



Newsletter

January 2022

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Our first newsletter for 2022 – so although a bit belated the team wish you all a very ‘Happy and Healthy 2022’.

Advice/Information etc

We tend to send out NALC Information as and when we receive them. We appreciate that this can result in a duplicate information landing in busy email boxes if you have already received it direct from NALC. We do not know who gets the information so we take the view that, if it is important and relevant to Surrey parish councils, it is better for you to receive it twice than not at all!

You may also receive a newsletter from Wellers law group which will keep you abreast of changes in the law. If you do not receive this please let me know so that I can register your Council with them and/or forward it on.

Lobbying of MPS

On the 23rd March NALC are leading, with the support of County Associations, a lobbying day with Members of Parliament. It will be held virtually. We will be contacting Surrey MPS inviting them to attend. The purpose is to talk through all the issues affecting Parish Councils and the need for new legislation to meet 21st century demands on local councils. So far key areas identified include (i) raising the profile of parish councils; (ii) *Meetings – councils should have choice to meet in person and virtually; (ii) civility and respect – the need for a more effective and therefore respected Code of Conduct.

Any information or examples in support of (ii) and (iii) above would be really helpful. If you have any other areas that you would like covered

please do let us know.

Despite the best efforts of NALC/County Associations we cannot get any clear official reasons why the Government is so reluctant to give choice on holding of statutory Meetings, particularly as it is generally felt that it better delivers democracy.

Pay Rise -2021/22

We still await the decision on the nationally agreed pay rise for 2021-22. This is presenting Councils with difficulties around budget setting, impacts on staff morale and has a knock on effect on other areas e.g. on other benefits that employees receive.

As you will know the Employer has offered 1.75% which has been rejected. The Unions are holding ballots (2/3 different unions) which will close in February. It could, therefore, be several months before the outcome is known.

It has been suggested that Councils could agree to pay the 1.75% now and the balance if there is an increase in the current offer. NALC has been asked to advise if this is legal. So far no advice has been forthcoming. Our view is that the Employers offer of 1.75% has not been accepted and, therefore, any premature pay out may be unsound and challenged by the External Auditor. Councils can at any time award salary increases based on performance so this could be a way of providing some increase in salary pending final settlement. However, on balance we feel it would be better to wait for the NALC advice (County Officers have this week pressed NALC for an urgent response).

Cyber attacks

We are aware of some councils that have been affected by cyber-attacks which has caused major problems in not being able to access data as it attacks the domain. We have long encouraged Councils to a gov.uk domain for a number of reasons (GDPR.FOI etc). GOV.uk is UK based – most of the others are not. It can be easier to sort if there is an attack. Many Councils still rely on members and clerks using their own domains and emails for Council business. So any of those domains can be affected. Using Gov.uk has a cost implication and is not immune from cyber-attacks. However there is support afforded by the Central Digital and Data Office (part of the Government Cabinet Office). Its role is to look after the gov.uk domain and aid understanding through advice and guidance.

It is possible that you will have recently heard direct from CDDO inviting you to complete a survey. They are keen to hear from Councils directly even if they have an independent IT provider as ultimate responsibility

rests with the Council. They will be using all the information received to identify what is needed by parish councils and hope to influence Government on areas such as funding.

NALC/County Associations have requested a crib sheet and other supporting information which we will let you have when received.

Surrey Board

In April we will mark the first year of a stand-alone Association. The Surrey Board will review the year taking on board any learning experiences and any areas that require a different approach or improvement. The Board will take account of the feedback in the 2021 Survey, from members and officers at the AGM and also from the Clerks' forums – SALC and Surrey SLCC branch. Any further feedback from members and clerks will be most welcome.

Sad news

It is with a great deal of sadness that we learned that our Board Member, David Crossley, Chairman of Churt Parish Council died after a short illness in December. He had been a councillor and chairman for many years and gave great service to his Parish. We will miss him.

Also Jackie Hackett, Clerk at Wotton Parish Council, who also sadly died just before Christmas. Again someone who had served the Council for many years and will be very much missed.

NALC events

NALC have been holding lunchtime virtual events (75 minutes duration). Details can be found on their website. In the next few months they will be holding the following lunchtime events.

23rd February 2022- Learn about levelling up. The White Paper, due to be published in the next few weeks, will be explained. What does levelling up mean for local councils? It will look at potential assets and new powers councils could be eligible to take on as well as other implications and opportunities.

30 March 2022 – Working together to make communities safer. How are Police and Crime Commissioners working with communities to reduce crime and improve community safety? What roles can parish councils play using existing powers and funding?

These events have key speakers and are sponsored but there is a small charge.

Surrey ALC (training)

Surrey ALC has an arrangement with Mulberry & Co for the provision of

training. The take-up from Surrey Parishes has been excellent both from members and clerks. Please do have a look at our website.

Chairs and Clerk Forums

Dates for your diary

Clerks Forum – 14th March 2022 (10-12 am) - Lisa Townsend, Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner, will be joining us.

Chairs Forum - 22nd March 2022 (7.00-9.00pm).

Finally we would love to hear from you not only about our service but any initiatives that your Council has undertaken that could be shared with others parish councils e.g. on the Green Agenda.



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