these projects further as a representative body following analysis of the results of both surveys.

16.36 Meeting closed

Signed (Chairman) _____

Dated _____