



Surrey ALC Ltd.
Minutes of the Virtual Board Meeting of Surrey ALC Ltd. held on
Thursday 30th July 2020 at 10:00am by Zoom

Attendance

Cllr Steve Cosser, Chairman
Cllr Dr Paul Cragg, Vice Chair
Cllr Mike Goodman, Director
Cllr Graham Alleway, Director
Cllr Stuart McLachlan, Director
Roger Taylor, Honorary Solicitor
Dr Richard Olliver, Vice President
Liz Cutter, Vice President
Christine Howard, Vice President
Trevor Leggo, CEO SSALC Ltd.
Anne Bott, Deputy CEO SSALC Ltd.
Anna Beams, Office, Training & Events Manager, SSALC Ltd

1. Apologies for absence

Mark Mulberry.

The CEO reported that Cllr Peter Perdue had resigned from the Board and was therefore not in attendance.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th May 2020 were approved as a correct record and duly signed.

3. Matter arising not on this agenda

None

4. Chairman's report on actions since last meeting

Cllr Cosser confirmed that:

- a letter of thanks has been sent to Cllr Harry Fitzgerald on behalf of the Board by the CEO.
- some articles have been sent to Anna Beams for inclusion in the Surrey ALC Bulletin by Board members and reminded those that have not yet provided an article to send one to Anna.
- 95% of members subscriptions have now been received and the CEO confirmed that those members that have not yet paid have been issued with reminders.

5. WSALC

Cllr Cosser briefed the board into the background of this agenda item. He reminded the Board that the joint Board (SSALC) resolved to undertake a strategy review last year to be carried out by the Chairmen of the three County Associations and that, since the review was undertaken, two of the three Chairmen have resigned from

their position on the joint Board. The Chairman of the West Sussex Association (WSALC) remains as Chair of SSALC.

Cllr Cosser advised that the strategy review and the investigation into any subsequent implications for the Surrey Association had been put on hold due to Covid-19. He reported that, having held a meeting with the Chair of WSALC, the focus of WSALC is on taking their own review forward and not wait for the joint review.

The CEO advised that Keith Stevens, then Chairman of the East Sussex Association (ESALC), stood down from that position on the SSALC Board but remains as the East Sussex representative to NALC and its Vice-Chair of the National Association (NALC).

The CEO reported that, at their recent Board meeting, the WSALC Board had agreed to commission an independent report for the member councils of West Sussex and that Professor Colin Copus is appointed to undertake the review.

10.14 Anne Bott joined the meeting

A budget of up to £7000 has been agreed to fund the review which will be paid from WSALC funds.

The CEO reminded the Board that he had produced a background paper on the history of the incorporation of the three associations which had previously been circulated to Directors of all Boards and that he has recently produced an impact assessment on the implications on the remaining two county associations should WSALC leave. He advised that the WSALC Board also agreed:

- A stand alone domain name to use for communication with West Sussex member councils to advise them of the progress of the review.
- To hold Board meetings to discuss the review using an independently appointed administrator and excluding all SSALC staff.

Dr Olliver commented that the economies of scale have been of benefit to all member councils and expressed disappointment should this change.

Cllr Goodman expressed concern that funds were being used from members subscription fees towards this matter.

The DCEO pointed out that there are financial liabilities in respect of SSALC such as office rental, IT and telephones and therefore consequences of splitting the three associations.

The CEO confirmed that the staffing and accommodation is geared to the three county arrangement and that a new ten year accommodation lease was agreed and signed in 2019.

Roger Taylor reminded the Board that he is a Director of all three county associations as well as SSALC and therefore will abstain from voting on this matter. He advised that he will consider his position on the matter as a Director of SSALC at the appropriate time.

The CEO confirmed that he had received advice that the Joint Board and the three Associations have been operating under implied terms which have been firmly established over 6 years.

There are Articles of Association for each of the four companies and background minutes of the Joint Liaison Committee, which was the forerunner of the SSALC Board, recording the decisions taken at the time.

Discussions centered around the need to obtain advice on the implications of one or more of the Associations leaving the arrangement and that currently there is a lack of clarity. The CEO confirmed that he had a delegated budget of £1000 which could be used to seek advice and this would benefit the Joint Board and the three Associations.

Cllr Cosser **PROPOSED** that:

- A working group is immediately formed to comprise of the Chair, Vice-Chair and Cllr Howard, Vice President, to urgently investigate potential impacts, implications and options for the Surrey Association should WSALC leave the three county association.

Members **AGREED** the above proposal

- A budget of up to £1000 (should the delegated £1000 be insufficient) is allocated to seek urgent independent legal advice in respect of potential impacts and implications for the Surrey Association should WSALC leave the three county association and that this advice should be made available for the Joint Board meeting on 14 August 2020.

Members **AGREED** to the above proposal

The three Vice Presidents, namely Dr Olliver, Cllr Cutter and Cllr Howard, would like it recorded that they agreed with the above proposals.

Cllr McLachlan enquired whether an item could be included in the newsletter regarding the current situation with a reassurance that all services will continue as normal.

The DCEO explained that there are plans to circulate positive messages to both Clerks and Chairmen regarding the services provided by SSALC during the Covid epidemic and that the intention is to promote future services in a positive way.

6. Strategic review

Cllr Cosser reminded the Board that a strategic review was currently being undertaken by SSALC and that he had requested the CEO to circulate a copy of the review which Board members have received. He formally requested that an item is included on the SSALC Board meeting agenda to discuss the outcome of the legal advice being obtained regarding the potential impact and implications for the three Associations.

The CEO advised that he intends that the Minutes from the three county association Board meetings are taken to the SSALC Board meeting for noting.

7. NALC Update

The CEO reported that:

- NALC reported a loss of £11.5k for 2019-20 due to the cost of Covid-19 and loss of Spring Conference income
- NALC have made financial savings through remote working and online meetings
- Affiliation fees will be increased by 3% for 2021-22
- Working practices are being reviewed
- Proposal to work more closely with the LGA
- The NALC AGM will be held remotely this year on 27th October
- NALC have been particularly active in providing Coronavirus advice to parishes during the pandemic
- NALC are actively looking at the devolution proposals across the country
- NALC and the LGA have united in approaching Government to keep planning local

8. Finance Matters

Cllr Goodman sought clarification regarding an increase of management expenditure and the total sum of liability creditors. Anna Beams advised that a response would be obtained from Mark Mulberry and reported back to the Board.

The annual accounts were approved and duly signed by Cllr Cosser and Cllr Cragg.

9. Training Update

Anna Beams advised that SSALC continued to offer remote training webinars using in house trainers. Virtual training courses have been successfully received and included Councillors, Chairmanship, Communication, Employment and Planning training. An increased programme will be released soon in partnership with Breakthrough Communications offering a variety of subjects for both Councillors and Clerks. The Board Members were reminded that they would be welcome to attend any of the training courses free of charge and that sessions would also be recorded should any Board Members wish to view them.

Anna Beams further advised that planning for the various annual conferences is on hold due to lockdown restrictions and that SSALC hope to offer a blended face-to-face and virtual programme of training courses in the future.

10. Covid-19 Update

The CEO reported that although he had not yet seen a report from the Surrey Resilience Forum, the Sussex Forum has indicated an increase in infections during the coming winter.

The CEO further indicated that there was increasing pressure from member councils for Clerks to resume face to face meetings and that the Covid Regulations allow for remote meetings to continue until May 2021. Advice will be provided by SSALC on blended meetings and the complexities involved in holding such a meeting.

Cllr Cosser reminded the Board that he represents SALC on 'Surrey Prepared', a group which feeds into the Surrey Resilience Forum and that information provided by Cllr Cosser is passed to Anna Beams who disseminates it to member councils. Cllr Cosser reported that he has been invited to a meeting to discuss how local councils can build on community engagement established during the Covid pandemic.

Cllr McLachlan suggested that advice could be provided to members regarding their IT provision and holding remote meetings, he offered his assistance as he has an IT background.

The CEO advised that members have been encouraged to include a provision in their budgets for IT provision and that they should consider preparing their budgets early.

Cllr Goodman expressed concern that clerks were being encouraged by their council to return to offices that are open to the general public and whether advice is being provided. The CEO responded that the advice given is that offices should not be open to the public as contact can be made by email or telephone.

11. Possible impact on local councils resulting from financial pressures on principal authorities

The CEO reminded the Board that the Secretary of State wrote to all Local Authorities in April 2020 stating that £3.2million was being made available to Local Authorities and that some of the funds would be for smaller councils.

The CEO subsequently sought clarification from the Secretary of State whereby it was confirmed that the funds were not meant for town and parish councils. It was further confirmed that no specific advice had been given to Principal Authorities in assisting town and parish councils, but that Government were encouraging Principal Authorities to assist local councils that had incurred expenditure due to the pandemic.

The CEO reported that it is clear that little, if any, funds are being made available to town and parish councils and he suggested that they should consider their budgets early this year as some Principal Authorities will perhaps be looking to devolve some activities.

NALC are lobbying ministers and officials and details have been passed to Jonathan Owen (NALC) by the CEO of member councils in Sussex that are in financial difficulty in order to assist with their talks.

12. Devolution White Paper

Cllr Cosser provided a summary of the background into the Devolution White Paper:

- Government have announced intention to issue a White Paper in the Autumn to deal with an acceleration to Unitary Authorities across the country.
- Surrey County Council have indicated that they wish the Government to request a proposal from them for Surrey.
- The Boroughs and Districts of Surrey have written to the Secretary of State in opposition to a single Unitary Authority.

Cllr Cosser reported that he had held a meeting with the Leader of Surrey County Council (Tim Oliver) along with the CEO and DCEO to discuss the involvement of the Surrey Association in any future debate and a potential consultation group.

Cllr Goodman reported that no White Paper has been issued yet and therefore a position statement from the Surrey Association cannot be produced until the Paper has been seen. Cllr Goodman suggested that a Zoom conference could be held with member councils after publication to receive their views and concerns.

Cllr Cosser confirmed that Tim Oliver has been booked and confirmed for the Surrey Association AGM.

Cllr Cosser proposed that information is circulated from the Board to member councils to inform them that the Association is prepared to work closely with all appropriate authorities on their behalf.

<p>ACTION: to circulate information to member councils from the Board updating them on the position of the Association in respect of the Devolution White Paper</p>
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13. Surrey Hills

Liz Cutter provided an update on the Greenways project:

- The Greenways is a multi-use route that can be used by horses, walkers and cyclists that links across Surrey to encourage use away from the main routes currently used.
- The current pandemic has highlighted the need for the project.
- Surrey County Council are positive about the project.
- The route would be access only to vehicles.

12:02 Cllr McLachlan left the meeting

14. Any other matters

Cllr Goodman: Suggested that Surrey County Council and Helyn Clack are copied into information circulated to members in respect of agenda item 12

Cllr Cosser suggested that other relevant parties should also be copied into the circulation.

DCEO:

- wished to reassure members that she was spending a lot of time advising members on the re-opening of offices and face to face meetings.
- advised that feedback had been positive from District and Borough Councils in respect of their engagement with the Association and local councils in Surrey.
- the workload has been particularly heavy in recent months during the pandemic and more intense than previously seen in Surrey. Advice sought has included High Court actions, challenges, governance and breakdowns in parish councils amongst Members. The DCEO thanked Roger Taylor for his assistance with some particularly difficult issues and his swift response and reported that feedback has been very positive from members who have sought advice and assistance from the Association.
- The AGM will be a virtual meeting on 24th September and it will need to be quorate.
- Peter Purdue has resigned and there are two vacancies on the Surrey Board but that, in the current circumstances, it is not an appropriate time to fill the vacancies.
- Board representation across the County will be addressed at a future time.

15. 2020 dates

24th September 2020: AGM

Cllr Cosser proposed that a date is diarised for within two weeks of the SSALC Board meeting taking place on 14th August 2020. A date will be circulated once confirmed.

<p>ACTION: CEO and DCEO to propose a date for a Board meeting in August following the SSALC Board meeting</p>
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Cllr Cosser closed the meeting by expressing his thanks to the Board for their input and support during the Board meeting and for continuing to focus on the best interests of the member councils. He also expressed thanks to all of the SSALC staff for their hard work on behalf of the Association.

Meeting closed 12.13

Date of next meeting

To be confirmed

Signed (Chairman) _____

Dated _____