



# NEWSLETTER

No.121 - July 2008

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Since the last issue of this Newsletter two important milestones have been passed.

Firstly members of the Executive have attended the inaugural meeting of both Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Shadow Unitary Councils as observers. We are now awaiting the opportunity for a dialogue with the appropriate officers and elected members who I know will be seeking to agree the manner in which their respective authorities can get closer to communities. This includes both listening to what people want of their council but also the delivery of services.

For Parish Councils this may mean the need to consider informal groupings to work on forums with unitary councillors, parish councillors and representatives of the voluntary sector. Are we prepared for change? Will Parish Councils take on responsibilities for further service delivery? It is for these reasons that the Association has promoted the two special meetings, one for the East taking place on the 8<sup>th</sup> July and the other for the West of Cheshire which will have taken place on 23 June. Both meetings are being chaired by Rt Rev Alan Chesters our President and I hope our town and parish councils will be well represented at these important events.

Secondly, the Association, through its membership of the North West Federation of Town and Parish Councils has, subject to formal approval in early September, secured a seat on four of the Leaders Forum sub groups, namely Planning, Transport, Housing and Economic Development, which will be developing proposals for approval by the Regional Leaders Forum - this is the organisation which is replacing the Regional Assembly. This membership should give North West Town and Parish Councils the opportunity to influence strategic decision making in these key areas at the regional level, something we have been striving for.

**ROGER PARKIN - County Chairman**

## Cheshire Association of Local Councils

### 2008 ANNUAL MEETING

*Middlewich Civic Hall - Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 6.30pm*

### Call for motions

The Annual Meeting Motion provides Member Councils with an opportunity to garner the support of the Association Membership in moving forward an issue that is of concern or interest.

The Motion should set out an action that is required by the Association – for example, 'This meeting calls upon the Cheshire Association of Local Councils to lobby/write/review ...'; it should not simply state a position – for example 'This meeting deplores/notes/agrees/disagrees with the statement ...'. The topic of the motion, however, is open to the Council to decide.

Any Member Council wishing to put a motion to the Annual Meeting needs to ensure that there will be someone present and able to put the motion to the meeting and a further person to second the motion. Standing Orders afford the presenter 5 minutes to put the motion to the meeting and subsequent speakers 3 minutes each to respond. Although not essential, additional background information can be particularly helpful in ensuring that delegates understand the purpose or reason behind the motions.

If Member Councils require any assistance with the drafting or presentation of their motions, they may contact Jackie Weaver at the County Office who will assist.

**The closing date for submission of motions is  
31st August 2008**

*For Motion and Booking Form or further information  
contact Susan Harding (details below) or at  
susanharding@chalc.org.uk*

**THE CHESHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**

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## Governance and Accountability for Local Councils

### A Practitioners' Guide 2008 (England)

In 2002 NALC and SLCC published the first edition of this guide to proper accounting practices and audit for local councils. The last time we updated and reissued it was after the update to the Accounts and Audit Regulations in 2003. This new 2008 edition builds on this previous work, and incorporates the changes to Regulations in 2006 and the impact of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

The new 2008 edition presents proper accounting and internal audit practices for financial years 2008/2009 and beyond. The guide will be issued for the first time in electronic format. It is free to download by practitioners from the respective websites of the joint publishers, NALC and SLCC. We will ask practitioners wanting hard copies of the guide to pay for the printing cost.

Over the last year we refreshed the guide in its appearance and for ease of access. It contains updates to the original guide, some extra and some new materials to help practitioners. For example, you will now find:

- a link to the popular publication *Councils Accounts – Your Rights*;
- updates about the thresholds separating basic and intermediate bodies;
- updates for the impact of changes to the Accounts and Audit Regulations and the Audit Commission Act;
- updates reflecting the LGPIH Act 2007;
- new notes on the council as Trustee;
- new notes on making and reporting long-term investments;
- new notes on completing Sections 1, 2 and 4 of the annual return;
- new section on how to carry out a review of internal audit;
- new section on capital budgeting;
- new Part 4 directing the largest councils to relevant proper practices;
- updated and new appendices covering:
  - councils legal powers

- the responsibilities of audited bodies and their appointed auditors
- a 2008 annual return
- links to the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 as amended and CLG's guidance on them
- CLG's guidance on investing
- executive year-end checklist
- updated and extended glossary of terms; and
- an Index

The full document can be found on the NALC website [www.nalc.gov.uk](http://www.nalc.gov.uk) or the SLCC website [www.slcc.co.uk](http://www.slcc.co.uk), or contact Susan Harding at the County Association

### The National Training Strategy (NTS) Bursary Scheme funds

County Training Partnerships and key stakeholders have just been advised of the imminent end to present funds supporting the NTS bursary scheme. The scheme has been supported by stakeholder and government subsidy since its launch in 2004 and was thankfully extended due to money allocated as part of last years Communities and Local Government (CLG) grant.

These funds are soon to come to an end and with no new funding likely in the foreseeable future we are forced to make this announcement. On present take up we estimate that the present fund will last no later than August of this year.

We are pursuing several options which may in the future mean we are able to re-launch the scheme, but in the short term this should not be relied upon.

It is worth preparing potential applicants that their application for a grant may not be successful for the reasons given in this briefing and large numbers of applications received will have a direct impact on the length of time funds will last.

If a point is reached that a number of applications are received with not enough money to pay them, those received and processed first will be those that will be approved. All subsequent applications will be returned with a letter clearly explaining the reasons why.

Notification that funds have actually expired will be issued in subsequent briefings.

## **CHESHIRE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES VOLUNTARY COMMUNITY AND FAITH SECTOR (VCFS) HUB**

We would like to introduce you to the Cheshire Children, Young People and Families HUB.

The HUB was established at the end of 2006 to provide a vehicle for the sector to come together to discuss, share and agree their priorities and to provide a mechanism for other agencies and organisations, including the Cheshire Children's Trust, to link with the sector.

During 2007, the HUB has:

- Gained representation on a range of bodies including The Children's Trust, the Every Child Matters sub groups and the Early intervention and Prevention Board
- Established and maintained links with the Safeguarding Board
- Influenced the priorities set by the Children's Trust for the new Children's Plan
- Expressed concerns around the delay in the Comprehensive Spending Review
- Contributed to discussions on the Integrated Youth Support Service
- Produced the HUB's first newsletter
- Held an annual event introducing the HUB

The HUB is made up of VCFS organisations that come to the HUB from the 6 areas that currently make up Cheshire, as well as providing a range of perspectives on issues that affect children, young people and families including: safeguarding; domestic violence; young carers; youth offending; workforce reform; family support and young parents; health; sport and physical activity; alternative provision; Voluntary Youth Service; Youth 11 – 25. The HUB also recognises that children and young people are different and so it aims to reflect the needs of black and minority ethnic children and young people; disabled children and young people; lesbian, gay and bisexual young people; children and young people from different faiths and children and young people from the Traveller Community.

The HUB has agreed its priorities for the coming year and it intends to:

- Develop the HUB further to ensure that it is inclusive and accountable
- Understand better what the VCFS is and how it can deliver outcomes for children, young people and families
- Maintaining and enhancing relationships with the Children's Trust
- Hold a number of events including training opportunities
- Influence the commissioning processes and ensuring the VCFS has full knowledge of it
- Celebrate the achievements of the HUB and of the VCFS
- Increase the knowledge of the sector around funding
- Establish and maintain a website for the HUB
- Take part in policy and strategy consultations
- Hold the HUBs second annual event

If you would like more information on the HUB then please contact either: Jon Reese at [jon.reese@cheshire.gov.uk](mailto:jon.reese@cheshire.gov.uk) or Alison Navarro mobile: 0797 074 0884 or at [alisonnavarro@btinternet.com](mailto:alisonnavarro@btinternet.com)

### **Making Local Connections**

Parish and town councils are the key to community empowerment and regeneration. The National Association of Local Councils' (NALC) National Conference in Eastbourne (20-22 May) showed that parish and town councils now have the opportunity to further develop their services to enhance their role as advocates and representatives of their communities.

Hazel Blears MP, Secretary of State, Communities and Local Government, said: "We are seeing a new era of modern 'Parish power'. It's high time we got away from stereotypes that parishes are sleepy, out of touch operations. Parishes are about local democracy in action and I'm proud to be strengthening their arm.

"As the smallest unit of local democracy, their small size belies the big impact they can have. The truth is new parishes can revive democracy, and modernise communities by putting more power into local people's hands. That's why we are boosting the power of parishes, devolving more power from

central and local governments to local people.

“Our forthcoming Empowerment White Paper will herald a significant shift of power, giving people a real say over the local issues that matter to them – schools, hospitals, police and housing. We need to learn from the best, and many parish councils are past masters at giving local people a voice.”

Dr Stuart Burgess, rural advocate and chairman of the CRC, told the conference that: “So as this agenda moves forward into the Empowering communities White paper – later this summer – we want to see efforts being applied to creating a much stronger marriage between elected and participative forms of local democracy. So I feel a broader change of direction is needed towards greater trust and decentralisation to local government – including an integral role for the parish and town council tier.”

“In essence – we support greater ‘Double Devolution’. Whitehall to local government and from local to parish – working in partnership with strong community voices”.

“It is only at the very local level that policies and services can truly reflect local circumstances.”

Cllr Ken Cleary, chairman, NALC, told the conference that: “The Local Government Act 2007 were a major achievement for town and parish councils: the power of community wellbeing; scope for new town and parish councils in London; new initiatives to develop our role; and new programmes to support the creation of new town and parish councils, especially in urban areas. We must seize upon these opportunities. We must invest resources in ensuring that our tier remains central Government thinking on community empowerment.” **DIS**

### **Local Government Charity Toolkit**

The Charity Commission has launched an online toolkit aimed at helping local councils manage their relationship with their charitable sector.

The toolkit is primarily aimed at helping local councils avoid the pitfalls of managing the charities of which they are trustees. It also raises awareness of some key issues about working with charities in the planning and delivery of local services.

The toolkit uses real case studies to highlight

some of the potential pitfalls and offer a range of tips on how to avoid them. The toolkit also offers some potential options for modernising, merging, or even winding up local authority run charities. The toolkit is designed to help councillors, legal and corporate teams, accounts, estates management and parks & leisure departments to ask the right questions and avoid expensive mistakes and/or lengthy casework involving the Charity Commission.

<http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/enhancingcharities/toolindex.asp> **DIS EXTRA**

## **GREAT BUDWORTH PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Vacancy for Clerk**

Great Budworth is a Cheshire village with approximately 300 electors. The village is recognised throughout the county as an area of particular historical interest.

The Parish Clerk provides managerial and administrative support to the Parish Council. The post is part-time (approximately 5 hours per week). Working hours are flexible. Salary range £8.595 - £9.827 per hour

The Clerk conducts Parish Council business and arranges and attends all Council and Committee meetings (approx 12 per annum). The Clerk is also the Responsible Financial Officer.

The successful applicant will have an interest in Parish activities; possess general office skills, including word processing and internet access and experience of the production of accounts. The successful applicant should be willing to obtain the CiLCA qualification in order to support the Parish Council's intention to become a Quality Council

Further information from Hilary Brudenell, Clerk to the Parish Council (01606 892404)

Closing date end of July 2008

### **ENCLOSURES:**

*The following documents have been mailed with this newsletter. Please ask your clerk for a copy or contact us directly for additional copies.*

**Annual Meeting Booking Form**

**Annual Meeting Motion Form**