



NEWSLETTER

No.120 - May 2008

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

I am writing this on the day before the elections of councillors for the two new Unitary Councils. Since the announcement was made that Cheshire was to be divided into Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East the Association has been active in seeking to meet with officers and councillors comprising the transitional groups. It will only be after mid May when the new councillors take up their posts that the direction each of the Unitaries take will start to become clearer.

In the meantime the organisation of the Association will remain as it is at present. So, our Area Meetings will continue to echo the District Boundaries and the County Office will cover the geographic area of Cheshire County Council, Warrington, Halton and Trafford. For the time being at least, there should be 'no change' in the way our member councils work with us.

Although there are many who are still deeply unhappy with the decision that was taken by the Minister to form these unitary councils they are a fact now. It is now the responsibility of everyone to make the system work for the benefit of the residents of Cheshire.

The Association's Executive Committee has been reviewing progress with actions taken on the motions debated at the last Annual Meeting. Updates will appear in the Newsletter but I would urge parish councils to start considering whether to submit a motion soon. The timetable for the circulation of the agenda papers is necessarily being brought forward so that everyone has more time to discuss any matters arising from them with their Councils prior to attending the meeting.

It would also help the Executive if your motions were properly worded as this will avoid editing. We will be providing guidance on the drafting of the motions and the staff at the County Office will always be pleased to assist. I also hope that Town and Parish Councils will recognise that if a number of motions are substantially the same

they should be combined, but again we would seek to work with those Councils that submitted the motions to seek their agreement.

Since I last wrote, the Association on behalf of the CLG (seemingly we must not refer to 'department' any more) hosted a meeting on e-Planning on behalf of GO-NW where members were brought up to date with the latest developments. Although a number of problems were identified with e-Planning, on the whole all attendees found the session useful and were broadly supportive as long as hard copy papers were to still be made available on request.

ROGER PARKIN - County Chairman

Cheshire Association of Local Councils

Local Government Reorganisation Information Forums - chaired by Rt Rev Alan Chesters (ChALC President)

As the arrangements gather pace this will be an opportunity for you and your council to find out how the Implementation Plans are progressing and how the arrangements affect your parish.

We will be holding an east and a west forum - details below:

23rd June 2008
Anne Bingham-Homes
West Cheshire

8th July 2008
Vivien Horton
East Cheshire
Astbury Village Hall
7.30-9.00

To register an interest in attending, and for details of time and venue, contact Susan Harding (details below) or at susanharding@chalc.org.uk

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ANNUAL MEETING 2007 - MOTIONS UPDATE

Each Annual Meeting of the Association sees a number of motions put forward by member councils to be discussed and (hopefully) supported by the meeting. Following that the Executive Committee agrees what it believes is the best way forward to achieve the outcome.

Although we try to ensure that we communicate any progress to the parish council itself, we tend not to advertise more widely but in this newsletter we are trying to address that point. Below are some of the motions from the 2007 Annual Meeting and information on what has happened with them since.

ChALC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MOTION

The original motion put forward by the Executive Committee was amended by the Annual Meeting to read:

“This meeting calls upon the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to acknowledge the importance of Town and Parish Councils in the proposed Local Government Reorganisation in Cheshire and to ensure that whichever option is adopted it very clearly sets out the terms for an active role for Town and Parish Councils in the future governance of Cheshire.

The proposal by Cheshire County Council for a single unitary structure made clear, reasoned and costed arrangements for an enhanced role for town and parish councils. The District proposal was lacking in detail thus making comparison impossible. Any decision by the Secretary of State based simply on the ability of the New Authority to pay for reorganisation should be rejected. Considerable weighting however should be given to that proposal which ensures a high standard of service to the Public at the lowest cost to the Council Tax Payers of Cheshire”

This motion enabled the Association to write to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) expressing the views of the Town and Parish Councils in Cheshire (many of whom will have written independently in any event).

The decision is now being implemented - an east

and west unitary authority - and ChALC is very actively involved in working with the Joint Implementation Team (JIP) to ensure the best possible outcomes for our Town and Parish Councils. (Please see notice of meetings on the front cover of this newsletter).

BETCHTON PARISH COUNCIL MOTION (1)

Some of the motions put to the Annual Meeting can be very parochial as this one from Betchton shows:

“This meeting is very concerned that the Environment Agency are not performing the tasks that they have promised or been ordered to undertake in respect of the Malkins Bank golf course investigation, following a successful prosecution involving the Environment Agency, they ignored a court directive to supervise the resulting clear up which they put down to lack of time”.

Although the parish council was already working with the Environment Agency, with their permission we contacted them and added our weight to the discussions. Betchton have since advised us that they have received a report from the EA and now consider the matter closed.

BETCHTON PARISH COUNCIL MOTION (2)

The original motion put by the Council highlighted the challenges that smaller councils (particularly those without broadband connections) were facing as more and more information comes to them electronically. It was amended by the meeting to read:

“This meeting calls on Councils to improve their IT Systems”

Cheshire is perhaps not as well served as some areas for IT support for its parishes, but there is some good ‘stuff’ on offer and the District and County Council have generally responded favourably with requests for assistance.

We were able to secure Betchton a laptop computer to try build up their IT resources and in addition we signposted the services of MACAW who offer telephone and on site support for community and voluntary groups and through our involvement with the RSCP (Rural Social and Community Programme) we have had this extended to include parish and town councils.

682/7 – Community-owned shop unveils new premises

A village shop in Devon, which was taken over by the local community when its owners retired in 2004, has unveiled purpose-built new premises.

As in many villages across the UK, when the owners of Berrynarbor's local shop retired, the residents faced the prospect of seeing their shop and post office disappear. But Berrynarbor's residents decided that the community would take ownership of the shop to keep it going.

Three active residents in the Devon village sent letters to the 200 households in Berrynarbor asking whether they would be willing to invest money to help save the shop from closure and if they would continue to use the shop if it was community owned.

They formed Berrynarbor Community Enterprise Limited and offered £1 shares in the co-operative to residents of the village. Within weeks the co-operative has raised over £10,000 from the community. This, in addition to grant finance, meant the co-operative could take over the shop in October 2004 and appoint a full-time manager to run the shop.

However, at this point, the co-operative was leasing the shop premises from the former owners. Not only was this costly, but the owners were seeking planning permission to turn the shop into a house. So, in the long term, the co-operative needed new premises.

Pam Parke, a member of the management committee, said: "We unveiled our new, purpose-built shop premises on 31 March 2008. It is such great news for the co-operative and the village. Not only have we got a good building; we have also extra space for a coffee area and for a computer terminal for residents to use."

DIS Extra

681/22 – Have your say

Planning applications generate around one million consultation requests per year: from Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to a wide range of consultees including national agencies, regional bodies, highways departments, parish and town councils, amenities societies, utility companies and the citizen.

These consultations are often paper-based and

can be expensive, time consuming and inefficient for each LPA and consultee to handle.

To help improve this process, and to complete the e-Planning process, the Planning Portal is launching a new e-Consultation Hub which will enable all the stakeholders in the planning process to complete their consultations online.

As a part of the ongoing stakeholder consultation they are inviting opinions and comment from Parish and Town Councils and are hosting an online questionnaire (which can also be printed off and returned by post) on e-Consultation and how it may affect your work.

The online questionnaire closes to responses on Tuesday 13th May 2008. The responses will be used by the Planning Portal to help them engage with Parish and Town Councils and help address any issues which may arise.

Do not miss your chance to get involved and register the opinions of your parish or town Council: www.planningportal.gov.uk/econsultation

DIS Extra

681/27 – Local democracy needs you

Local people are being given the opportunity to have their say on improving local services and reviving communities today as Hazel Blears calls for contributions to the new Empowerment White Paper, launching an online public discussion forum. Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Hazel Blears is asking people to give their opinions by email, letter, or by contributing to an online discussion forum. The White Paper, due out in the summer, will outline Whitehall's ambition to give communities a stronger voice in local decision-making and the delivery of local services, and communities are being asked to contribute their opinions on how government can change for the better. Blears has launched the introductory document Unlocking the talent of our communities outlining the ways local people can have their say. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/729418>

DIS Extra

FIFTH CHAIRMEN'S AND MAYORS' LUNCH – FRIDAY, 30 MAY, 2008, LANCASTER, LANCASHIRE

As you will be aware the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act progressed smoothly through Parliament recently. Dame Jane

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Roberts completed her Councillors' Commission in December. The Commission for Rural Communities is currently revealing the findings of its inquiry into strengthening the role of rural councillors which has also recently concluded. I am in no doubt that this is one of the busiest, challenging and most exciting years in the first tier movement.

The Act contains various references to themes such as chairmanship and mayoralty which directly affect Chairmen and Mayors. Being a Chairman or Mayor, especially on a larger council, at a time when more services are likely to be devolved to town and parish councils, can be a difficult task, requiring both flexibility and perseverance.

There will undoubtedly be implications and challenges for parish and town councils over the next few years in meeting the demands from both Government and our own communities in providing a clear vision and strong Leadership, in dealing with constantly changing economic, social and cohesion challenges.

In order to provide an opportunity to discuss these issues and a valuable networking experience, the National Association is organising a fifth informal Chairmen's and Mayors' Lunch for Chairmen and Mayors on larger councils, which will be held on Friday, 30 May, 2008, in Lancaster, Lancashire.

This event will be a good chance for Chairmen and Mayors on larger councils to:

- *share with others experiences of being a Chairman or Mayor on a larger council, (be they good or bad!);*
- *share views on being effective role models for a community or town;*
- *spend time with like-minded Chairmen and Mayors on larger councils from around the country;*
- *develop your network of contacts and maybe make new friends.*

This fifth Lunch will be hosted by Cllr. Hazel Williams as Chairman of the National Association's Larger Local Councils' Committee. We will start with drinks and brief introductions followed by a sit-down lunch (with wine and soft drinks). We will also have some brief words on the experience of being a Chairman or Mayor at a larger council, from a guest larger council

Chairman or Mayor – at the start of the lunch.

We would encourage Leaders or leading members attending the event to arrive at 13:00 in the ground floor bar area, Royal King's Arms, 75 Market Street, Lancaster, LA1 1HP, please. If you would like to attend, please ask Susan Harding for a Booking Form and return it to the NALC Office with payment, by no later than Friday, 23 May, 2008. Other booking information about this event is on the form.

For more information about this event, please contact, Chris Borg, Larger Councils' Development Officer on 020 7290 0741 or by e-mail at chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk.

Whitegate & Marton Parish Council Vacancy for Parish Clerk

The Parish Clerk provides important managerial and clerical support to the Whitegate & Marton Parish Council. The post is part-time (approx 5-6 hours per week). Working hours are flexible and a salary is paid.

The role involves supporting day to day parish council business and providing a parish communication link with local authorities. The clerk is required to arrange and take minutes at one formal parish council meeting each month.

Requirements for the role are an interest in Parish activities, general office skills including word processing, internet access and a home office facility.

Please apply by end May 2008 to:

**Keith Rayner,
Chairman, Whitegate & Marton Parish Council
tel: 01606 883208**

ENCLOSURES:

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

Vitalise - Fundraising Letter from National Charity
CiLCA Support Session Notice and Booking Form
East - West Seminar Booking Form