



NEWSLETTER

No.123 - September 2008

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

This will very likely be my last Chairman's Message for the ChALC Newsletter as I shall be standing down after 4 years as Chairman. I do not wish to dwell on the past but exhort town and parish councils to reach out and grasp the opportunities you are being given to enable you to do more for your communities if this is what you wish.

Most of the Cheshire Town and Parish Councils sent representatives to the recent QPC Forum and a number of aspiring Quality Councils attended and heard David Mahon from NALC (National Association of Local Councils) setting out the changes in the rules governing accreditation and re-accreditation. I urge town and parish councils not to hold back and to make all efforts to strengthen their resolve to the Quality scheme since I am convinced that the new Unitary Councils will look especially to you for support in the delivery of the neighbourhood working agenda.

All town and parish councils, whether they have Quality status or not will I hope take whatever steps they deem appropriate to give value to their local communities to justify the precept that the electorate is called upon to pay.

On the subject of the reorganisation of local government in Cheshire, ChALC will continue to provide leadership and help all town and parish councils with the challenges that lie ahead.

The Association hosted two meetings, one in the east and one in the west to enable councillors to understand better the environment in which they will be working from April next. These meetings scratched the surface and further meetings are being planned.

In the meantime parish councillors should network with their local shadow councillors to keep abreast of any developments.

ROGER PARKIN - County Chairman

Cheshire Association of Local Councils

2008 ANNUAL MEETING

*Middlewich Civic Hall
Thursday 23rd October 6.30pm*

Your opportunity to participate in the debate and to vote on matters of interest to parish and town councils such as:

***Affiliation Fee Rates
Protection of the Green Belt
Rural Post Offices
Public Conveniences
and of course ...
LGR!***

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

CHESHIRE COMMUNITY ACTION (nee Cheshire Community Council) NEWSLETTER

For updates and information on the work of Cheshire Community Action please click on the link below to open the latest edition of their newsletter.

<http://www.cheshireaction.org.uk/forms/newsletters/Newsletter-September-2008.pdf>

Or if you prefer your newsletters the old fashioned way ... contact Chris Davenport (Office Supervisor at Cheshire Community Action):

96 Lower Bridge Street, Chester, CH1 1RU
t: 01244 323602 f: 01244 401036
e: chris.davenport@cheshireaction.org.uk
w: www.cheshireaction.org.uk

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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT NEW MODEL PUBLICATION SCHEME

Members may already be aware of the requirement to adopt the new model publication scheme and will have been advised directly by the Information Commissioner.

For those clerks/councils who need to know more NALC have produced Legal Topic Notes L03-08 and L19-08 which will give much more information. Copies of these are available on request through susanharding@chalc.org.uk.

As stated therein the proposal was that the new publication scheme was to be comprised of three elements. These are:

- **A publication scheme** – a commitment document, approved by the Information Commissioner and adopted by a public authority ;
- **A sector specific manual** (including the definition document) – containing definitions of information covered within the core classes of information in the scheme and including good practice guidance; and
- **A guide to proactively published information for the public** – a means by which the information made routinely available by an authority can be easily identified and accessed.

THE PUBLICATION SCHEME

In line with section 20 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 the Information Commissioner has now developed and approved a new model publication scheme which can be adopted by parish and community councils as well as parish meetings. Adoption needs to take place by 31 December 2008 and the scheme will be operational from 1 January 2009. For the avoidance of doubt the new Model Scheme is generic in nature (i.e. it is for all public authorities irrespective of them being a local authority) and is not sector specific. The change of emphasis from detailed schemes to a very generic model is a deliberate move by the Information Commissioner's Office.

The model publication scheme may be adopted without modification and such adoption requires no further approval. In short parish/community

councils and parish meetings can simply adopt the scheme (by way of formal resolution) without needing to submit anything to the Information Commissioner. This is a major change from the procedure required under the original scheme and is significantly more straight forward. Once adopted the scheme will be valid until further notice. Any modification which removes information from the model scheme will require the approval of the Information Commissioner.

A copy of the new model publication scheme is available on the Information Commissioners website at www.ico.gov.uk - the easiest way of locating it is to click on Publication Schemes under the A-Z listing.

The scheme is in very basic terms evidence of a commitment/charter by parish/community councils and parish meetings to make information available to the public as part of its normal activities. It is however no longer the primary document that will be made available to members of the public – that will be the guide to proactively published information (see later) mentioned in the opening paragraph of this briefing.

The type of information covered in the scheme is included in the 'classes of information'. Although a council or parish meeting will be adopting the model scheme in its entirety, it will be committing to provide only the information which it actually holds. Therefore, if for example the council or parish meeting does not hold a specific piece of information in one of the classes, this does not mean it will be in breach of its obligations. If the council or parish meeting does not hold any information contained in a particular class it clearly cannot provide it. However there is no need to delete the class from the model scheme.

Additional assistance is provided as to the definition of the classes of information in the guide to proactively published information for the public. Two separate guides have been developed one for parish/community councils and one for parish meetings and both are attached.

The scheme commits a parish/community council or parish meeting:

- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information, including environmental information, which is held by the council or parish meeting and falls within the classes set out below.

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- To specify the information which is held by the council or parish meeting and falls within the classes below.
- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine information in line with the statements contained within the scheme.
- To produce and publish the methods by which the specific information is made routinely available so that it can be easily identified and accessed by members of the public.
- To review and update on a regular basis the information the council or parish meeting makes available under this scheme.
- To produce a schedule of any fees charged for access to information which is made proactively available.
- To make the publication scheme available to the public.

For further information request the relevant legal topic notes (see above) or contact the County Office for guidance.

HABITATS AND HILLFORTS OF CHESHIRE'S SANDSTONE RIDGE

Cheshire County Council has secured Heritage Lottery Funding for its 'Habitats and Hillforts of Cheshire's Sandstone Ridge' Project. The aim is to improve the wildlife and heritage of the Ridge and increase people's understanding and enjoyment of its special assets. The project will be undertaking a range of site based improvements in and around the six Iron Age Hillforts from Woodhouse and Helsby in the north to Maiden's Castle, Bickerton in south. As well as providing training in archaeological techniques, heritage and rural skills the project is looking forward to working with the parish councils to improve the understanding of these historic sites and surrounding landscapes.

The 3 year project hopes to start in October 2008.

For more information contact:

Alun Evans, Regeneration
Cheshire County Council,
Backford Hall
Backford, Chester. CH1 6PZ

alun.evans@cheshire.gov.uk
01244 973177

OUR VERY OWN ... LOCAL HERO!

Winners of the Congleton Borough Council civic awards, Local Heroes, were announced this week following a meeting of the scheme's judges. Judging was tough again this year as the number and quality of nominations was exceptional.

The winners will be presented their awards at a ceremony at Congleton Town Hall on Friday 19th September, hosted by BBC presenter Nigel Jay, and sponsored by Siemens PLC, Pochins PLC, MMU Cheshire, South East Cheshire Enterprise, ADED Services Ltd and Hansa Associates Ltd.

The Borough Award is a special award given for a major achievement or in recognition of long-term service to the community goes to **Frank Walton**.

Frank has an outstanding and unique record in local government in this area. He was the Clerk of Cranage Parish Council for 50 years, later he also served as clerk at Twemlow and Somerford Parish Councils. During his time as a clerk he has always gone beyond the call of duty, at the end of a phone seven days a week, and nothing is too much trouble for him. Even in retirement he is still there to help when needed. He has worked tirelessly for his community over the 50 years with dedication and enthusiasm.

Well done Frank!!!

KEEPING OUR RED TELEPHONE BOXES

BT are currently promoting their Adopt a Kiosk programme - more detailed information about this new programme can be found online at www.bt.com/payphones. However in summary, the new initiative allows communities, where usage of the public payphone service is limited, the opportunity to take ownership of the red telephone box free of charge, ensuring the kiosk, minus the payphone equipment, is retained in situ for generations to come.

Any recognised local authority can apply for the Adopt a Kiosk programme, as long as they comply with all of the terms and conditions, details of which can be found online alongside the contract and a detailed set of Questions & Answers.

Any interested local authority can apply to Adopt a Kiosk, however applications should be

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submitted before Oct 1st 2008. Applications received after this date could be rejected because the kiosk in question may have already been removed. Applications for Adopt a Kiosk will only be accepted via www.bt.com/payphones.

BT has indicated that they have received a small number of enquiries from communities that agreed there was no overwhelming demand for a public payphone service yet were interested in contributing towards the maintenance costs associated with that provision. They have therefore created a programme similar to Adopt a Kiosk whereby communities, if they so wish, can contribute towards the ongoing maintenance of a full public payphone service as opposed to potentially losing the payphone as part of the ongoing removal programme. Details of this Sponsored Kiosk programme can also be found online at www.bt.com/payphones

Feeding The Growth Of Local Communities

Local Food

Did you know there is a £50 million programme that will distribute lottery grants to a variety of food related projects to help make locally grown food accessible and affordable to local communities?

Local food has five main food themes under which a range of projects can be supported.

- Growing Food Locally
- Celebrating Cultural diversity
- Social Enterprise
- Skills and Learning
- Healthy Eating, Healthy Living

Grants from £2000 up to £500,000 are available for not for profit groups and organisations in England delivering projects such as growing, processing, marketing, and distributing local food; composting and raising awareness of the benefits of these activities.

What Can Local food Fund?

- Allotments
- Box Schemes
- Celebrating food cultures

- City Farms
- Community food growing projects
- Community seed exchanges
- Composting
- Education and learning
- Farmers' Markets
- Food co-operatives

remember be creative!

If you are hungry for more, why don't you get your teeth into a fantastic Local food project and help make local food part of your local community. Please visit www.localfoodgrants.org Prefer to chat? Call Changing Spaces advice Line on 0845 602 1659 for all initial enquiries.

PAY NEGOTIATIONS

We are sorry that we have been unable to advise on the settlement for this year. Those of you who follow this (avidly?) will perhaps know that the National Employers, UNISON and Unite are still in negotiations over the settlement but that no decision has yet been reached.

We will inform members direct by e-mail as soon as the information is received.

CLERK'S VACANCY! With a difference ...

This time it is not a Council looking for a Clerk but a Clerk looking for another Council!

This part-time Parish Clerk is seeking to add another Parish Clerk position to her workload. If a vacancy arises in your parish please contact:

Mrs. Helen Connolly on 01829 770109"

ENCLOSURES:

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

Update - Newsletter of the ChangeUp Consortium and progress report on funding and how it has been/is being used.

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**Annual Meeting 2008 - Supplementary Booking
Form**