



NEWSLETTER

No.110 - September 2006

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The main holiday period is ending now and the conference season is on us again.

The first of the two conferences of importance for parish and town councils is the National Association of Local Councils conference taking place at the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool from 22 to 24 September. Since this is the first time this conference has taken place locally which enables many parishes to send delegates on a daily tariff basis may I urge you to make every effort to attend at least for part of the time. The event also provides a networking opportunity for councillors and clerks from all over the country to learn from one another. Further the Chief Executive of Cheshire County Council, Jeremy Taylor is the keynote speaker.

The second is our own County Association Annual Meeting taking place in Middlewich on 12 October. A weekday evening has proved the better time for many councillors and clerks so I hope as many of you as possible will come along to this important event. There are increasing pressures on the time and resources of both councillors and clerks and the event provides you with a good networking opportunity to speak with your colleagues and share ideas and good practice.

Roger Parkin
County Chairman

ANNUAL MEETING 2006 **MIDDLEWICH CIVIC HALL**

Thursday 12TH October 2006
7.00 – 9.00 pm

Items on the Agenda will include:

- The Annual Report
- Financial Statement
- Setting of the Affiliation Fee
- Members Motions

If you have not already booked your places please contact Susan Harding at the County Office as soon as possible

Come along and meet the team – Jackie, Chalky, Susan and members of the Executive Committee will be available for you to meet and share your thoughts and ideas (or concerns)

Refreshments will be available on the evening

SAFER COMPUTING ...

The Importance of Protection

These days most local councils regard a computer as an essential tool for preparing minutes, correspondence, accounts and probably many other things. Just imagine what a problem it would be if all those electronic files were to disappear. Most organisations are likely to suffer data loss which can range from a minor inconvenience to a major problem. The answer is to safeguard the system and carry out regular and systematic backups of files. A computer which is stolen or damaged can always be replaced but the information it contains may be lost forever.

A backup is any procedure that makes spare copies of files (data, programs, operating system, settings, etc.). Strictly speaking, it also implies these are complete copies of all files that will be kept outside the computer and that these copies are made with special software designed for that purpose. Rigorous backup routines are vital if you need to be up and running in the minimum time following a loss of data. Unfortunately fully automated professional backup equipment is generally quite expensive. However there are many things which are simple and cheap to do and which can preserve those important files.

The first thing is to safely store all those installation disks and CDs which came with the computer. The next thing is to make sure that your system is protected from viruses, spyware or other malware which might cause data loss. If you are connected to the internet and especially if you have a broadband connection you must have a firewall and antivirus program and ideally additional protection against spam email and spyware. Windows XP contains a basic firewall but it is just that i.e. basic. There are excellent all in one products from software houses such as Zone Alarm, Norton and McAfee with smaller providers like Sunbelt Software and Grisoft also selling very efficient, dedicated applications. All such software quickly becomes useless if you do not apply the updates and patches which are sent out by the manufacturers on a regular basis. This also applies to the windows operating system. If you use XP make sure that automatic updates is turned on.

Once you have attended to these basics you need to consider how you are going to back up your important files. Windows applications conveniently save most files to the 'My Documents' folder. It is

a good idea to create subfolder here to classify your information. I like to start by creating a folder for each year, 2005, 2006 and so on. This means that you can easily archive a complete year's worth of data to a CD or DVD which can be kept in a safe place. You then only have to backup the current year's data regularly. How often, really depends on how frequently you produce documents. If you use the computer daily to produce new files then a daily backup is in order, if only weekly perhaps a weekly backup is ok.

For your regular backups you have a wide range of options. Most pcs these days have a CD or DVD writer which means you can easily make a copy of your files to rewritable media. Alternatively you can purchase a standalone hard drive or even install a second hard drive in the PC on the assumption that it is unlikely that two drives will fail at once. However fire, flood or a burglar could quite easily deprive you of all the equipment which is why it is best to have a way of keeping the backups in a separate location to the computer. This pushes you towards removable media such as CD/DVD, stand alone hard drives, memory sticks/pen drives or possibly an online archive service. Larger organisations will probably want to invest in a tape system where the backup is stored on a removable cassette. To save you the pain of doing the backup manually there you can use software applications to do the job automatically. Whatever medium you choose it is important to carry out the backups regularly and to check that the information on them can be retrieved. Many folk have been caught out when the automatic backup system has never been checked for correct operation. **Graham Scott**

About the author: Graham Scott was a Moulton Parish Councillor for over 25 years he is now is clerk to Davenham PC. Before taking early retirement he was IT Security Manager for ICI Chlor-Chemicals.

SNOOKERED?

Henbury Parish Council has a snooker table that has become surplus to requirements.

The table is 7 foot by 3 foot 6 inches, has its own legs and a green baize top. It is in good order. The Council will likely accept a fairly nominal sum for it if the purchaser is prepared to come and collect it! Bear in mind ... it will be heavy.

If you know of a community group that might be interested, please contact Susan Harding at the County Office and she will pass on your details to Mike Wooton at Henbury.

CHESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Invitation

The Chairman of the County Council, Councillor Neville Price, will be hosting a large service in Chester Cathedral on 25 March next year at 3.30pm.

The theme of the service will be to celebrate the County Council's links with Town and Parish Councils. All Town and Parish Councils in Cheshire will be invited to attend and formal invitations will be sent out in January 2007.

Please put this date in your 'council' diary – we can't complain we have not been given good notice this time!

STANDARDS BOARD OF ENGLAND **BULLETIN No 30**

The latest issue of the bulletin from the Standards Board for England is now available.

Highlights of this issue of the bulletin include:

- **The referrals process** - types of complaints we do not refer for investigation
- **Monitoring local investigations** - details of our new approach
- **Research on standards committees** - research on their role in supporting and regulating authorities
- **Dealing with the press** - advice for dealing with enquiries about investigations

The bulletin is a roundup of news and guidance for officers and members, providing the latest news, features and guidance on the Code of Conduct and the work of the Standards Board for England. It is published every two months. Past issues are available at

www.standardsboard.co.uk/Publications/TheBulletin/

If you do not have access to the internet, but would like a copy of the bulletin please contact Susan Harding at the County Office and she will send you a print.

SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

ASSISTANT TOWN CLERK

20 hours per week. Salary to £11,295

The local council wishes to improve its service to the community by strengthening its staff with an assistant to the present Town Clerk. Candidates should have sound secretarial, IT and personal assistant skills and experience. It is anticipated that the successful candidate will progress with training to be eligible for appointment as Town Clerk.

Sandbach is a market town in the Borough of Congleton and is currently implementing a Market Town Initiative. The Council is aiming for quality status. It has an exciting vision of the future with a heavy agenda.

It is based in its own offices in the Sandbach Literary Institution building at Hightown, Sandbach. The hours are to be worked from Monday to Friday with some evening work and with occasional weekend requirements.

Apply for a Job Description and application form by emailing the Town Clerk at clerk@sandbach.gov.uk or by telephoning him on 01270 759959. Alternatively, access the Council's website www.sandbach.gov.uk.

The closing date is 15 September 2006

PARISH CLERK VACANCY

Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall Parish Council

Part time parish clerk required by Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall Parish Council to produce agendas, take minutes at Council Meetings (usually 6 per year), follow up action points, receive and deal with correspondence and administer the accounts.

This is a salaried position, (approx 3 hours pw @ £7.846/hour) Regular liaison with the Chairman of the Council is also required. Computer literacy and internet connection preferred.

Tel (01829) 732059 for further information and to arrange interview.

'Magistrates and probation working together with your community to improve public confidence in sentencing and raise awareness of the effectiveness of community penalties.'



Local Crime: Community Sentence (LCCS)

Cheshire Project

The aim of the initiative is to enable the general public to better understand how offenders are sentenced in the local courts and how they are supervised by the Probation Service in the community.



Cheshire Magistrates and staff from the National Probation Service Cheshire Area are working together to:

- ① improve public confidence in sentencing;
- ① raise awareness of the effectiveness of community penalties.



In order to achieve this, the Local Crime: Community Sentence (LCCS) scheme arranges for Magistrates and Probation staff from the Cheshire Probation Area, working in pairs, to make presentations to members of the public in a wide range of organisational settings.

We wish to meet up with community groups in Cheshire who would like to know more about how offenders are dealt with. This will be done by involving audiences in a sentencing exercise, using a case study of an offender and their offence, together with relevant background information. The audience will be informed as to how decisions are arrived at in determining the most appropriate sentence to impose. The presentation will continue to outline how the Probation Service supervises offenders in the community and what sanctions can be imposed on those who do not fully comply.

This is a lively and interactive presentation where members of the audience are invited to express their own opinions and views about the sentencing of offenders. Its aim is to increase awareness of what takes place in the criminal courts and to provide a greater understanding of how the system works.

We are looking for community groups in Cheshire who feel they would benefit from such a presentation. The presentations are also ideal for mature students in Universities and Colleges of Further Education. The presentation takes a minimum of one hour to complete to give the audience opportunity to participate and can take place during the daytime or the evening. The presentation does require a minimum of 12 participants and no more than 25 in order to be successful and rewarding for all involved.

For more information please contact Liz Gaughran, LCCS Co-ordinator, telephone 01244 394500 or email liz.gaughran@cheshire.probation.gsi.gov.uk.

CHESHIRE'S RURAL TOURING NETWORK

Please note that the Autumn Season 2006 programme is now available. Contact Cheshire County Council Arts Service on 01244 602839 for copies.

SUMMER MEMORIES ...

Buckingham Palace Garden Party by William Brown

The telephone call from the County Office was the first inkling of this exciting event! The official invite kicks us into action and it's off to hire a morning suite and some suitable 'kit' for Margaret – my wife. Elegance being the order of the day.

The day starts with us parked under the trees in the Mall watching the Guards on horses and horse-drawn coaches pass by. We join the queue to enter the front of Buckingham Palace where security is very thorough – passports and driving licences have to be shown to the police on entering the gates.

Across the courtyard and through a sumptuously decorated room and onto the lawn behind the palace. A continuous supply of lemonade alleviated the effects of the heat and we enjoyed a brief chat with the 'Time Team' crew who were due to dig up part of the lawn and some of Windsor Castle over the August Bank Holiday!

We watched the Queen conversing with selected couples and were free to wander round the gardens. The Royal Family then took their leave to applause from all of the guests. We then retraced our steps to the front of the Palace and caught up with the Lord Mayor of Stoke-on-Trent in his official car.

The following day we headed north, back to our normal lives but with the memory of a marvellous day.

Many thanks to William and Margaret for taking time to share that with us.

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Central Networks – up to £2,500 to help build a better community

Central Networks is offering community groups and others the opportunity to apply for funds to build better and safer local environments.

The fund supports projects such as improving safety in a children's playground or building a nature reserve on old waste ground – they will consider a wide range of applications.

If you are in the Central Networks distribution region you may be eligible to apply. For more information and an application form why not visit their website at www.central-networks.co.uk