



West Sussex ALC Ltd.
Minutes of the Virtual Board Meeting of West Sussex ALC Ltd. held on
Friday 21st April 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 Donald Mahon, Horsham District Association
Cllr Martin Sheldon, Mid Sussex District Association
Trevor Leggo, CEO WSALC Ltd.
Julie Holden, Clerk's Representative, Society of Local Council Clerks (Sussex Branch)
Cllr Andrew Shaxson, SDNPA Representative
Anna Beams, Secretary to the Board

1. Apologies for absence

Received and accepted from Sarah Norman and Mark Mulberry. Not present, Cllr Mike Mendoza.

2. To approve the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 9th February 2023

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

3. Financial update

In the absence of Mark Mulberry, the accounts and report circulated with the agenda [appendix A](#) were noted.

Following a query raised, the Chairman and CEO confirmed that they are aware of outstanding payments and they will be carried over into the new financial year.

4. CEO update

The CEO updated the Board in the following matters:

NALC: during a meeting with Keith Stevens, NALC Chairman, the CEO suggested that a clear statement outlining the functions of NALC would be a useful document to circulate to member councils.

REMOTE MEETINGS: Government continues to be pressed to re-introduce the option for town and parish councils to hold remote or hybrid meetings at their discretion. The CEO is of the belief that being unable to hold such meetings has had a direct impact on the number of candidates that have stood for election this year. Lord Lytton, Joint President of WSALC, recently spoke persuasively to the House of Lords on the matter and NALC have indicated that they continue to press Ministers.

RECRUITMENT: has settled in West Sussex in terms of a reduced number of vacancies and an encouraging number of applicants applying for those vacancies.

MEMBERS ALLOWANCE: It was brought to the CEO's attention that Arun District Council mislaid a nomination paper that was handed in to them before the submission deadline. They subsequently found the paper and approached the CEO regarding a suitable solution to the nominee being omitted from the election notice. As the said nominee would not be entitled to the Councillors basic allowance unless they were elected to post, ADC agreed to re-issue the notice. The incident highlighted the fact that co-opted councillors are not entitled to be paid a councillors allowance, one of three issues which NALC are currently lobbying for, the other issues being remote meetings and sanctions.

QUEENS GREEN CANOPY: 150,000 trees have been planted across West Sussex, a tribute to the many West Sussex parishes that have taken part. The Chairman has been actively involved across a number of parishes in the county.

5. Elections

The CEO advised the Board that, despite best efforts to encourage candidates to stand as councillor, there are fewer contested elections than previous elections held in 2015 and 2019. He believes that an inability for councils to hold remote and hybrid meetings may have had an impact. He reported the following by District:

Chichester – 1 parish had no candidates and will hold a new election in June, 2 parishes had 1 candidate.

Mid Sussex – contested elections in the 3 Town Councils and in 4 Parish Councils, 7 out of 24

Adur – no elections in 2023

Arun – 1 contested election apart from the town councils

Horsham – 2 contested elections

The CEO explained that the issue appears to be widespread and not confined to West Sussex and added that, if a council is inquorate due to insufficient candidates, the District Council can use reserve powers and stand in. Members can then be co-opted onto the council.

6. Reports by District Associations

- a) **Adur:** The CEO advised that he is working with Sompting Parish Council to develop a business plan.
- b) **Arun:** Cllr Michael Tu provided an update following an Arun District Association conference which took place in March. He thanked the WSALC Chairman for being present and added that the conference was well attended with 23 of a possible 25 parishes represented. Two senior officers from WSALC were invited along with 3 senior officers from ADC, including the CEO, and were given an opportunity to engage with the parishes. Following a positive outcome from the day, Cllr Tu wrote to ADC immediately afterwards to confirm the

commitment given by them to engage and communicate positively with the parishes. He will continue to take forward the momentum with a further conference planned for September.

The CEO added that ADALC have formed a Management Committee that meet and take actions forward between meetings. He highly commends this model to the other District Associations.

- c) **Chichester:** Cllr Tim Russell explained that, at the last CDALC meeting held in February, no successor for either himself or the third representative to the WSALC Board were received. A CDALC paper regarding the formation of a Steering Group was considered but no further progress made.

Cllr Charles Britton added that he hopes to take the Steering Group forward in the future.

The CEO reported that the Chairman of CDALC has recently resigned and that a successor will be sought following the elections.

As Cllr Russell has resigned from his positions on both CDALC and the WSALC Board, the Chairman thanked him for his support throughout his tenure.

- d) **Horsham:** Cllr Malcolm Eastwood provided an update on a remote HALC meeting that was held in February. The Environment Manager from HDC attended and provided updates on environment and climate change workshops attended by parishes within the district. Following the workshops, 'knowledge hubs' have been created where closed groups can discuss initiatives around climate change and the environment. 28 councils and other organisations attended the workshops.

There has been a lack of movement on the Local Plan, with 4 councils waiting a considerable time for their Neighbourhood Plans to go to Referendum. Cllr Eastwood held a poll at the HALC meeting, where 65% of councils present indicated that they would wish to see the Local Plan move to Regulation 19 now and not be deferred until after the elections in May.

It was agreed at the meeting that Cllr Eastwood would write to HDC on behalf of HALC to raise the issues around the Local Plan. There has since been an exchange of correspondence and, as a result, Cllr Eastwood was invited by HDC to join a Neighbourhood Plan group along with the 4 councils whos plans are waiting to go to Referendum. A progression plan and timeline are now in place.

- e) **Mid Sussex:** The Chairman and CEO recently met with senior officers, Lucy Corrie, Head of Communities and Mat Jarman, Emergency Planning Officer, at Mid Sussex District Council. Their proposal they took to the meeting suggesting that the MSDC positively engage with parishes was well received and they have both been invited onto the Mid Sussex Partnership. The CEO also held a positive meeting with the Head of Democratic Services.

7. SDNPA Report

Cllr Andrew Shaxson referred to his report circulated prior to the meeting ([appendix B](#))

He added that a document on parish priority statements has since been circulated to parishes. As the policy referred to in the document is in the early stages, Cllr Shaxson believes that the statement is premature, and he will report back to the Board on the outcome of the statement if he is in a position to do so.

The CEO reminded that Board that parishes are entitled to nominate representatives to the SDNPA Board and that, in previous years, SSALC have administered the election. Whilst the parishes may nominate representatives, nominations are signed off by DEFRA.

It has been usual in previous years for nominations to be submitted to DEFRA in July, however this year the deadline had been set for early to mid-June which the CEO believes is an unrealistic timeframe. The CEO has approached the Head of Democratic Services at Mid Sussex District Council who has confirmed that the deadline is not achievable. The CEO has therefore contacted the SDNPA to request an extension.

Cllr Shaxson reminded the CEO that current council representatives can remain in post for 3 months following parish council elections. It was further suggested that the SDNPA are approached with a proposal that current representatives continue in post until early next year, therefore allowing sufficient time for parishes to submit their nominations and those nominations be forwarded to DEFRA.

8. Matters for discussion not on the agenda

The CEO reported that 17 parishes have engaged in the WSALC initiative to adopt a template Emergency Plan produced by Dee Thornton.

Julie Holden wished to raise issues with the Modality Partnership, comprising of privatised GP practices in Mid Sussex. Reported problems are in regard to primary GP care and 5 parishes have written a joint letter to the Chief Executive of Modality, the Chair of the ICB (Integrated Care Board) and their local MP.

9. Future meetings

To be confirmed.

The Chairman closed by again thanking Cllr Tim Russell for his support and service to the Board and wished him luck in the future.

15:58 Meeting closed.

Signed (Chairman)  D D Pinnock (Jul 28, 2023 18:07 GMT+1)

Dated Jul 28, 2023

APPENDIX A

WSALC Limited – Management Accounts Reporting for the quarter to 31st March 2023.

The association ended the year with a strong financial footing with closing reserves £81k after a £25k surplus for the year. Our subscription income was £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.

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 £93,615 of which £647.49 remains unpaid as at the management accounts date. The original budget was for £81,083.

Albourne Parish Council £57.12
Ardingly Parish Council £558.04
Newtimber Parish Meeting £32.33

Expenditure

The costs incurred to date are £104,639 against a total year end budget of £95,165. The additional expenditure over budget is in the main £5,920 in advertising (Wild stag video) and £6,270 (Wild stag and Steve Tilbury) in consultants.

All costs are listed within this pack.

Bank & Cash Balances

At the 31st March there was £22,685 in the current account and £50,199 in the deposit account.

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

2024/25 £0.3185p per elector	{income circa £97.2K}
2025/26 £0.3248p per elector	{income circa £99.1K}
2026/27 £0.3313p per elector	{income circa £101.3K}

Reserves

The associations reserves position is as listed below:

31-03-22	£56,119 (actual)
31-03-23	£81,586 (actual)

APPENDIX B

SDNPA report to WSALC Board 21/4/2023

This is a short report, but reflects important issues continuing to face the South Downs National Park.

I have previously pointed out that the SDNPA has had to budget within the restrictions of a flat-cash settlement for the last four years, and the likelihood of a reduction in the size of that settlement in future years. We were therefore surprised to find out on 1st March that all English National Parks, regardless of their size and budget, would receive a one-off 'supplementary cash injection' of £440,000 at the end of this financial year. The money must be spent within the financial year 2023-24. Being a one-off it cannot underwrite ongoing costs, but can be used to bring forward projects that might have otherwise stalled. This grant and some welcome positive words from Therese Coffey are hopefully indicating that the government appreciate the status of National Parks and will fund them accordingly. We will keep our fingers crossed and do nothing to rock the boat.

I referred at the last board meeting to the meeting of West Sussex Parishes which was to be held at Midhurst on 15th March. Each of the 87 West Sussex parishes could have sent two representatives, but the turn-out was truly awful, as only 18 Parish Councillors (including Alun Alesbury and me) attended. Furthermore, the Q and A session, the opportunity to say anything was met with silence. Bizarrely the SDNPA officers say they don't mind such a lack of enthusiasm, but the six parish Councillors on the Authority are most concerned. Footnote
- CDALC meetings are better attended!

I must say that had I been in the audience of that meeting, rather than been chairing it I would have asked a question, or made some point, about planning delivery. There is no denying that the planning system remains under pressure, a position that the continuing shortage of planning officers exacerbates. The planning application submitted to build business premises and 700 homes on the North Street Quarter at Lewes will not help address that pressure. It is the largest ever planning application in any European National Park. It will soak up a lot of planning officer time and resources.

At a very local level, Midhurst and the surrounding area are suffering from the impact of the fire at the Angel Hotel on the night of 15th / 16th March. A decision must be made without further delay concerning the future of the Victorian façade of the hotel, which left standing has a stranglehold on the town, its hinterland and surrounding road network.

Alun Alesbury and I are coming to the end of our four-year term on the SDNPA. We are both intending to re-stand for re-election and concerning that process Trevor Leggo has sent parishes within the SDNP a memo requesting them to put an item on the agenda of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council following the 4th May election, to consider putting forward a nominee. Talking of elections, not one of the 47 Chichester District parishes in the SDNP is having an election, indeed many are short of members. Is this widespread; if so, it reflects badly on people's willingness to provide democratic leadership at local level.

Andrew Shaxson

WSALC Board Minutes 21 April 2023

Final Audit Report

2023-07-28

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