



NEWSLETTER

No.113 - March 2007

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

In the last edition of the Newsletter I referred to two important developments then taking place.

Firstly the Revised Code of Conduct was published in January 2007. Many of you will already have grappled with the proposed changes and will have fed them in by the closing date of the 9th March. As with the initial introduction of the Code the Association expects to be providing training courses during May to ensure that we are aware of the implications of the agreed changes. If it is timely you may wish to have sight of the Association's response.

Secondly and arising from the Local Government White Paper both the Cheshire Country Council and Chester City Council have submitted proposals for unitary local government for Cheshire. The County Council prefer a single county unitary whereas the Districts represented by Chester City opt for a more devolved 2 or alternatively 3 unitaries based on the existing District boundaries.

It is expected that central government through DCLG will make known their preferences by end March. This will be followed by a period of consultation with various partner organisations before a final decision is announced in July. Whether this consultation will include parish councils remains to be clarified.

Meanwhile the Association is actively liaising with both the County and City Councils to ensure that the parish council interests are kept to the fore. It is not expected that the status quo will be an option so change will become inevitable.

Town and parish councils especially those with Quality status can expect to come under pressure to take on more service delivery responsibilities within their communities. The Association staff at Burleydam are there to help Clerks seeking advice on how best to meet the challenges which lie ahead.

ROGER PARKIN

ANNUAL PARISH/TOWN MEETINGS ... A little light on a muddy subject ...

Round about now the County Office begins to field a number of queries regarding the Annual Parish (or Town) Meeting. Who, what, where, when

Each of us has developed a format that we have not challenged – some hold the Annual Parish Meeting, the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council and an Ordinary Parish Council Meeting on the same night! Confusing ... you bet.

The Local Government Act 1972 Sch 12 para 14(1) and (3) requires an Annual Parish Meeting (in an area with a Parish Council) to be held between 1 March and 1 June (inclusive) and must not begin before six o'clock in the evening.

The parish meeting is made up of the local government electors registered for the area and the Chairman of the Parish Council should preside. If s/he is unavailable then the meeting will elect a chairman for the meeting. In order to identify who is eligible to attend (and potentially vote) the electoral registration officer, if requested to do so, must provide a free copy

THE CHESHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

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of the relevant section of the electoral register (*Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regs 2001, SI 2001/341, reg 47*).

The ordinary notice of the parish meeting is **seven** days (*LGA 1972 Sch 12 para 15(2)*) and a signed notice advertising the meeting displayed in a prominent place.

Most parish councils use this forum as a means of informing the electors of the work that the council has been involved in over the past year – an Annual Report of sorts.

The quorum of the meeting is **two** and decisions are taken by a majority of those eligible to vote (see register earlier). Although the parish meeting may discuss parish affairs its resolutions can only guide the parish council not command it.

The parish council bears the expense of the parish meeting (*LGA 1972 s150(2)*) and it is reasonable to provide refreshments, speakers or other similar attractions to ensure a good turnout.

WHAT KIND OF FUTURE DO YOU WANT?

Would you like to be sprinting at 80? Or zooming around in a self-driving car?

Would you like a robot to serve your breakfast? Would you be happy for computers at the supermarket to know what's in your fridge?

Would you have a new heart grown from stem cells?

These questions form part of **sciencehorizons** – the first ever widespread public engagement programme designed to get the nation talking about what we want from science and technology in the future.

sciencehorizons invites community groups across the UK to have their say by **requesting a free sciencehorizons**

discussion pack. The **sciencehorizons** discussion pack contains everything a group needs to run a discussion and send in their views.

The pack contains stories about what life might be like for a set of fictional characters in 2025, and asks the group to discuss their reactions to these stories, record their views on the forms supplied and return their responses to sciencehorizons. Groups do not need to have an interest in science to take part – **sciencehorizons** is for everyone.

Discussion packs can be requested via the website www.sciencehorizons.org.uk, by calling 020 8683 6602 or by emailing contact@sciencehorizons.org.uk.

The results of discussions across the UK will help the Government to understand the public's hopes and concerns about the way science and technology could be used in the future.

CLERKS SALARIES

This is the time of year when we start to field questions about the increase in salaries for the forthcoming financial year.

We don't usually get the update until about June/July so it is usual to backdate any agreed increase from 1st April. We circulate the information as soon as we have sight of it. But, how do you know if you should increase the salary? Well, the starting point is the Contract of Employment ... do exactly what is says on the label! No contract ... Contact Jackie Weaver at the County Office for a model contract of employment and get working on it. ALL employees should have a contract – it protects both the employer and the employee and everyone knows what is expected of them and what they can expect in return.

The National Association of Local Councils in conjunction with the Society of Local Council Clerks has produced an excellent guide to employment and an electronic copy can be

obtained from the County Office on request.

Although they no longer promote the electorate figure as a means of calculating the number of hours to be worked, they do agree that the minimum number of hours necessary to do the basic work in the smallest of councils (i.e. < 250 electors) is 12.5 hour per month. Does your Council accord with this?

As always, if your Council needs assistance with any employment matters, the Chairman or Clerk should contact the County Office to discuss their issues – in confidence.

APPEAL COURT RULING OVER CARAVAN ENFORCEMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Court of Appeal has upheld a High Court ruling that stop notices when applied to caravans did not breach human rights legislation...

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/news/?1115314843339>



JUST A QUICK REMINDER

MACAW is a new IT support organisation to support the voluntary and community sector groups in Cheshire and Warrington with general computer, or ICT, support.

If you have a problem with your computer or printer, the first step is to look at their knowledge base on their website if you have access to the internet - www.MACAW.org.uk

There are many guides there to help you solve the problem for yourself first. If you cannot get the answer you need, then, you can phone through to the team on **0845 337 0577** and they will endeavour to help you.

Can rural councillors make a difference?

The Local Government Bill currently going through Parliament proposes a stronger role for local councillors. But while 88% of councillors feel they are effective or very effective in their role, recent research by the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) has revealed that nearly half of rural people do not believe that they can influence decisions, and only a quarter of rural people would channel their views through their local councillor.

The Commission for Rural Communities has therefore launched a national inquiry to explore the opportunities and challenges for rural councillors and what stands in the way of them doing more to help rural people have greater influence over local decisions.

Speaking about the inquiry, Stuart Burgess, chair of the CRC and rural advocate said: “We know that rural councillors play a hugely important role on behalf of rural communities. But we also know that many rural people do not feel involved in local decision making, even though they would like their views to be heard.

“The Commission for Rural Communities is therefore seeking views about how to strengthen the role of local councillors in rural areas. We want to hear people’s views, experiences and ideas about what works, what needs changing and what the role of councillors should be in the future.”

The Commission has set out six areas where it is seeking information. These include:

- Examples where rural councillors are helping their community influence local decisions
- The barriers and constraints that stand in the way of rural councillors doing more
- Why people sometimes chose other routes, such as local charities or community groups, to influence local decisions
- What the role of councillors should be in the future and what is needed to unlock that potential.

Mr Burgess added, "We're keen to hear from rural councillors and parish clerks, community groups, local partnerships, council officials, business associations and anyone with ideas and experience they want to share. We will be exploring the issues people raise with us in a series of visits over the spring, and all the information will be used to shape the inquiry's final recommendations for action."

Details of how people can get involved in the inquiry, with a full set of the inquiry's questions, are on the Commission's website www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk. The deadline for sending in views is Friday 18 May.

DIS 650

Clerk and Council of the Year 2007 awards launched

The search is on to find the AON/NALC council and clerk of the year 2007. Following the recognition received by Richard Bowran for his work as clerk at Newport Parish Council, and Burgess Hill Town Council we want to highlight and promote the work of the best clerk and councils across the country.

We want to recognise those who have made a distinct contribution to their communities over the past 12 months. We know that councils and clerks make valuable contributions over a number of years – but the awards are recognising the work of your clerk or your council over the past 12 months.

Cllr Ken Cleary, chairman of NALC said: "We welcome applications and bids from all parish and town councils who can clearly demonstrate how effectively and efficiently their service delivery and representation has been in the past year and the real difference that this has made to the local community."

A prize of £500 will be made to the council crowned Council of the Year, with Clerk of the Year receiving a two-night hotel break, including dinner, bed and breakfast.

Nominating a council or clerk for the awards is simple. You can download an application form from the NALC website. Simply

complete the form and send it to NALC by 25 May 2007.

The closing date for all applications is 25th May 2007. All submissions should be made to NALC, with the appropriate entry form attached. Full details are available on www.nalc.gov.uk, e-mail awards@nalc.gov.uk, or call 020 7637 1865.

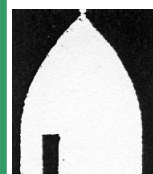
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Planning together: new guide to help shape sustainable communities

A guide offering practical advice to local authorities on how to work most effectively with strategic partners in the shaping of sustainable, mixed communities has been launched by Angela Smith MP, minister for communities and local government.

Planning Together, LSPs and Spatial Planning: a practical guide seeks to help improve collaboration between local planning authorities and those involved with Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) to help in the creation of good places and the provision of better local services.

Planning Together, LSPs and Spatial Planning: a practical guide can be found here: www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1505906



BOLLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

Applications are invited for the post of
TOWN CLERK
Up to 18 hpw
£22,000 pro rata (dependent on experience)

Full particulars from

*Bollington Town Hall
Wellington Road, Bollington, SK10 5JR
01625 572985*

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