



West Sussex ALC Ltd.
Minutes of the Virtual Board Meeting of West Sussex ALC Ltd. held on
Friday 15th July 2022 at 2:30pm by Zoom

Attendance

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

Cllr Martin Beaton, Arun District Association

Cllr Charles Britton, Chichester District Association

Cllr Tim Russell, Chichester District Association

Cllr Malcolm Eastwood, Horsham District Association

Cllr Donald Mahon, Horsham 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

Mandy Jameson, PCC Office

Dee Thornton, Valens Water Limited

1. Apologies for absence

Received and accepted from Cllr Alison Cooper and Julie Holden.

2. Election of Vice Chairman

The Chairman advised that Cllr Martin Beaton has resigned as a parish councillor and will therefore be stepping down as a WSALC Board member and Vice Chairman. He thanked Cllr Beaton and wished him well in the future.

He added that Cllr Jon Millbanks has resigned as a parish councillor and Cllr Tony Nicklen has been replaced as the Adur District representative on the Board, resulting in a further two vacancies.

The Chairman nominated Cllr Malcolm Eastwood for the position of Vice Chairman which was **AGREED** unanimously.

3. To approve the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 29th April 2022

Cllr Martin Beaton requested that WSALC should not lose sight of the initial work undertaken to update the clerk's contract of employment. He further requested that a summary of actions is circulated to clerks following each Board meeting to highlight the work carried out by WSALC.

Anna agreed to circulate a summary of actions following WSALC Board meetings.

The Chairman requested that Board members send Anna photograph of themselves to post on the website if they have not already done so.

The CEO confirmed that an entry has been submitted to the County Association Project of the Year initiative along with supporting letters from the Chief Constable of Sussex Police, Jo Shiner and the PCC.

The Minutes were **APPROVED** as a true record of the meeting held on 29TH April 2022.

4. CEO update

The CEO updated the Board in the following matters:

- a) WSALC Forums: both the clerks and chairman's forums continue to be well attended. The CEO provides updates on matters of current interest and at the most recent forums covered the following topics:
 - i. Operation London Bridge.
 - ii. Resilience planning and the need for councils to produce a robust plan.
 - iii. The results of the recent round of Police focus groups, Mandy Jameson of the PCC office will be providing an update to the Board under agenda item 9.
 - iv. The civility and respect project being co-ordinated by NALC, the SLCC and LGA. Clerks and chairmen are encouraged to sign, and ask all councillors to sign, a pledge agreeing that they will treat councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, and representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect in their roles.
 - v. British Sign Language. It now a requirement for councils to make provisions for profoundly deaf councillors by way of a signer. It is currently unclear whether this applies to members of the public.
 - vi. Borrowing approval applications are currently taking approximately six months to be processed. NALC are addressing the issue.
- b) NALC are inviting member councils to submit examples of good practice and initiatives regarding working with their communities to help combat loneliness and the cost of living crisis.
- c) The CEO and Chairman recently met with Andrew Griffith MP. Key items for discussion were the restoration of sanctions and local councils having flexibility and discretion to hold remote and hybrid meetings. Andrew Griffith advised that he will raise both matters with the new Secretary of State.

The Chairman added that he recently attended a NALC Assembly by Zoom. He reported that the Chairman of the SLCC, Steve Trice, attended and gave an address highlighting the work taking place between NALC and the SLCC.

5. Financial update

Mark Mulberry referred to his report circulated with the agenda (*appendix A*)

He highlighted the following:

- Income in Q1 was c.£125,000 of which c.£93,000 was member subscriptions
- Expenditure in Q1 was c.£17,000

- Reserves are anticipated to be c.£85,000 at year-end, just over 50% of income and Mark suggested that the Board may wish to consider whether to set aside a sum to use for future projects.

Mark **PROPOSED** that subscription levels are set at an increase of 2% for 2023-24 and the subsequent 2 years.

It was **AGREED** to increase the subscription level by 2% for 2023-24 and the subsequent 2 years, noting that there are sufficient funds in reserves should expenditure increase significantly.

It was **AGREED** that some of the reserves would be transferred to a deposit account.

6. AGM & Conference

Following a full and open discussion, it was **AGREED** to provisionally book Thakeham Village Hall for the AGM and Conference on 28th October, subject to carrying out tests of hybrid facilities.

It was **PROPOSED** and **AGREED** that a representative from Knepp and Lady Emma Barnard, the new Lord-Lieutenant of West Sussex, are invited to speak at the conference. Board members were asked to approach the CEO and Anna with further suggestions.

7. Reports by District Associations

a) Adur:

The CEO advised that there is no District Association in Adur as the district has two parish councils, Lancing Parish Council and Sompting Parish Council, and that the parish councils themselves appoint a representative to the WSALC Board. The two parish councils have resolved to each appoint a WSALC voting representative, with one being appointed to the Board on a rotation basis.

Sompting Parish Council resolved to replace Cllr Tony Nicklen as their representative resulting in a vacancy on the Board.

Lancing Parish Council will appoint their representative at a meeting on 20th July, this representative will fill the vacancy.

b) Arun:

Cllr Martin Beaton reported that a meeting of the ADALC management committee and the Leader and CEO of Arun District Council took place in June. At the meeting it was explained that ADC are having to re-deploy staff to high priority policy areas while they undergo a period of low staffing. Both ADALC and ADC are engaged in developing a positive and productive relationship moving forward.

A follow up meeting will be held on 5th September with the ADALC AGM on 13th September.

c) Chichester:

Cllr Tim Russell advised that the CDALC AGM had taken place on 6th June and reported the following:

- i. Cllrs Charles Britton and Tim Russell were re-elected as WSALC Board representatives.
- ii. The CDALC finances are in a healthy position.
- iii. A budget needs to be established before setting a subscription level.

- iv. Member councils reported disaffection with the CDC planning department and it was suggested that the department is under-resourced in terms of planning officers.
- v. The WSALC police focus groups were commented on as being a useful initiative.
- vi. Engagement with PCSOs amongst member councils is improving.

Cllr Russell added that seventeen representative councils attended the AGM with four apologies given, despite the meeting being held remotely by Zoom. He explained that CDALC face a challenge in engaging with the wider Chichester district as the focus tends to be on the southern peninsular.

Cllr Charles Britton explained that there is a tendency for councils in the SDNP to identify with the park rather than Chichester District Council matters and that the SDNPA meetings have a good attendance. CDALC will continue to address the matter and identify ways of engaging member councils across the district.

d) Horsham:

Cllr Malcolm Eastwood reported that the AGM was held on 13th July and reported the following:

- i. Cllr Malcolm Eastwood was re-elected as Chairman and Cllr Donald Mahon was elected Vice Chairman.
- ii. Cllrs Eastwood and Mahon were appointed as WSALC Board representatives.
- iii. The annual subscription was increased from £15 to £20.
- iv. A new Constitution was adopted.
- v. Chief Inspector Kendal Wells of Sussex Police attended and spoke about road policing in Sussex.

Cllr Eastwood advised that Horsham District Council will be delivering a briefing on Water Neutrality to all HALC member councils on 27th July. He added that he will include a section on climate change to establish what involvement HALC should have with HDC on the matter.

The Chairman commended the work that has been undertaken by Cllrs Eastwood and Mahon to re-energise HALC.

e) Mid Sussex:

The Chairman reported that MSALC will hold an AGM on 28th July and that, if necessary, he will act as interim Chairman of MSALC until a suitable replacement is appointed. He is hopeful that the association can be revived.

8. SERCAF subscription

The CEO explained that SERCAF is the South East Regional County Officers Forum, consisting of nine county associations across the southeast. The forum meets to consider matters of common interest and the CEO is the current secretary.

Prior to the COVID pandemic the forum met in person four times a year, which had a cost implication. An annual subscription was levied of £200 per county association.

During the pandemic, the forum continued to meet virtually and all unused subscriptions held by the forum were returned to the county associations at the request of a member.

Recently, some members of the forum have indicated that they would like to return to meeting in person. The CEO advised the Board to note that, should face to face meetings return, a subscription may be charged to WSALC.

9. Sussex Police

Mandy Jameson provided the following updates:

- Seven Police focus groups were held in West Sussex in May, Sussex Police value the focus groups as a two-way dialogue with local councils, follow up groups will be held in November.
- Anti-social behaviour and youth disorder is a current issue, there is work being undertaken by multi-agency groups to tackle the issue.
- An application has been submitted by Sussex Police to the Safer Streets Funding and it is hoped that the funds will be used to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- Roads – CI Kendal Wells is keen to tackle issues on Sussex roads and is proactive in his approach. Sussex Police Chief Constable Jo Shiner has been appointed National Police Chiefs' Council lead for Roads Policing and the PCC is the Association of Police & Crime Commissioners roads policing representative.
- Police engagement:
 - i. Mandy and the CEO sit on the Police Force Engagement Working Group which looks at any issues regarding police liaison with local councils. If any local councils have any issues engaging with the police, they should speak to either the CEO or Mandy.
 - ii. The term 'Neighbourhood Policing' appears to be causing some confusion and lack of clarity, this is being addressed.
 - iii. The campaign 'Click Call Connect' aims to encourage the various means of contacting the police, WSALC will disseminate information to member councils.
 - iv. There appears to be a perception that drug crime is not being tackled, Mandy emphasised that most work is covert and therefore not visible.
 - v. Mandy requested that member councils are reminded that they can register for 'In the Know' to receive information in their local area from Sussex Police.

The Chairman advised that he attended a rural crime event on 13th April and was encouraged to hear that the number of officers within the team has increased from one to twenty and is now the largest rural crime team in the southeast of England.

10. SDNPA Report

Cllr Andrew Shaxson referred to his report circulated with the agenda (Appendix B).

He added that there is now a strong indication that Government would like to give more emphasis on the second purpose of National Parks. The first being to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and wildlife and the second to promote opportunities to understand and enjoy the special qualities of the parks.

The Design Supplementary Planning document has been agreed and will become effective week commencing 25th July.

The SDNPA AGM was held on 5th July when Cllr Vanessa Rowlands of Litlington Parish Council was elected Chair. Cllr Barbara Holyome, a long-standing member representing the Winchester district, stood down.

11. Resilience Planning

Dee Thornton delivered the attached presentation (Appendix C).

She explained that she has assisted two local parishes with drafting a resilience plan. She provides knowledge and infrastructure within a template to allow local councils to draft their plan.

Following a query she advised that she will investigate the matter of insurance and whether those volunteering support should be covered by suitable insurance.

12. Matters arising

No matters arising.

13. Future Board meetings

Board - Friday 14th October 2022 @ 2.30pm – Zoom

AGM - Friday 28th October 2022 – *(exact timings to be confirmed)* – Thakeham Village Hall

16.46 Meeting closed

Signed (Chairman) _____

Dated _____

WSALC Limited – Management Accounts Reporting for the quarter to 30th June 2022.

Income

Subscription income is £93,432 of which £15,644.95 remains unpaid as at the management accounts date. The original budget was for £81,083.

Expenditure

The costs incurred to date are £17,983 against a total year end budget of £95,165.
All costs are listed within this pack.

Bank & Cash Balances

At the 31st March 2022 there was £145,796.17 in the current account and £22 in the deposit account.
A copy of the bank statement is provided with this pack.

Year End Forecast

It is anticipated that there will be a surplus of £28,574 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 association carries forward into the 2022/23 year £56,119. This equates to roughly 50% of income – being the same suggested amount to member councils.

SDNPA report to CDALC – 6th June 2022

It is only 2 months since I produced my last report to CDALC parishes, and there have been no fundamental changes during that time. Consequently, it is both a short report and some will echo what I said in the April report. Whilst still having to take account of **Covid** the SDNPA has largely returned to the methods of working suspended more than two years ago, with one major difference. Virtual meetings are now being used WHERE THEY CAN BE, it having been found that there are few disadvantages faced by the SDNPA by not having the participants drive for many miles to talk face to face at workshops and general discussions. It has the added advantage of benefitting the organisation financially, and financial issues are ever more relevant. The full Authority, planning, and policy and resources committee meetings have to be held face to face.

The SDNPA have formerly replied to the consultation on the Government's reaction to the **Glover Report**, and we await outcomes. How long will that take; the government has many other things to concentrate at present? It is worth noting that whilst minor changes could be introduced quite quickly, if there are major changes in the offing they are most unlikely to be enacted for some years.

I previously referred to the renewal of the **agency agreement with CDC** to undertake planning services on behalf of the SDNPA. A most important plus factor of this arrangement is the positive impact on the budgets of both organisations. Some improved checks will be introduced, but to ensure that both CDC and the SDNPA are kept informed of how the service is working Parish Councils should consider how they can better monitor planning and enforcement delivery. It is worth noting that whilst CDC are paid according to the number of planning applications they handle, a lump sum is paid for providing planning enforcement.

As I mentioned in April, the SDNPA is starting to review the **Local Plan**. This 305 page document was many years in creation, being adopted July 2019. A revised document should be in place by July 2024; this is unlikely to happen but authority members have been assured by officers that as the SDNP doesn't have to achieve a statutory housing target the National park will not be assailed by rapacious developers. Whilst the fundamental document should remain sound for some years to come, as with all such documents there are issues which as time passes need to be addressed. One that is being loudly flagged up is to ensure all policies take as full an account of Climate Change as possible. There appears to be a rapidly increasing grass roots interest in many parishes to move much faster and further to address Climate Change through planning than is currently the case. Is it not just Climate Change but the supply / cost implications of Brexit and the Ukraine war that is driving this? The review could be interesting; a West Sussex parishes meeting which will be a briefing on this topic and Climate change has been scheduled for 18th October to take place face-to-face at Midhurst. Details to follow. In the meantime a webinar on the topic of **Climate Change** is being broadcast at on 13th July, commencing at 6.30pm. ANYONE IS WELCOME TO WATCH IT. This can be viewed live or on Youtube later. I have sent a link to Anna Beams for her to circulate as is considered fit.

A '**Design Supplementary Planning document**' has been a long time in production, and the finished document will be considered by the SDNPA planning committee on 14th July. All being well the committee will agree to its implantation with immediate effect. This document can be viewed on the planning committee agenda.

There is understandably a lot of pressure to resolve the **Water Neutrality** issue that is preventing a lot of development not only in the SDNP but all the areas served by the Southern Water works at Hardham. The fundamental issue is that water demand in the South East has long outstripped sustainable replacement; is the impact on the Arun Valley international wetland sites the 'canary in the coalmine'? It should be a sobering fact that a drop of water that falls on the South Downs can take up to 500 years to flow out. Should Havant Thicket (to yet be built in the Portsmouth Water area but supplying Southern Water) be just one of a number of new reservoirs created to enable us to store winter flow that is otherwise lost to the sea? At the start of the 2020 Covid lockdown Southern Water were monitoring an average water use of 120 litres / head /day but that increased by 25% to 152 litres / day. Although that use has fallen back a little, it shows how vulnerable the area remains, especially after a statistically dry winter and spring.

As I previously reported the SDNPA has been given a **flat cash settlement** by DEFRA for this financial year 2022 – 2023, with the likelihood that this will remain the rate for the following two years. Inflation is almost certain to be more than 10% this autumn, which will cause the authority not only financial discomfort this year but worse in future years. Alternative means of raising cash to cover the day-to-day costs of running the organisation are very limited. As the relatively young Authority has not had time to build up a reserve of financial 'fat' which might have enabled to lose some without tangible impact, it is having to look fast into ways of cutting back. One of these is to reduce the number of meetings of the Authority and its committees, including planning. Also, there will be cutbacks of staff by more than 5% by the autumn. To do this staff are being invited to take early retirement and voluntary redundancy, but if necessary there will be compulsory redundancies. The resources made available to parishes will be further restricted; are there ways the 47 National Park parishes in the CDALC area (noting that we are collectively more than 1/4 of all SDNP parishes) can act together for the benefit of both parishes and the National Park?

Andrew Shaxson

Amended 4th July 2022.

