



# NEWSLETTER

No.116 - September 2007

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

I am writing this just as I am about to start my last year as your Chairman. Local Government reorganisation will present the Association with many challenges which I trust will motivate my successor whoever he or she may be to come forward during the coming year.

Whilst on the subject of local government reorganisation you will have seen that the Association has been careful to take a non-partisan position, based on a willingness to talk and work with any of the councils when developing their proposals for unitary government for the County. In its final submission to the government consultation process, the Association stated that we hoped that a definitive decision would now be made removing months of uncertainty so that everyone could start work towards implementing whatever decision was made. In my view - after declaring that the County proposals met all the criteria set out in the invitation - asking the Districts to look again at their proposal and have a second chance of developing their financial viability in greater detail suggest a lack of impartiality in the adjudication process. Many of you will have noticed that City regions are mentioned, a structure of which many town and parish councils will be largely unaware and upon which they have not been consulted. The Secretary of State takes the view that an East/West split would align with the economic focus of the conurbations to provide strategic leadership. I am not persuaded that this will deliver local community engagement and empowerment for Cheshire.

If and when a change to unitary status is imposed the consequences for parish councils will almost certainly be greater politicisation so I make no excuse for adopting a political stance now. The Districts' proposals as contained in the document - People & Places, submitted by Chester City Council - is particularly vague on the part to be played by existing parish councils and a policy towards increased parishing of non-parished areas. Whilst I acknowledge the intention to flesh out these proposals, without clear statements or policy on the manner in which town and parish councils will work, the resources necessary and the authority to be devolved within the East and West Unitaries, I fail to see how these proposals support, develop and benefit our town and parish councils.

The Single Unitary proposal appears well researched, presented and costed. Whatever doubts we may have

on the area committee proposals and the degree of 'local' which this will achieve, town and parish councils have a defined role, responsibilities and funding to enable them to perform. It would be for town and parish councils to fight their corner to ensure that a single unitary council actually delivers on its promises.

The Secretary of State and Ministers in announcing their decision mentioned the importance of the City Regions and their strategic relevance to the twin East/West unitary proposals. The meaning of this statement is unclear since the boundaries of the city regions are ill-defined - something highlighted during the Examination in Public for the Regional Spatial Strategy but parked at the Hearing. From my experience the rural parts of the existing District areas are often forgotten in favour of the pressures from the higher population urban centres. How much greater will this pressure be from the major cities of Liverpool and Manchester on the proposed relatively small twin unitaries in Cheshire? In my opinion a single unitary would have the size and clout to better stand up to these pressures. With an empowered area committee structure and greater influence from its size a single unitary for Cheshire would be better equipped to deliver services to all residing in our towns and parishes whilst ensuring that rural communities are not marginalised.

**ROGER PARKIN - County Chairman**

### Cheshire Association of Local Councils

#### 2007 ANNUAL MEETING

*Middlewich Civic Hall  
Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> October 6.30pm*

**YOUR** opportunity to make **YOUR** Councils  
views known on:

***Affiliation Fees  
Election of Officers  
Local Government Review  
The Quality Council Scheme***

We aim to make this our liveliest and most interesting  
AGM to date ... with **YOUR** help.

*Booking Form and further information available from  
Susan Harding (contact details below)*

**THE CHESHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**

**Blue Bache Barn • Burleydam • Whitchurch • Shropshire • SY13 4AW**

**☎ 01948 871314 • 📞 07957 804764 • 📠 0870 1319 465 • [www.chalc.org.uk](http://www.chalc.org.uk)**

## CHESHIRE COMMUNITY COUNCIL – NEW GRANTS SCHEMES:

Cheshire Community Council is currently involved with the Plunkett Foundation's new grants scheme funded by the NWDA. Their role is to offer support and advice on the application process for the Community Initiative Fund. The programme was launched on the 15th of May 2007 and will end on the 31st of March 2008. 'The programme actively promotes and supports rural community-led initiatives that will improve rural services'. There are two funds for rural communities:

### The Community Initiative Fund

Targets Rural Community Groups wishing to develop existing or new voluntary projects that will improve services in their local areas. Grants are available up to £7,000 as well as individual facilitation to help with general needs.

#### Who can apply?

- Voluntary Organisations
- Community Groups
- Charities
- Parish Councils
- Individuals
- Be a group with a defined social purpose

#### Projects must:

- Be located in targeted areas specified by the fund please follow link to see if you are eligible.  
[www.ruralcommunityfund.org.uk/eligible.html](http://www.ruralcommunityfund.org.uk/eligible.html)
- Contribute to community sustainability, supporting the economic and or social situation of the community to ensure its future
- Individuals who possess the skills and expertise to implement the project successfully, or they are able to show how they will acquire or develop them.

### The Community Enterprise Fund

Rural Community Groups wishing to establish or expand community enterprises which contribute to the rural services and economic improvements in their local communities. Grants available up to £6,000 and up to 5 days advisory support is available per project

#### Who can apply?

- Social Enterprise
- Prospective Social Enterprises
- Voluntary Organisation wishing to develop an enterprise based activity

#### Projects must:

- Be located in targeted areas specified by the fund please follow link to see if you are eligible.  
<http://www.ruralcommunityfund.org.uk/eligible.html>
- Be a group with a defined social purpose
- Have the potential to achieve economic viability, even if this is with the benefit of some minor grant support or voluntary contributions
- Must evidence of local need for the service (e.g. through community consultation, market research, feasibility studies)
- Individuals who possess the skills and expertise to implement the project successfully, or they are able to show how they will acquire or develop them.

For further details contact Tamara Bainbridge 01244 354 118 [tamara.bainbridge@cheshirecc.org.uk](mailto:tamara.bainbridge@cheshirecc.org.uk) or visit [www.ruralcommunityfund.org.uk/index.html](http://www.ruralcommunityfund.org.uk/index.html)

### SCOOTER COMMUTER/WHEELS2WORK

Wheels2Work is a scheme aimed at helping 16-19 year-olds take up employment, training or education, where a lack of suitable public transport prevents them getting there.

A 50cc scooter is provided, complete with training, insurance, helmet and riding gear, for up to six months. The scheme can help with obtaining a driving licence and will pay for the Compulsory Basic Training course.

There is a small charge of £10 per week if you are working, or £6 per week for those going into education/training. Some of the fee is refunded at the end of the loan period, if the scooter comes back in a reasonable condition.

Am I Eligible?

- ? Are you currently unemployed/not in education or training?
- ? Do you have an offer of a job or training or education?
- ? Is the unavailability of public transport stopping you getting there?
- ? Are you 16-19 years of age?

If you can answer yes to the above, then you may be eligible. Most of Cheshire is covered by Wheels2Work. To find out more, call one of the coordinators listed here:

Macclesfield - Sarah Collier 01625 504348  
Crewe - Dave Smith 07985 897 715  
Vale Royal - Paul Crompton 07985 8818  
Chester and E. Port & Neston  
- Bob Hughes 01244 976986

#### **AND KEEPING UP WITH THE 'TRANSPORT' THEME:**

Many thanks to Sharon Angus-Crawshaw (Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council) for drawing our attention to this useful website that anyone can use to match unwanted items up with people who want/need them. This could be useful not only to individuals but also to a range of community groups - <http://uk.freecycle.org/>

#### **PARISH COUNCILS MANAGING CHARITIES**

Does your Council manage charity owned land? Do you have such assets to insure or manage?

If so Frodsham Town Council would very much like to hear from you ... even if you have as many questions as answers!

Please contact Alison Kunaj - Town Clerk Frodsham Town Council on 01928 735233 or by e-mail at [Alison@frodsham.gov.uk](mailto:Alison@frodsham.gov.uk)

#### **PAPERS, PAPERS EVERYWHERE AND NOT AN INCH OF SPACE?**

We are often asked 'What should we do with all the papers that the Council are required to keep

... and how can I get compensation for my lost bedroom - it is full of Council stuff?"

The manner in which documents are kept and preserved is governed by four different types of authority and sometimes give rise to conflicting requirements – Manorial documents are covered by the *Law of Property Act 1922 s 144A(5)*; Tithe documents (*Tithe Act 1946*) and 'Others'. For the purposes of parish councils (in the main) it is the 'others' that we are mainly interested in.

The County Council is required to periodically review preservation orders which parish councils are obliged to regard (*LGA 1972 s226(5)*) and these cover the requirement to keep safe and secure the parish documents such as minutes for example and any other historic documents not covered by the Manorial and Tithe provisions.

So what does that mean for us? First of all we need to sort out what documents we need to retain and for how long. The Association produces a leaflet on Retention of Documents (*available on request from Susan Harding – [susanharding@chalc.org.uk](mailto:susanharding@chalc.org.uk) or 01948 871314*). Then we need to look at secure storage. No one expects fire or flood (!) but it does happen and although much can be replaced, there are parish documents that simply could not be reproduced or replaced (perhaps minutes from the days before computers were in such general use) and these would be lost to the community for ever.

It is important that we make a distinction between those documents it is handy to have around and those which we need to keep although it is rare that we will want to access them. It is also important that we take note of whether the document is held elsewhere (for example planning documents which are held, often electronically, by the Borough Council which may be useful to keep but can be reproduced by the Planning Department if necessary). So if we have papers that are required to be retained and are what we might considered to be suitable for archiving – give them to the professionals to store:

Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies Service  
Cheshire Record Office,  
Duke Street, Chester, Cheshire. CH1 1RL.  
Tel: 01244 602574 Fax : 01244 603812  
[recordoffice@cheshire.gov.uk](mailto:recordoffice@cheshire.gov.uk)

... and rediscover that lost bedroom!

## IT SUPPORT

Just a quick reminder that MACAW has been offering help to Voluntary and non profit organisations through Congleton & District CVS since 2005. The service is currently free and is open to all voluntary and community sector organisations throughout Cheshire and Warrington and the infrastructure groups that support them.

If your organisation is in need of IT support please contact MACAW on 0845 337 0577 and he'll be happy to help you. A feedback page has been created on the MACAW website, where you can view the feedback that has been left by other organisations. The address is [www.macaw.org.uk/feedback.php](http://www.macaw.org.uk/feedback.php).

In the meantime why not try out this month's IT tips – keyboard shortcuts? Press the Windows Logo on your keyboard plus the following keys –

<b>F</b>	Display Find: All Files
<b>F1</b>	Display Windows Help
<b>R</b>	Display Run command
<b>Break</b>	Displays System Properties box
<b>E</b>	Windows Explorer
<b>M</b>	Minimises all open windows
<b>Shift+M</b>	Restores minimised windows
<b>D</b>	Displays desktop
<b>Del</b>	Deletes without being asked

Peter Griffiths - MACAW c/o Congleton CVS  
11 Hope Street, Sandbach, CW11 1BA  
Tel: 0845 3370577 Mob: 07957 893365

## Post offices and village shops

Post offices combined with village shops play a crucial part in rural economies and provide a focus for community life. A new study produced on behalf of the Commission for Rural Communities investigates the significance and co-dependency of combined rural post offices and village shops in England and provides an overall perspective on their viability.

The report updates research first carried out in 1999 by the Countryside Agency and is set against the background of an impending programme of post office closures that will affect both rural and urban areas. For further information, check out: [www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/events/postofficesandvillageshops](http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/events/postofficesandvillageshops) for more information. **DIS 661**

## Supporting parish and town councils at the local level

The Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) has published a new report 'The Features and Characteristics of Successful County Associations of Local Councils' which explores and promotes reform for the parish council sector.

The CRC believe that creating a renewed structure of empowered and influential town and parish councils, with well-organised and effective representation at county level, will help to support strong and sustainable rural communities. For further information, check out the report by visiting <http://tinyurl.com/2nvt3e> **DIS 661**

## Rural Social Enterprise Conference 2007: Inspiring Rural Communities

The Seventh Plunkett Foundation Rural Social Enterprise Conference is being held on the 28th and 29th November 2007, at Hinxtion Hall, Cambridgeshire.

This year's conference will look at Inspiring Rural Communities by using social enterprise approaches to rural development. The East of England Development Agency (EEDA) will be the principle sponsor for the event. Following the success of RSE6, held in the South West region in partnership with RISE, Plunkett will be hosting RSE7 in association with Social Enterprise East of England (SEEE).

We are delighted that Sue Huggins, Head of Network Change at the Post Office will be giving a keynote presentation on day 2 of the conference.

For further information on how to participate as a delegate, speaker, exhibitor or sponsor please contact <mailto:mike.perry@plunkett.co.uk>.

## ENCLOSURES

*If you would like additional copies of any of the enclosure, contact Susan Harding at the County Office*

### ChALC Annual Meeting Booking Form

Registration form and information on the 2007 AGM

### ChALC Annual Meeting Motions Form

If your Council wishes to submit a motion for debate to the 2007 AGM just fill in this form and return to ChALC