



West Sussex ALC Ltd.

Minutes of the Virtual Board Meeting of West Sussex ALC Ltd. held on Friday 30th April 2021 at 2:00pm by Zoom

Attendance

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

Cllr Tony Nicklen, Adur 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 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)

Anna Beams, Mulberry and Co (clerk)

1. Apologies for absence

Received from John Godfrey DL, John Lytton DL and Cllr Martin Beaton.

The Chairman reported that Cllr Lilian Richardson, a previous WSALC Board member, sadly passed away on 26th April 2021. A moment of silence was held in respect of Cllr Richardson's tireless contribution to the local council sector.

2. Welcome to the new Directors

The Chairman welcomed two new members of the Board, Cllr Malcolm Eastwood and Cllr Donald Mahon, both appointed representatives of Horsham District Association.

3. To approve the Minutes of meeting held on 11th March 2021

The Minutes were approved subject to the following amendments:

5b) It was noted that, at the meeting held on the 22nd February 2021, the then Chairman, Terry Oliver, had received full support from all directors. Three days later, at the AGM, members passed a vote of no confidence in the Chairman and the Vice Chairman and they had both been required to stand down. Phil Baxter and Tony Nicklen, who were both at that meeting and voting, were asked if they should consider their position in light of events, and also stand down.

Amended to:

5b) It was noted that, at the meeting held on the 22nd February 2021, the then Chairman, Terry Oliver, had received full support from all directors. Three days later, at the AGM, **an overwhelming majority of members passed a resolution that the Chairman and the Vice Chairman were required to stand down. Phil Baxter and Tony Nicklen, who were both at that meeting, were asked if they should consider their position in light of events, and also stand down.**

4. To consider an invitation to Clerks for two of their number to join the Board as observers with the right to speak but not vote

Cllr Nicklen proposed that the invitation should be extended to all clerks and not limited to two, this was deemed impractical by the CEO and the Chairman as it would require a change to the Articles of Association. The Chairman proposed that the matter could be raised at a future meeting shortly before the AGM.

Julie Holden, Chairman of the Sussex branch of the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), advised the Board that she has been elected by the SLCC membership to attend WSALC Board meetings as an observer.

The Chairman proposed that the second representative is also nominated by the SLCC and that it would be helpful if the two clerks represented different districts within the County.

It was **AGREED** that two representatives from the SLCC attend future WSALC Board meetings, one being Julie Holden and a second representative to be nominated by the SLCC membership. Further clerks or chairmans representation at Board meetings should be made only by prior arrangement with the CEO and in consultation with the WSALC Chairman.

It was **AGREED** that a future item will be taken to the Board to amend the Articles of Association to formally appoint two clerks as Directors to the Board.

5. Recognising the benefits of stronger DALCs operating along similar lines and to consider the appointment of one person to act as Secretary to all four DALCs

The Chairman noted that the District Associations have a very important role within the County and that they are undergoing a resurgence following recent meetings with member councils and the election of new representation on the WSALC Board. The Chairman further noted that three of the District Associations do not have secretaries at present and that a proposal was raised at the recent West Sussex Clerks Forum that any interested parties should contact the CEO with expressions of interest and a quote to provide secretarial and treasury services to all of the District Associations.

The CEO advised that, as the Chichester District Association currently have a temporary secretary, that the proposal was either for four District Associations or three, depending whether the current secretary remains in post. The CEO further advised that two parties have responded with expressions of interest, a clerk and Mulberry and Co., and that the Chairmen of the District Associations should meet with the candidates.

The CEO provided an update in respect of grants paid to the District Associations by WSALC. Grants have been paid annually to assist with administration costs, the sum varied as it was based on the number of parish and town councils in membership of the District Association but was £350 on average. A proposal was made to increase the grant to each district Association to a round figure of £500 per year.

It was **AGREED** that the CEO should contact the Chairmen of the District Associations to discuss the proposal and the expressions of interest with a view to meeting with the candidates. It was noted that the District Associations are not bound by the proposal.

It was **AGREED** unanimously that a grant of £500 per year is paid to each District Association with immediate effect. Due to its size, Adur District Association will not receive a grant from WSALC.

6. Report back from meeting with Clerks

The CEO reported that a Clerks Forum was held by Zoom on 15th April 2021 to allow clerks in West Sussex to meet with Board members, the CEO, Anna Beams and Mark Mulberry. Clerks were given an opportunity to raise matters of interest or concern and to receive clarification of the new WSALC and Mulberry and Co service provision following the cessation of SSALC. The CEO recommended that the meetings are held regularly as attendance was high and the feedback was favourable. The CEO thanked the Chairman and Board for their attendance at the meeting and their efforts in gaining the trust of the clerks.

Julie Holden added that the feedback she has received through the SLCC has been extremely favourable and that she will be happy to attend future forums.

The Chairman recommended that the frequency of future forums should be discussed under Agenda item 11.

7. Financial update – to include approval of Annual Accounts to 31st March 2021, the budget to 31st March 2022 and the two years' forecast beyond

Mark Mulberry referred to the Annual Accounts which were circulated with the Agenda and reported the following:

- There is £94,657 in the WSALC current account as of 30 April 2021.
- The total sum of debtors is £52,000 which is made up of outstanding subscription invoices. Statements will be issued towards the end of May but Mark is not expecting any defaulters.

Mark advised the Board that Management Accounts will be presented on a quarterly basis and a full expenditure list along with invoices will be provided to ensure full transparency. Cllr Nicklen reassured Board members that he has always been extremely content with the transparency of reporting by Mark Mulberry.

Cllr Eastwood raised a question regarding a sum paid to Hampshire Legal Services, Mark explained that Hampshire Legal Services were engaged by the WSALC Board during 2020-21 and had incurred costs but that no further costs are outstanding.

Mark then referred to pages 2-4 in the Management Accounts and reported that:

- As at 31st March 2021 the income showed £122,000
- There was £106,000 in expenditure during 2020-21
- WSALC showed a surplus of £16,000 as at 31st March 2021 which when added to reserves gave a closing balance of £36,000 in reserves translating to a bank balance of £45,000, the difference being debtors and creditors
- A sum of approximately £2000-3500 is due to be received from SSALC on closure of the SSALC company accounts

Mark sought the Boards approval for the accounts to be signed by the Chairman and Vice Chairman and subsequently filing with Companies House.

The Board **APPROVED** the accounts for signing.

8. Website presentation

Anna Beams demonstrated the new WSALC website to the Board.

Cllr Nicklen queried the use of the joint Sussex logo and it was explained by the CEO that the logo was retained for simplicity and that it was recognised by member councils. It was suggested that a potential new logo could be discussed at a future meeting.

Anna asked the Board whether they would like to add their individual contact details to the website. All Board members agreed that they would like contact details posted on the Directors page.

The Chairman raised a question regarding member councils knowledge of the website. Anna explained that details had been circulated by email, in the newsletter and at the recent clerks forum and that there have been in the region of 130 visits to the website to date.

9. Training programme

Anna Beams referred to the training report circulated prior to the Board meeting adding that bookings were at a level expected and that Mulberry and Co would continue to expand the programme to include face to face training, networking days and conferences. Anna reported that there will be a need to take into account the cost of venues and length of face to face training sessions and therefore the cost to member councils will be reflected in that.

The Chairman raise a question regarding member councils knowledge of the training programme. Anna explained that details had been circulated by email, in the newsletter and at the recent clerks forum and booking numbers reflected that members are aware of the programme.

Julie Holden stated that feedback from members of the SLCC has been very good in response to the training programme.

10. Reports by District Associations

- A) Adur: Cllr Nicklen reported that Sompting and Lancing Parish Councils have elections on 6th May and that a meeting of Adur District Association will be called once Members are in place.
- B) Arun: Cllr Cooper reported that all is quiet within the district. The CEO advised that he had received communication that the Chairman of Arun District Association is standing down and a new Chairman will therefore need to be appointed at the next meeting.
- C) Chichester: Cllr Russell reported that the Chichester Association has held its first formal meeting where a new Constitution was presented. Some objections were raised to points within the Constitution which will require amendment. Cllr Russell added that it is a challenge to cater to all parishes within Chichester due to differences in priorities such as the South Downs and the south of the county.
The CEO suggested that there were previously sub-districts in Midhurst and Petworth which could be resurrected.

Cllr Britton added that coastal parishes within Chichester have common interests quite different to National Park parishes and that discussions are in place to invigorate the association.

- D) Horsham: Cllr Mahon reported that an AGM has taken place attended by 22 member councils and that Horsham has a membership of 29 local councils out of a possible 32. He thanked the Mid Sussex and Chichester Associations for sharing their Constitutions and the aim is to update the Horsham Constitution to be consistent with the model and to re-engage with Horsham members proactively.
- E) Mid Sussex: Cllr Millbanks reported that a very well attended meeting has taken place, the Constitution has been amended and that Cllr Tony Steer has been re-elected as Chairman. The Chairman reminded Board members that the Mid Sussex Association are happy to share their Constitution with all other District Associations.

11. Calendar of future meetings

The Chairman recommended that future Board meetings are held on a quarterly basis and suggested they are held on a Friday afternoon, with one of the meetings to either precede or follow the Annual General Meeting. He suggested that the Board meetings are scheduled to take place following District Association meetings and that therefore the dates should be set after a District Association Secretary has been appointed. He further added that Clerks forums should be held twice a year following scheduled WSALC Board meetings.

The Board **AGREED** to hold Board meetings on a quarterly basis following District Association meetings and to hold two clerks forums per year following two of the Board meetings.

12. Any other matters to be raised by Directors

- Cllr Millbanks formally thanked the CEO, Anna Beams and Mark Mulberry for their hard work in preparing everything necessary for the new WSALC service provision to members. The Chairman and members of the Board added their thanks.
- The Chairman raised the matter of membership of WSALC and those members that have given notice to cancel membership. He asked Julie Holden and Cllr Nicklen to provide an update on the reasons for their respective councils terminating their membership.

Julie Holden reported that the Town Council wish to continue with membership of the Mid Sussex Association and that the Council had made the decision to cancel membership of WSALC before the new Board and procedures were in place. Julie added that she is confident that the council will see the effectiveness of the new Board and that the termination of membership will be temporary. Julie further added that East Grinstead Town Council wished it to be noted that they are disappointed in NALC and that they felt that NALC had not supported individual councils during the upheaval of WSALC. The Chairman offered his and the CEOs support.

Cllr Nicklen reported that the reasons for Sompting Parish Council wishing to terminate their membership are purely financial.

The CEO added that 3 other members had indicated their wish to terminate their membership, East Wittering & Bracklesham Parish Council, Upper Beeding Parish Council and Aldwick Parish Council, but that he is unsure of the reasons. He stated that, as of 31st March 2021, 6 parishes in West Sussex were not in membership and had not been in membership for a considerable time:

Rogate Parish Council
West Grinstead Parish Council
Slinfold Parish Council
Middleton-on-Sea Parish Council
East Dean Parish Council
Trotton with Chithurst Parish Council

The Chairman stated that he is encouraged by retention of membership despite the difficulties of the previous year.

- The Chairman reminded the Board there is a vacancy for President of WSALC. He recommended that the two current Vice Presidents, John Godfrey DL and John Lytton DL, are nominated to be joint Presidents following their first class representation within the Association.

The CEO confirmed that both Vice Presidents are highly regarded and would make excellent joint Presidents.

Cllr Nicklen made an alternative suggestion for the post however it was felt that, as both Vice Presidents had served the county so well, particularly during the difficulties of the past year, it would be sensible to nominate them to the position and show the acknowledgement and gratitude of the Board. The Chairman acknowledged the suggestion of Cllr Nicklen and recommended that it is discussed at a future date.

It was **AGREED** by the majority of the Board that the CEO would draft a letter to the Vice Presidents inviting them to take up the position of joint President before putting a vote to member councils.

15.47 Meeting closed

Signed (Chairman) _____

Dated _____