



**Executive Committee Meeting Monday 29 April 2024 held Beacon Business Centre,
Hopton Park and via ZOOM 6.32pm to 8.21pm**

PRESENT:

Cllr John Scragg (Chippenham TC) Chair, Cllr Andrew Sadler Smith (Cherhill PC), Cllr Vanessa Sturmey, Cllr Patricia Fellowes (Heytesbury PC), Cllr George McCaffery (Corsham TC), Cllr Judy Rose (Devizes Town Council), Harry Tipple (Community First) Head of Community & Partnership Development, Ian Nockolds (Community First) WALC Local Councils Advisor.

ONLINE:

Cllr Isabel McCord (Bremhill Parish Council), Richard Culverhouse (Hilperton Parish Council and Heywood Parish Council), Clair Wilkinson (Chiseldon and Great Bedwyn Parish Council), Mike Phillips (Little Cheverell Parish Council), Peta Puyo (Easton Royal Parish Council), Clare Churchill (Burcombe Parish Council).

1. Welcome

Cllr Scragg welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited John Quinton from the Independent Remuneration Panel to introduce their proposed review of Town and Parish Council Allowances across Wiltshire.

Mr Quinton explained that he had been involved with a similar review in Dorset and following a request for a review by a Town Council, he proposed to undertake a county wide study, with the support of WALC.

Questions were raised about how Town and Parish Councils were to be consulted and what the review would cost to undertake. During this discussion, it was highlighted that Swindon Borough Council undertake a similar exercise annually.

Mr Quinton concluded the discussion by setting out his plan for a consultation with Town and Parish Councils to develop a Model Scheme, that Town and Parish Councils could apply if they wanted to.

2. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Cricklade Town Council, Marlborough Town Council, North Bradley Parish Council, Wilton Town Council and South Swindon Parish Council.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the Executive Meeting held on 19th February 2024 were adopted and signed as a true record by the Chair.

4. Local Council Advisor

The Chair introduced the new Local Council Advisor, Ian Nockolds, who summarised his report to the Executive.

In the two months since starting, induction training had gone well, both with Community First and NALC. The support of other County Association Local Advisors, particularly across the South West, has also proved valuable.

A Log system has been introduced to manage enquiries as they come in and this system allows for issues to be coded, highlighting trends in the support Members are requesting.

Training provision has been a priority and an e-learning package has been put in place to support Councillors, with additional training being planned for Councillors and Clerks.

5. Events

Members were asked to consider whether WALC should arrange a Conference for later this year and what subjects the event could cover.

Suggestions included: Artificial Intelligence, Civility & Respect, Flooding, Neighbourhood Plans and Community Transport.

It was agreed that the Local Council Advisor would explore the feasibility of holding a County Conference in late Autumn and would liaise with the Executive over speakers and venue options.

6. NALC Update

The Chair gave an update on NALC's April National Assembly meeting, which focused on the challenges facing local government finance and the implications for local (parish and town)

councils. In Wiltshire, some Town Councils have requested services such as street cleaning, public toilet provision and grass cutting be devolved to them to maintain quality.

Members discussed what more WALC member Councils could do to support NALC with their efforts to lobby the UK Government.

There was also a discussion about the support WALC could offer members, particularly Parish Councils, with the development of their Neighbourhood Plans. Suggestions including pooling published plans and the development of a template Member Councils could use.

7. Community First

Harry Tipple provided an update on four of the projects undertaken by Community First (CF) of interest to Town and Parish Councils.

Grants: Across Wiltshire and Swindon, Community First helps manage the Landfill Communities Fund (LCF). The LCF offers capital funding for environmental, heritage and local community projects in areas where local landfill operators' sites or depots are located. The LCF allows landfill operators (LOs) to contribute a portion of their landfill tax liability to community and environmental organisations to 'offset' some of the negative impacts of living near a landfill site. Since CF started working with Crapper and Sons and Hills they have awarded over £5.6 million pounds for community initiatives.

Village halls and community buildings: Is an advisory and support service from Community First, dedicated to championing local village halls and community buildings. CF offer a variety of services including practical support and advice, training, regular updates for members, access to digital resources and an online directory website with individual hall profiles, to help members advertise their hall or building. Currently CF have 188 village halls and community buildings in the membership, set to rise to 191 in the coming weeks.

Community Led Housing - Rural Housing Enabling: CF has been involved with the promotion and support of community led housing for several years working with the Wiltshire Community Land Trust, Wiltshire Council, Swindon Brough Council and housing associations. Recently CF have secured funding from DEFRA to employ an RHE consultant and develop an active partnership group to help raise awareness of the lack of affordable housing for local people in rural areas and encouraging and supporting communities to help make provision for new homes.

Community Transport: CF support the CT sector as a whole in Wiltshire and Swindon which consists of 22 CT groups and 42 link schemes. Last year the Link schemes had 1,592 active volunteers who delivered on 40,299 tasks. 29,761 of which were medical related. The economic value of the volunteer support donate is over £1.4 million pounds. Harry Tipple

concluded his comments by requesting support from WALC Member Councils concerning the recruitment of volunteers to support Link schemes.

8. Finance

- a. Balances for both WALC bank accounts were noted.
- b. Annual subscription invoices have been sent out to all Councils in the week beginning 15th April.
- c. Members considered a proposal to commission additional HR support. Two quotes had been received from Worknest and Monahans, with a report comparing both provided by the Local Councils Advisor.

RESOLVED - Monahans support would be trialled over a 3 month period, up to a limit of £1,000.

- d. High Interest Bank Account – At the last executive meeting, CF were asked to look into high interest accounts. WALC currently have two accounts with Barclays, a standard business account and a business premium account. Currently there is £7,273.80 in this account which earns an interest of 1.5%.

CF have looked into a Barclays treasury account which does offer a higher interest rate, but requires a minimum deposit of £100k into the account.

9. Constitution

Proposed changes to the WALC Constitution were discussed.

RESOLVED – A Constitution Working Group comprising Cllr John Scragg, Cllr Andrew Sadler Smith and Cllr George McCaffery would be convened by the Local Councils Advisor to review the suitability of the current Constitution and propose amendments ahead of the AGM.

10. Potential Motions to NALC

The Chair explained that members can submit motions to NALC, highlighting issues affecting councils' ability to support their communities. In certain cases, these motions will be referred to the National Assembly or, more rarely, NALC's AGM. The county association submits a motion with an explanation and supporting evidence using the motion form.

The Chair encouraged members to consider issues affecting their councils that could be submitted as future motions to NALC.

11. Date of Next Meeting

Discussion took place about future meetings, including the need for an AGM in October.

RESOLVED that the next meeting will be held on Monday 29th July 2024. Details on location and time to follow.

The meeting closed at 8:21pm

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Cllr John Scragg, Chair WALC