OALC Newsletter

December 2019



# The headlines

**Sensible tip of the month -** page 2 –your publication scheme

**Oxfordshire CC** – page 3

**ONPA** page 4 – meeting January 11th, Chalgrove

**Collaborative Housing event** – page 6 CFO 16th January

**FREE face to face legal advice** 7th April – page 7 book your slot

**Climate Emergency** – page 8 has your council declared?

**NT guide for heritage in Neighbourhood Plans** – page 11

**Sec 137 amount for 2020/21** – page 12

**Pay Scales** - page 12 no news yet!

**Surveillance Cameras** – page 13 reminder from CCTV Commissioner

**PC expenditure on Church property** – page 13

**NALC Chairman open letter to all councillors** – page 14

**Consultation on trespass & illegal encampments** – page 16

**Employment Briefing –** page 17 Advertising vacancies

**Finance Briefing** - page 22 VAT registration

**OALC Training programme, Cilca and LCAS** – page 23

**Vacancies** – page 28

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**Training Programme 2020 book here -**<https://www.oalc.org.uk/events>

* **Website Accessibility –** 22nd January am, Oxford

**FULLY BOOKED**

* **Parish Meetings -** 30th January am 2020, West Oxfordshire DC
* **Preparing for Audit** – 5th February am 2020, Begbroke Science Park
* **Understanding Internal Audit** - – 5th February pm 2020, Begbroke Science Park
* **Charity law** – 12th February 2020, full day, Didcot
* **Planning** – 24th February 2020, morning, West Oxfordshire DC

**Vacancies this month**

* Sibford Gower PC - Clerk
* North Newington PC – Clerk
* Whitchurch on Thames –

Clerk/RFO

## Sensible tip of the MONTH – publication scheme, your council should have one, where is it? is it up to date?

The Freedom of Information Act requires every public authority (this does include town and parish councils) to have a publication scheme, approved by the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO), and to publish information covered by the scheme.

The scheme must set out your commitment to make certain classes of information routinely available, such as policies and procedures, minutes of meetings, annual reports and financial information. Much of this information is required by the [Transparency Code](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transparency-code-for-smaller-authorities) too.

The ICO has a model publication scheme template [here](https://icosearch.ico.org.uk/s/redirect?collection=ico-meta&url=https%3A%2F%2Fico.org.uk%2Fmedia%2Ffor-organisations%2Fdocuments%2F1267%2Fparish_meeting_information_guide.doc&auth=jqbU4ZUh%2Fdfsm00t1gHxjA&profile=_default&rank=2&query=parish+councils+publication+scheme)

The information required falls under 7 categories:

* Who we are and what we do
* What we spend and how we spend it
* What our priorities are and how we are doing
* How we make decisions
* Policies and procedures
* Lists and registers
* The services we offer

The information in the publication scheme represents the **minimum** you must disclose.

Put the publication scheme on the council website so it is easily accessible. If you are asked for any of this information, you should be able to make it available quickly and easily

## We have made a slight change to the front page of our website

Previously the front/home page had a very prominent box about registering and logging in. Some people were put off by that box. It was particularly dominant if you accessed the site via a phone.

To clarify – the only area of the OALC website that is restricted to member councils is the Members Area and to benefit from the members discount on training courses you do have to be logged in as a registered member.

Many people didn’t realise there was more on the front page if you scrolled down. As a consequence we have moved the welcome box up the page and moved the login/register box down the front page. It’s only a small change but hopefully it is more welcoming and less peremptory.

## OALC Still need an Hon. Treasurer

We have tried everything except bribery or blackmail to find an Honorary Treasurer.

Is there an accountant (retired or not) or anyone with a financial background out there willing to help OALC? It would probably only be for half a day per quarter. We need a wise head to act as a critical friend. All the day to day financial work is done in house. We need someone to provide oversight and strategic advice and guidance.

Contact [info@oalc.org.uk](mailto:info@oalc.org.uk) or give the County Officer, Christine Lalley a call on 0774 6943076

## Oxfordshire County Council



Local Councils Cutting Verges

For several years now, about 130 town and parish councils have taken on the cutting of the grass verges themselves. OCC will pay a grant, to any local council who wish to do this, giving them control over when the grass gets cut and how often. For more information email [volunteercoordinationteam@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:volunteercoordinationteam@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

[**County Councillors Priority Fund**](https://www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/councillor-priority-fund)**,** each councillor has a £15,000 grant each year for projects in their areas. This fund closes in March 2020 so councils should apply ASAP to their County Councillor. There are a few County Councillors that haven’t yet spent all their allocation. So check if your councillor has any money left. **The latest that applications can be submitted is 31 January 2020.**

# Local News

Thames Water and Scottish and Southern Electricity want to encourage any vulnerable people to sign up for priority services with them. This article appeared in last month’s Update but Thames Water are very keen to get the message out into your community, particularly to the vulnerable.

Please could your council assist them by:

* Placing this article (below) in your own newsletters and magazines
* Requesting leaflets to display at any local information points

**Why sign up for priority services?**

At Scottish Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) and Thames Water, we aim to provide a reliable service for every individual in our region, 365 days a year. But if something does go wrong, our priority services teams are on hand to help.

By signing up for our free priority services, you can benefit from extra help in electricity or water-related emergencies. Our goal is to provide extra peace of mind if you’re of pensionable age; living with a chronic medical condition or restricted mobility; experiencing a change in personal circumstances; or raising a family with young children under the age of five.

No matter your needs, you’ll have access to a dedicated telephone helpline, which you can call at any time of day. In the unlikely event your water stops flowing or your lights go out for a long period of time, we’ll give you a call to discuss what’s happened, what we’re doing to fix it, and any additional support you might need, including an alternative supply of water or power.

You can also rely on us for proactive support. When we’re planning maintenance to our power lines or pipes, we’ll give you plenty of notice so that you can make alternative arrangements. We’ll make sure to communicate in the format that best suits your needs and, if you want extra reassurance, help you set up a doorstep password so that you know it’s us if we ever pop by to speak to you.

We’ll keep any details you share with us safe and confidential.

To sign up today, visit [www.thameswater.co.uk/priorityservices](http://www.thameswater.co.uk/priorityservices) or [www.ssen.co.uk/PSR/Thameswater/](http://www.ssen.co.uk/PSR/Thameswater/)

Call 0800 0093652 option 3, or email [ecs@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:ecs@thameswater.co.uk).

To request registration forms, email [priroityforms@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:priroityforms@thameswater.co.uk)

## Oxfordshire Neighbourhood Plans Alliance

ONPA is pleased to report an important milestone from its meeting with key members of the team working on the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP) for Oxfordshire.

The JSSP is the principal activity overseen by the Oxfordshire Growth Board (OGB), to which ONPA made representations over the last few months. Encouraged by positive meetings with OGB Director, Bev Hindle, the ONPA proposal is that “made” neighbourhood development plans across Oxfordshire, being part of the Development Plan for the County, must be acknowledged as a key part of the evidence base used to build Spatial Plan policies.

The credibility and acceptability of the JSSP to local communities across Oxfordshire might well depend on the extent to which they can see that their concerns have been properly taken into account in the new high-level, long-term Plan. Our 34 “made” plans already represent the aspirations of around 125,000 people - a not inconsiderable proportion of the County’s population.

At the recent meeting, it was agreed in principle that a comprehensive evidence base of Oxfordshire NDP objectives and policies will be assembled – effectively a data bank of our grass roots approach to planning – and that it will be analysed for inclusion within the JSSP process. The detail of how this will be done is yet to be decided, and this will be on the agenda for ONPA's next general meeting on January 11th.

ALL WELCOME AT NEXT ONPA MEETING

A reminder that the first ONPA general meeting of 2020 will be on Saturday, January 11th at 10.30am at Chalgrove Youth Centre. All new members, prospective members and observers are welcome to attend. More information from [info@onpa.uk](mailto:info@onpa.uk)

## Councillor grant scheme - SODC

If there's a community project in your area that's in need of a funding boost you could appeal to your local district councillor. All 36 district councillors in South Oxfordshire have a budget of £5,000 as part of the councillor grants scheme to help fund projects in their ward areas. This is available to local 'not for profit' organisations (including parish councils) whose work benefits local residents.

The funding is ideal for projects which are relatively low cost (between £500 and £5,000) and expected to be completed within a year. Examples of previous funding include an outdoor gym, defibrillators, a senior citizen Christmas lunch and new mowers for sports pitches.

To make an application, groups should get in touch with their local councillor and submit online via our website. For more information visit [southoxon.gov.uk/grants](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/community-advice-and-support/grants-and-community-loans).

## Cherwell District Council Community Infrastructure Capital Grant Programme

Cherwell District Council’s capital grant programme is open to applications from not-for-profit organisations and community groups for projects that are seeking capital funding. Awards can be granted of up to 50% of the total capital costs of the project and up to a maximum of £50,000 per project. With a budget of £100,000, **the next deadline for applications is 31 December 2019** with the aim of funding projects from 1 April 2020. For more information please visit CDC’s website at <https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/info/118/communities/290/community-grants/2> or call Sarah Burns, Community Funding Officer on 01295 221538.

## Do you live in Marcham, Appleton, Sutton Courtenay, Stanford in the Vale or Ardington/Lockinge?

If you do, you might be interested in an Oxford University, Department for Continuing Studies course starting in April 2020, it is entitled Five Berkshire Villages in Oxfordshire. The course information states:

*In this course we will examine five villages, which up until 1974 were in Berkshire, but now form part of Oxfordshire. The study villages all have their own unique characteristics and we will analyse them through their geographical setting and their archaeology, history, topography and buildings.*

There are 10 sessions on Friday mornings with field trips, more details and booking here:

<https://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/courses/five-berkshire-villages-in-oxfordshire?code=O19P550LHW>

## Collaborative housing

Community First Oxfordshire is hosting, together with a number of partner organisations (Oxfordshire Community Land Trust, Community Impact Bucks, Oxfordshire Community Foundation and Connecting Communities Berkshire) a community led housing support service.

The partners who make up Collaborative Housing provide information, advice and technical support to those who wish to deliver community-led housing projects. The partnership is new, funded by Government and is still developing. The aim is that local experts from across the Thames Valley will offer packages tailored to your needs. Collaborative Housing aims to take you from initial concept to homes on the ground. Collaborative Housing will be working with existing and new Community Land Trusts, cooperative and cohousing groups in both towns and villages to deliver small scale affordable housing developments. It’s a different kind of approach to housing development, grassroots led and collaborative.

* **Forming a group** Including community-led housing delivery routes, organisational and legal entity structures, group processes and decision-making methods, community engagement, group visioning, governance and accountability.
* **Evidencing and consultation** Including Housing Needs Surveys, research and data analysis and consultation strategy
* **Finding a site** Including identifying sites and negotiating acquisition of land and property
* **Funding** Including sourcing housing development funding, obtaining initial pro bono professional support, support for budgeting and financial planning, guiding grant proposals
* **Project planning** Including signposting to specialist legal and professional services, preparing viable business plans and financial appraisal, signposting to design/architectural expertise, advice on project management, identifying and managing risks and negotiating with the Local Authority
* **Development** Including advice on development finance, managing development projects and construction, selecting partners and consultants, preparing feasibility studies, design and building options, pre-planning / planning application development, managing contracts and negotiating with developers
* **Ongoing management** including advice on managing finance, managing buildings, group processes, regulatory requirements, allocations and membership.

For more information go to either Community First Oxfordshire [www.communityfirstoxon.org](http://www.communityfirstoxon.org) or Collaborative Housing <https://collaborativehousing.org.uk/contact.html>

Community First Oxfordshire and Collaborative Housing invite you to their upcoming event to celebrate and showcase some key milestones in community-led housing locally. The details are:

**Thursday 16th January 2020 6.30 – 8.30pm**

**Oxford Town Hall**

***Drinks and nibbles will be provided***

At the event CFO will be launching the Collaborative Housing Hub ([CoHoHub](https://collaborativehousing.org.uk/)) which is a new support service for groups carrying out community led housing projects.

They will also give a summary of findings from recent research carried out in collaboration with Oxford City Council called “[Routes to Delivery](https://www.communityfirstoxon.org/housing-community-planning/community-led-housing/community-led-housing-routes-delivery/)” that looked at how to get more community-led housing in Oxford as well as showcasing local projects. To book a (free) ticket and see more details about the event click the link below:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/celebration-of-community-led-housing-tickets-71796696853>

## **FREE** face-to-face Parish and Town Council Legal Advice Surgery with Wellers Hedleys Solicitors

**Date: Tuesday 7th April 2020**

**Time:** up to 30 minute consultation *(specific appointment time between 10am and 3pm* ***must be booked in advance).***

**Subject:** A brief but succinct outline of the issue to be provided on booking.  Councils should bring all relevant information and paperwork with them on the day

**Venue: Committee Room (upstairs), Town Hall, Market Place, Wallingford OX10 0EG**

**To book an appointment contact: OALC on** [**info@oalc.org.uk**](mailto:info@oalc.org.uk) **tel: 07519367709 or 07746943076**

## Police Call on Public To Sign Up For Free Counter Terrorism Training

An award-winning counter terrorism training course is being made available to the public for the first time and Thames Valley Police want you to sign up and help protect the UK.

Devised by Counter Terrorism (CT) officers and security experts, the [ACT Awareness e-Learning package](https://ct.highfieldelearning.com/) was previously only available to staff working in crowded places like shopping centres and entertainment venues.

Now Counter Terrorism Policing has decided to open up the training to anyone who wants to become a CT Citizen so they can learn how to spot the signs of suspicious behaviour and understand what to do in the event of a major incident.

The programme was originally devised in partnership with Marks and Spencer - and participants needed to be signed up by their employers. Today the online learning is available free of charge to anyone who wants to take part.

The decision to offer the training to the public was not made in response to the recent attack in London. However, the tragic event, when two people lost their lives to terrorism, was a stark reminder of the ongoing threat and the need for vigilance.

*“ACT Awareness e-Learning is especially useful for anyone working in or regularly visiting crowded places,”* says Detective Chief Superintendent Richard List.

“*We developed each stage alongside industry experts and to date over one and a half million modules have been completed.*

*“The course has been so popular, with nine out of 10 users saying they would recommend it, we want to open it up to as many people as possible.*

*“The threat level remains at Substantial – meaning an attack is likely - so giving everyone the chance to be extra eyes and ears for police and local security teams help to keep all communities across the Thames Valley safe.*

*“The festive period is obviously a very busy one – so this is a good time to join up and become a CT Citizen.”*

ACT Awareness is made up of seven modules that take a few minutes each to complete. You can pause and re-join at any time. In total it takes just 45 minutes – so less than an hour of your time could help to prevent an attack or help save lives if one was to happen.

The course is hosted by online training specialists Highfield. To register and start learning, click [here](https://ct.highfieldelearning.com/).

Luke Stratford (Police, Comms, HQ South)

# National News

## Climate emergency – let us know if your council has declared

1. **Local**

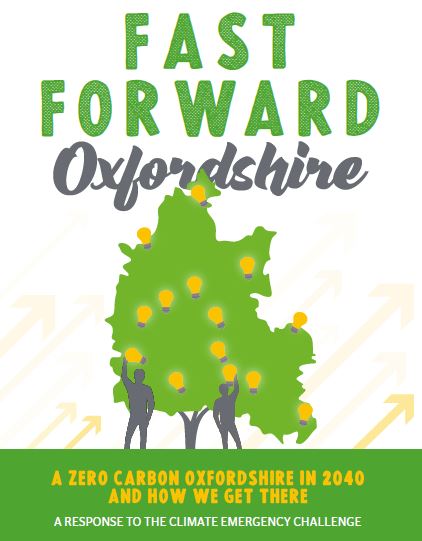
Has your town or parish council declared a Climate Emergency? If it has, you can register on the Climate Emergency website [here](https://www.climateemergency.uk/blog/category/declarations/town-parish/)

Also please can you inform OALC know too. At the moment we have no idea how many councils have declared so it is difficult to advocate in the absence of hard figures.

A meeting was held in November at **Henley** Town Hall hosted by their Climate Emergency Working Group (CWEG); surrounding interested town and parish councils were invited to attend and hear presentations from members of the group and others.

Mention was made of Salix, a non-profit, government-funded organisation which provides interest-free funding to the public sector to improve energy efficiency in their buildings. <https://www.uk100.org/salix-finance/>

The **Thame** Green Living Plan was also mentioned, it is definitely an exemplary local project, please read more about it here <https://www.thamegreenliving.org.uk/> The plan looks at 5 themes – spaces and routes; water and drainage; air and environment; energy and efficiency and waste and reuse

Oxfordshire Friends of the Earth has produced a booklet, *Fast Forward Oxfordshire*, copies can be down loaded here <https://www.oxfoe.co.uk/fastforward/> The Fast Forward relates to how to get to zero carbon by 2040. Their policy goals are set out below, although when they use the term ‘Oxfordshire Councils must’ the booklet appears to be referring to principal authorities not town and parish councils.

**1. Homes and settlements**

*We need to ensure all existing homes are well insulated to at least* ***‘EPC C’*** *level by 2035 at the latest, and to have eradicated fuel poverty by the same date. Sooner than that, all new buildings need to be zero carbon and this must be a planning condition.*

**Oxfordshire Councils** must:

* Require zero carbon standards for all new homes and other buildings in Local Plans from now (see also Energy section).
* Ensure that all homes have good access to safe and attractive open spaces, such as gardens, play spaces and parks, in line with national targets.
* Establish and lead local partnerships to coordinate area-wide home retrofitting programmes to reduce energy use and tackle fuel poverty in existing homes, starting with the most deprived areas first.

**2. Transport**

*We need a transport system that works for everyone – that delivers better public health, a zero carbon economy and fair access to services for both urban and rural communities.*

**Oxfordshire councils must:**

* Prioritise investment in integrated cycling, walking, and public transport systems, including electric buses and taxis; a county-wide rapid transit network; electric car and bike charging points; and a network of good cycle routes within and between all larger towns.
* Act (with government support) to reduce car use through measures such as road pricing / congestion charging, workplace parking levies and constraining road space, supported by re-regulating bus services.

**3. Work**

*We need to create and maintain high quality green jobs for unskilled, semi-skilled and knowledge workers as part of the transition to a fair zero carbon future.*

**Oxfordshire councils** must:

* + Focus the county industrial strategy and related plans on building a ‘*circular economy’* aimed at minimising environmental impacts and improving wellbeing rather than just maximising economic growth, and on creating high quality green jobs that benefit all workers alike.
* Develop local procurement plans as an incentive for rapid carbon reduction by focusing their purchase of goods and services on local businesses that meet agreed carbon reduction targets and / or havea clear social / environmental purpose such as cooperatives.
* Create (with partners) a local *Green Infrastructure Bank* to provide investment finance for economic projects with ambitious carbon reduction targets.

**4. Energy**

*A clean fossil-free energy system will be an essential part of the transition to a zero-carbon economy. Some progress has been made in recent years, but faster action is needed. Fossil fuel power generation should be phased out by 2030.*

**Oxfordshire councils** must:

* Identify areas suitable for renewable energy and require the integration of renewable energy generation in all new developments.
* Develop and implement an energy demand reduction strategy with countywide targets. This should include a mass home retrofitting programme to reduce energy use in existing houses including energy efficiency improvements, solar PV and behavioural programmes, starting with the most deprived areas first.

**5. Food**

*Changing what we eat and how it is produced will help achieve our zero-carbon target. Eating more locally grown food, fruit, vegetables, grains and pulses, and less meat, will also benefit our health, our economy and our countryside.*

**Oxfordshire councils** should:

* Ensure that all schools, hospitals, care homes and other institutions deliver meals that accord with the ‘*Eatwell*’ and *WWF* ‘*Livewell*’ guidelines on healthy eating and that the majority of options on menus are healthy and plant-based, with less and better meat.
* Retain existing land holdings and make these available where suitable for community-supported agriculture and food businesses.
* Require food growing provision (such as roof gardens, community orchards and edible landscaping, including nut and fruit trees) to be incorporated into all new developments; and support moves to retrofit existing developments with such provision.

**6. Nature**

*By 2040 we need people and nature to be thriving together. People will feel healthier and happier.* *Oxfordshire’s next generation will understand that the natural world is the foundation of our wellbeing and prosperity: that we depend on it, and it depends on us*.

**Oxfordshire councils** must:

* Include in local Plans a local nature and ecosystem restoration plan (Nature Recovery Network) to reverse and restore habitats and species, and ecosystem quality.
* Commit to doubling tree cover on council owned land and update local planning strategies to support doubling of tree cover across the local authority area.
* Require all new developments to provide *100% biodiversity net gain.*

## requirement for Accessible websites for parish councils by **september 2020**

On 4th December the Cloudy team did a presentation to the Oxfordshire branch of the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC).

**HINT - IT IS VERY WORTHWHILE FOR YOUR CLERK TO BE A MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY OF LOCAL COUNCIL CLERKS!**

Please join SLCC - contact Liz Folley, Clerk, Chinnor Parish Council <https://www.slcc.co.uk/membership/> for more details.

The Cloudy Group <https://www.cloudygroup.co.uk/>, a Buckinghamshire based company, works with councils to digitally transform them, improving productivity and efficiency whilst keeping control of costs.

To view the presentation they did online please click this link [Oxfordshire ALC Conference 2019 - Public.pptx](https://thepcpeopleltd.sharepoint.com/:p:/s/CloudyITTrainingAcademy/EaYvRmRDXAFNnCrcuVyPTaUBuFfnk-cwY4ep54UdD9zDPQ?e=gXFQHh)

Here is a quick and easy way to test pages on your website for accessibility <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPX8Mzo5pBU&feature=youtu.be>

If you’re struggling with meeting your WCAG 2.1 AA obligations and are interested in a Full Website Accessibility Audit, please complete the application form and the Cloudy team will provide you with a no-obligation quote.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=_zo_Apc3d0u0HZAyZo40IykeMYlxDY9CgYiSG9lOT_hUQTZEMUVVMkpHREg4MUNDSENKNzhYN05WWS4u>

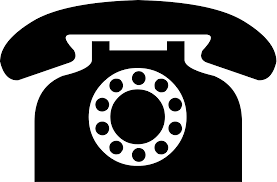
The core principles of the [Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/accessibility-requirements-for-public-sector-websites-and-apps) are that local authority websites should be:

* Perceivable – so people can hear or see the content
* Operable – so that people can use the computer by typing or by voice
* Understandable – so people get clear simple language
* Robust – so people can use different types of assisted technology

We would suggest that your starting point is talking to whoever created the council website, do they know and understand the requirements of the Regulations? Can they do an accessibility check on the council website and then suggest what improvements/alterations are necessary to work towards compliance?

A few simple things to consider:

* Don’t put text over a picture, there needs to be real contrast so the text stands out and is readable
* Use headings logically to structure content, screen readers can jump between different levels of heading so they need to be logical
* Include proper alt text on images you use
* Links need to be accessible. When including links in your content, use text that properly describes where the link will go. Using "click here" is not considered descriptive, and is ineffective for a screen reader user.
* Be careful with using colour, ensure proper contrast of text on background, no silly fonts
* Is it possible to use universal symbols such as a telephone adjacent to the contact telephone number to give better visual clues?



* Not everyone can use a computer mouse, those with mobility issues may only be able to use a keyboard and have to tab through to find content; think about headings

You may find this link useful in understanding more about how a screen reader works and therefore how to write content that works well with a screen reader. A screen reader literally **reads everything** that is on the screen <https://accessibility.blog.gov.uk/2017/02/08/advice-for-creating-content-that-works-well-with-screen-readers/>

## National Trust Guide for heritage in neighbourhood plans

This article is from The Planner magazine 19th November 2019 Words: [Laura Edgar](https://www.theplanner.co.uk/content/laura-edgar)

New guidance has been published to show local communities how heritage can be incorporated into neighbourhood plans.

The National Trust’s Guide to Heritage in Neighbourhood Plans is intended to help communities to take a lead in planning for historic areas by enabling them to identify and safeguard local heritage in the places in which they live, work and spend their leisure time.

Karin Taylor, head of planning at the National Trust, said: “As the guardian of many special places, the National Trust understands the benefits that historic features can bring to places and people.

“By creating a neighbourhood plan, communities can create general planning policies for development of land in their area. Through this, they have an opportunity to create a vision for the future of their area, agreeing what is special and how local character can be preserved and enhanced.

“Our new guide describes how heritage can be incorporated into neighbourhood plans. This includes guidance on collecting your evidence base, engaging with wider stakeholders, the statutory process and planning for heritage.”

Guide to Heritage in Neighbourhood Plans comprises guidance on: planning policy and designations; advice on providing an appropriate and effective evidence base that supports the heritage aspect in neighbourhood plan policies; and a range of tools for assessing design, character and sustainability.

It also briefly outlines the neighbourhood plan process, from designation of a neighbourhood area right through to the adoption of the plan.

Anyone involved in neighbourhood planning, and people with an interest in planning heritage, will be able to use the guide.

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/documents/neighbourhood-planning-and-heritage-guidance.pdf>

## Section 137

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has announced that the appropriate sum for the purpose of section 137(4) (a) of the Local Government Act 1972 (the 1972 Act) for parish and town councils in England for 2020-21 is £8.32 per elector. Last financial year it was £8.12 per elector.

## Pay scales for 2020/21

Around this time of year, NALC can normally announce the new pay scales for local council clerks for the next financial year. These pay scales are based on the local government pay scales negotiated by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services.

The NJC has stated that there will be no progress on negotiations until next year, you can read more on their website [here](https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/workforce-and-hr-support/local-government-services?utm_source=Members&utm_campaign=4af373f2b3-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_06_08_03_15_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_206970988f-4af373f2b3-323671257&mc_cid=4af373f2b3&mc_eid=2593660dc7). We will, of course, keep you updated as we hear of progress.

## Surveillance Camera Commissioner reminds local councils of regulations



The Surveillance Camera Commissioner Tony Porter has written to parish and town councils this month reminding them of the rules around the use of surveillance camera systems in public places.

In the letter, he says: “It has come to my attention that there are some instances where [local councils] are installing Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras to monitor low-speed zones. These systems typically capture data (number plates) and feed it via the internet to a server in partnership with a third-party supplier. I fully understand that speeding offences can be of great concern to you and the communities you serve, and I would not wish to preclude you from tackling these issues head-on.

“That said, ANPR can be an extremely intrusive system, and you must ensure that you are using it within the boundaries of the law, including the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, the General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018.”

He goes on to say that local councils also need to be wary of working in partnership with third-parties, keeping in mind the Surveillance Camera Code. The code states that you should ensure partnership arrangements are not being established without proper management controls being applied.

Finally, he encourages local councils to visit his website [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/surveillance-camera-guidance-tools-and-templates) to complete the surveillance camera systems self-assessment tool and data protection impact assessment

## Parish council expenditure on Churches and Church property

We have a steady trickle of enquiries from member councils as to whether parish councils can make grants to their local church.

Unfortunately and unhelpfully there is conflicting interpretation of the law; the Church of England believing and advising that parish councils can give grants - Church of England Funding guide 13 *Local Authorities and funding* link [here](file:///C:\Users\ext-pcowx\Downloads\-https:\www.parishresources.org.uk\wp-content\uploads\FG13-Local-authorities-and-funding.pdf) And also in a 2017 ChurchCare document, which suggests that councils can fund repairs to church property that would otherwise fall within the Local Government Act 1894 prohibitions. ChurchCare is part of the Church of England. The Local Government Act 1894 in effect set up parish councils, separating the church/vestry from the state.

NALC legal advice is that section 8 of the Local Government Act 1894 prohibits grants for works on property relating to the affairs of the church or an ecclesiastical charity.

 NALC issued a legal briefing in January 2018 L01-18 (in the Members Area of our website) and has recently re-confirmed its legal view.

NALC has seen the ChurchCare document and it does not alter its view. NALC writes – The ChurchCare document includes a number of statements which they have partially put in bold text. If one reads the bold text it seems clear that a grant can be given, but if you read the entire sentence the opposite is true.  For example, the first sentence quoted from the 2017 English Cathedral and Church Buildings Sustainability Review (the Review) says in the bold part “local authorities are not prohibited from awarding funding to churches” which seems clear.  However, the whole sentence in the original document stated “The law should be clarified, whether through legislative change or the issue of guidance, to establish that local authorities are not prohibited from awarding funding to churches” which makes it clear that even that body thought that changes to the law may be required to enable parish councils to make grants.

NALC state that it is, to say the least, unfortunate that ChurchCare has highlighted the parts of a number of sentences in order to put forward a view that is misleading but financially beneficial to itself. The most that can be said for the conclusions of the Review is that they thought the law on this point was unclear and needed change. NALC’s view is that the terms of section 8 of the 1894 Act are clear as it enables a local council to execute or contribute to the cost of works “in relation to any parish property, not being property relating to affairs of the church or held for an ecclesiastical charity”. There is no need to highlight part of the wording to understand the message.

In summary, NALC’s view is that the ChurchCare document is misleading about what the Review stated about the law and does not alter NALC’s view as set out in Legal Briefing L01-18.

In early 2019 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government indicated informally that they agreed that the 1894 Act prohibited spending on church property although they did say that a view from the Government is not conclusive as only the courts can finally decide what a law means in detail.

Jane Moore, Senior Solicitor and Legal Services Manager, National Association of Local Councils

## Working together to build stronger communities – NALC Chairman Sue Baxter’s open letter to all councillors

Building stronger communities was the theme of October’s NALC Annual Conference where Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, paid tribute to England’s 100,000 councillors for all the work they do for their places. And I want to add my own thanks and appreciation, and wish you all the very best for the new decade ahead.

Right across the country, our local (parish and town) councils have been building stronger communities for the last 125 years. Delivering many things that help make places good to live in, work, and visit. From community events to play areas, allotments to defibrillators, firework displays to markets, public toilets, to giving grants – and much more.

Increasingly though, as our existing 10,000 local councils continue to grow in size, resource and ambition, they will be at the centre of community power as service deliverers, culture creators, place shapers and leaders.

In fact, as the most local level of democracy and community action, their role has never been more important, with increasing ambitions to tackle national issues: building community resilience, tackling loneliness, promoting community safety, and creating healthier communities. And recently many hundreds of local councils have declared climate emergencies, and are playing their part in addressing this most pressing of global challenges.

Over the next few years NALC is planning to focus on the three themes of health and wellbeing, the climate emergency, and engaging young people, and to highlight the current and future potential of the local council sector in helping other agencies and our communities.

Now we have a new government in place, I will be personally prioritising making contact with key ministers across government to ensure the role of our local councils and their future development, including on the themes outlined above, is firmly on their agenda.

Whatever our own political views, on your behalf NALC will work with the government (and parliament) to ensure that they make your job of building stronger communities easier, not more difficult, that your ambitions for your places are supported, not thwarted.

We will continue to press government on measures contained in our [*A prospectus for ultra-localism*](https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/publications/2556-a-prospectus-for-ultra-localism/file) that help communities to help themselves, so local people can build strong, thriving and resilient communities.

**Firstly,** empower people and communities. Level up the whole country and establish new local councils in unparished areas including cities such as London, so no community is left behind in having democratic local leadership that is accountable, open and transparent. And allow communities to take back control of their area and have more of a say over planning, housing and development by strengthening neighbourhood planning and ensuring neighbourhood plans have greater weight and protection.

**Secondly,** help build capacity and support local leadership. Free up communities to respond to the changing needs of their area by making it easier to access the general power of competence, supported by a new national democracy fund to encourage more people to become councillors and support for training and development. And by strengthening the standards regime to improve conduct and behaviour and increase public trust and confidence, and tackling intimidation of elected representatives.

**Thirdly,** provide flexible and diverse funding. Empower local leaders at all levels to plan for the future and invest in their areas by scrapping council tax referendums. And by reforming business rates, including re-introducing legislation to exempt public conveniences which are an important and valued community facility and asset which provides both a public health and economic benefit.

I believe that with this national support we can be at the centre of a movement of community change, and never has it been more important for local councils to play their full part in this, including realizing our potential to help bring the country and communities back together after the last few challenging years.

In order to do this, I would like to issue two challenges for the decade ahead.

* Firstly, to the sector: be up for this challenge, be ambitious for your communities and take your place as the first tier of government. Working with colleagues in the 43 county associations across England, NALC will encourage and support councils of all sizes to do just that. We must work collectively together to fulfil the sector’s potential to transform communities, encouraging more people from all backgrounds to get involved. Crucially, we must continue to ensure we are well run and open and transparent to residents.
* Secondly, to the government and other agencies (including principal authorities and the health sector), work with us to use what we can offer. Engage with us and listen to us – we are a movement of 10,000 well-run organisations and over 100,000 councillors plus thousands more volunteers, all working to improve their communities. My clarion call to you is to help NALC bring the benefit of local councils to all communities in England.

In the decade ahead, working together, I want to see more local councils set up across the country, ambitiously fulfilling their potential to boost community power. Using their local democratic mandate to influence the work of other institutions and build strong, thriving and resilient communities.

Local councils are of the community, and for the community. They absolutely have a key role to play in the 2020s. Now, more so than ever before, their time has come.

Sue Baxter

## Consultations – trespass/unauthorised caravan sites

The government has launched a consultation, on proposals to give police new powers to arrest and seize the property and vehicles of trespassers who set up unauthorised caravan sites. But it fell fowl of purdah regulations. The link to the government website is here <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-police-powers-to-tackle-unauthorised-encampments>

**The consultation closes on 4th March 2020**

Currently such trespassing is defined in law as a civil matter. But the Home Office is consulting on making it a criminal offence.

This follows a Home Office review into how trespassing, while setting up an unauthorised encampment, could be made a criminal offence in England and Wales, learning lessons from other countries like the Republic of Ireland.

As a result, the Home Office is proposing to broaden the categories of criminal trespass to cover trespassers who enter onto any land without permission of the occupier with the intention to reside.

As part of the consultation, the Home Office is also seeking further views from local authorities, police forces, travellers, communities and the general public on alternative measures giving the police greater powers to tackle unauthorised encampments.

The proposed amendments to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 include:

• lowering the number of vehicles needed to be involved in an unauthorised camp before police can act from 6 to 2

• giving the police powers to direct offenders to sites in neighbouring local authorities. Currently they can only direct trespassers to sites in the same area

• allowing officers to remove trespassers from camping on or beside a road

• increasing the time - from 3 months to a year - during which offenders are not allowed to return to a site they have already been removed from

Responses to an initial consultation on the amendments, launched in April 2018, were clear that problems are caused for communities and business across the country by unauthorised encampments.

Councils have since been reminded of their existing obligation to provide enough “transit sites”, which provide travellers with a place to stay short-term and prevent problems from being shifted to neighbouring areas.

OALC Executive Committee has considered this consultation and endorses the amendments set out above.

# Employment Briefing

Employment law is complex and specialized. OALC can assist with general employment queries but we retain the services of Chris Moses, Personnel Advice and Solutions Ltd. to provide expert advice to our member councils. We have retained Chris for four hours per month available free of charge to member councils. OALC pay for this, because we believe it is an important and valuable service to our member councils.

|  |
| --- |
| In a series of brief guidance notes, over the coming months PAS will take Councils through the processes of recruiting, inducting and appraising staff, as well as providing guidance notes on producing Contracts of Employment that are suitable for the individual needs and requirements of your Council |

The series begins with Advertising Job Vacancies

All Councils need to consider how to recruit staff at some point, whether they employ just one Clerk for five hours per week, or a range of staff.

1. **Defining what you need for the post**

Every Council is unique, and its recruitment process needs to respond to their particular needs. The whole recruitment process should begin with a Council identifying the unique demands within the Parish or Town, and making sure that their recruitment process will meet those needs. Evaluation of the job (not the person) is essential.

The starting point involves the drafting of a Person Specification and the Job Description for the post. There are a number of templates for these documents in circulation, but they are not designed to meet the needs of individual Councils.

Firstly, write a Job Description which lists all the tasks involved in the job. Use this to then create a Person Specification.

Taking the post of Clerk as an example, there are a number of criteria to consider when drafting the Person Specification:

* **Qualifications**

Is CiLCA needed? A CiLCA qualified Clerk may be a real bonus to a Council, but may cost more to recruit. Would a more cost effective option be to recruit an untrained applicant and train them?

Does the post need someone to focus on finance management? If so, would the AAT Qualification be more suitable?

Alternatively, if the Council is involved in a major project, such as building a Community Centre, do you need someone with planning and project management skills?

* **Previous Work Experience**

Someone who knows how local government works, and is familiar with the workings of District/County Councils may be helpful. Alternatively is the Council looking for someone from a commercial background who can take the Council in that direction?

* **Knowledge of the Town/Parish sector**

Does the Council need someone who is familiar with local politics, the demands of groups within the Parish and any divisions within the Council?

The other option would be to go for someone who is a “clean slate”, and is not tainted by local issues.

These are just some of the criteria which make up the unique character of the post. Elected Members need to agree what criteria they want to include. Once the Council has decided what needs to go into the Person Specification, Members can produce the job advertisement for the post, as well as the selection criteria.

Typical contents of a Person Specification for the post of Clerk.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Essential | Desirable | Qualifications |
| Education | Good general education with a minimum of 2 ‘A’ levels or equivalent  GCSE’s to include English and maths grade C and above or equivalent  Certificate in Local Council Administration or willingness to obtain within six months of appointment | Membership of the Institution of Local Council Managers | Desirable  Certificate in Local Council Administration (CILCA)  And other relevant qualifications such as:  Certificate in Local Policy Studies First Year  The Certificate in Local Policy Studies  The Diploma in Local Policy Studies  BA (Hons) Degree Local Policy Studies |
| Previous work | Minimum of 5 years staff management and team leadership, including application of personnel procedures  An understanding of budget setting and financial control  Working as, or supporting, a Responsible Financial Officer (or equivalent) in budget planning, keeping accounts and generating financial reports | Post holder in Local Government Senior management  Experience of advocacy and negotiation at a senior level  Good knowledge and understanding of Local Government / smaller Council financial management.  Records management  Minute taking and servicing committees | Recognised management qualifications.  Attendance on recognised management training courses within the public sector. |
| **Skills and knowledge** | Ability to create and manage own workload in the light of competing and changing priorities and organisational challenges  Advising , supporting and constructive communication with elected members  Working knowledge of the procedures, roles, duties and responsibilities of a Parish Clerk, a Parish Council and Councillors  Good local government / small Council legal knowledge with an ability to recognise the legal consequences of actions recommended by elected members  Flexible team player with good interpersonal skills who can motivate and promote high levels of commitment and achieve results through others including external partners  Excellent analytical and organisational skills  Proficient in standard office IT packages  Ability to work effectively within a Local government framework  Excellent communication skills both written and oral | Working knowledge of local government law, administrative and committee procedures and the planning system  Confident public speaker  Good report writing and press release skills  Working knowledge of employment legislation | Local government qualification, as detailed above.  SAGE and /or other finance software training.  Recognised financial management qualification. |
| **Personal Qualities** | Proven assertiveness in managing a varied and diverse work environment, to demonstrate achievement of the organisation’s strategies and plans.  Ability to deal with a wide range of people in an impartial, diplomatic and professional manner.  Flexibility of approach, open to innovative and creative ways of working  Ability to deal with a wide range of people with diplomacy and tact  A commitment to equal opportunities, diversity and community engagement  Ability to work alone and as a member of a team  Methodical and thorough approach to tasks  Ability to anticipate problems and find solutions with a positive attitude  Confident and able to deal with pressure | Ability to generate ideas and consider strategic issues | Assertiveness training.  Communication skills training.  Time management.  Leadership skills |
| Other | Ability to attend evening meetings and willingness to work at weekends if necessary  Access to or use of a car  Willingness to undertake relevant training to enhance the role of Parish Clerk |  |  |

1. **Job Advertising**

Councils do not necessarily need to pay for expensive newspaper adverts. Member councils need to think about what is the best way to reach potential applicants?

OALC will circulate the advert in the monthly Update and put it on their website or we may know of potential candidates who are looking for a job.

Do not forget the Councils website, Facebook page and Parish Notice Board as means of reaching candidates.

**Content of job adverts** (OALC) have a template, please ask for it

* Job title
* Location of the job
* Duties & responsibilities of the job
* Essential and/or desired skills, experience & qualifications
* Pay/remuneration
* Application procedure
* Closing date for applications

**Job advertising compliance**

* Do not use words that could be construed as sexist in job advertisements, for example 'handyman'.
* Ensure that advertisements neither state nor imply that the work is unsuitable for a disabled person. For example, avoid stating that the job requires physical fitness or energy if this is not strictly the case.
* Avoid vague and subjective terminology such as 'intelligent', 'articulate' or 'good communicator'.
* Avoid using age limits or ageist terms - for example, 'young, dynamic junior required'
* Do not specify qualifications that a specific age group will not have (e.g. media studies is a recent addition to the list of degrees, and older people would not have had the opportunity to study this).
* Do not ask for skills that are not required (e.g. requesting fluent English reading and writing when this is not part of the job requirement).
* Do not raise false expectations (e.g. mentioning a bonus that is unlikely to be offered).
* Remember that an advertisement could be seen as an implied term of a contract of employment - hence anything offered in relation to the job could be binding.

**Advertising vacancies internally**

If you choose to advertise vacancies internally within your organisation either instead of, or as well as, advertising externally you should make sure that:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Your internal advertisement is compliant and contains all of the information outlined in the external advert. |
|  | You select a method of publication that will be accessible to all staff. |
|  | You ensure that any temporary staff or agency workers are informed of the vacancy. |
|  | You take special steps to inform any staff on leave, such as long term sick or maternity leave, of the vacancy. |
|  | Where redundancies are being considered within your organisation internal advertising opportunities should be exhausted fully before any other advertising takes place. |

**Discrimination**

All forms of advertising are within the scope of the Equality Act 2010 and liability under the Act can also extend to publishers of adverts. To avoid problems you should:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Not state a preference for candidates of a certain sex, age, race, religion or other protected characteristic. |
|  | Avoid implying a preference through the language used in the advert, for example, the use of gender specific job titles such as handyman or waitress. |
|  | Avoid stating requirements that relate to protected characteristics, for example, age, race, gender disability, religious beliefs. |
|  | Make sure that you advertise the position in a non-discriminatory way, for example, avoid advertising a position in a single religious publication where people of other religions are unlikely to see it, or advertising only on social media sites where older applicants may be less likely to become aware of the vacancy. |

Further information and advice for councils can be found by visiting [www.personneladviceandsolutions.co.uk/factsheets](http://www.personneladviceandsolutions.co.uk/factsheets)

# Financial Briefing

**OALC also offers its member councils the benefit of advice from Steve Parkinson, our Finance, Audit and VAT advisor. If you have any problems or queries concerning finance, VAT, accounting process or financial governance we will send them on to Steve so that you can benefit from his extensive experience. Please send us an email (**[info@oalc.org.uk](mailto:info@oalc.org.uk) **) with a clear description of your problem with as much background information as possible. We will send it on to Steve and get back to you with his response.**

As part of his work for us Steve writes a short article each month. We will put these articles in our Member’s Area for reference as well. This month it is on -

**VAT registration**

A common mistake we encounter is where a council makes taxable sales of services and has failed to register for VAT at the correct time. This can have serious consequences, as HMRC will expect VAT to be paid on income from the date that the council should have registered. HMRC have the power to go back up to 20 years (and sometimes they do) in the case of a failure to register, in addition to charging penalties and interest.

Councils are entitled to reclaim VAT on their non-business activities under Section 33 of the VAT Act, without being registered for VAT. However, they often make the mistake of assuming they can reclaim VAT on all their costs. Non-business activities include services provided free of charge (such as open spaces & play areas), services carried out under a regime that only applies to public bodies (allotments & cemeteries) and leases for £1 or less.

Where councils provide other services in return for payment, they may need to register for VAT. If a council sells goods or services and the VAT charged on sales would be more than £1,000 in any financial year, it will need to register for VAT. It is important to understand that the registration threshold for businesses (currently £85,000) does not apply to councils.

Not all sales attract VAT. Lease or hire of land and buildings are generally exempt from VAT (unless the council is VAT registered and has made an Option to Tax on the site) so these do not create a requirement to register.

Common sources of income that may cause a need to register are:

* Advertising & Sponsorship
* Café, bar & catering sales
* Admission to events (festivals, concerts, Mayors’ balls, fireworks, films)
* Car parking or boat moorings
* Individual sports bookings
* Services to third parties (grass cutting, hire of hanging baskets)

Unregistered councils cannot reclaim VAT on costs relating to taxable sales and sometimes it is a good idea to be registered so that VAT can be reclaimed. For example, charges for passenger transport are generally zero rated where the vehicle seats 10 or more, but a council won’t be entitled to reclaim VAT on the vehicle or the running costs unless it is VAT registered.

Councils that have income from these sources should contact their county association if they are unsure whether they should be VAT registered or not.

# Training and Development

## OALC Training programme

Please book your places via the website <https://www.oalc.org.uk/events> We cannot reserve places. The booking system is binary, you either book a place or you don’t!

Training 2020

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **date** | **subject** | **Half/full day** | **trainer** | **location** |
| Wednesday 22nd January | Website Accessibility  Fully booked  (if successful we will look to run another session) | Half/morning  10-12.30 | [cid:image001.png@01CDF997.FC56B050](http://www.oxeyes.org.uk/website/) | Oxfordshire Association for the Blind,  Bradbury Lodge,  Gordon Woodward Way,  Oxford, OX1 4XL  (near Redbridge Park & Ride) |
| Thursday 30th January | Parish Meetings | Half/morning  10-12.30 | Frances  Webster, solicitor  Wellers Hedleys | West Oxfordshire District Council Offices, Witney OX28 1NB |
| Wednesday 5th February | Preparing for End of Year Audit  Understanding Internal Audit | Half /morning  10-12.30  Half /afternoon  2-4.30 | Steve Parkinson | Blenheim Room, Begbroke Science Park, Begbroke OX5 1PF |
| Wednesday 12th February | Charity Law | Full day | Roger Taylor | Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot OX11 7JN |
| Monday 24th February  Extra Session | Planning – How local councils fit into the planning system and effective responses to planning applications | Half/ morning | Phil Shaw | West Oxfordshire District Council, Witney, OX28 1NB |
| Wednesday 18th March | Roles and Responsibilities for new councillors and clerks | Full day | Elizabeth Howlett | Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot OX11 7JN |
| Wednesday 22nd April | Information Management  Social Media | Half/morning  Half/afternoon | Elizabeth Howlett  and Jo Wills | Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot OX11 7JN |
| Wednesday 13th May | Parks, play areas and equipment, sport & fitness areas | Full day | Streetscape, Came and Co and Fields in Trust | Islip Village Hall, Church Lane, Islip, Kidlington OX5 2TA |
| Wednesday 3rd June | Neighbourhood Planning  (Booking available soon) | Full day | Neil Homer | Oak Room, Bloxham Mill Business Centre,  Barford Road  Bloxham  Banbury OX15 4FF |
| Wednesday 15th July | Chairmanship skills | Full day | Elizabeth Howlett | Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot OX11 7JN |
| Wednesday 9th September | The Experienced Councillor  Chairing and Facilitation skills | Half/morning 10 12  Half/afternoon  1.30 – 3.30pm | Frances Webster  Wellers Hedleys | Oak Room, Bloxham Mill Business Centre,  Barford Road  Bloxham  Banbury OX15 4FF |
| Wednesday 23rd September | Roles and Responsibilities for new councillors and clerks | Full day | Elizabeth Howlett | Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot OX11 7JN |
| Wednesday 21st October | Finance for councillors  Contracts & procurement | Half/ morning  Half/ afternoon | Steve Parkinson | Blenheim Room, Begbroke Science Park, Begbroke OX5 1PF |

## Other training and conference opportunities

Date for your diary - NALC Spring Conference 17th March 2020; Aviva Conference Centre, London will concentrate on the potential town and parish councils have to deliver support in the health and well-being arena.

The conference will focus on one of NALC's key campaigns for 2020, health and wellbeing, and how local councils can create healthier communities.

The conference will include speakers on the latest health and wellbeing policy issues, interactive panels, dedicated time for a Q&A to ask your questions, promoting good practice and an expanded sector-specific exhibition showcasing products and services that can support your council’s needs. In addition, there will be a range of sessions to help answer some critical issues, such as:

* What are the health challenges communities are facing?
* How are different tiers of local government collaborating?
* Reaching out to help local councils tackle hidden disabilities
* How the public and private sectors can work together?

More details on the NALC website [here](https://www.nalc.gov.uk/springconference?utm_source=Members&utm_campaign=c532368988-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_07_26_02_43_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_206970988f-c532368988-323671257&mc_cid=c532368988&mc_eid=2593660dc7)

## Local Council Award Scheme – show the world how good you are!

This month instead of encouraging councils to support your Clerk to become qualified by undertaking the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) it is time to put the spotlight on the council itself.

The Local Council Award Scheme (LCAS) replaced the Quality Council Scheme; it is designed to provide a framework to support councils to improve and develop. The scheme offers councils the opportunity to show that they meet the standards set by the sector, assessed by their peers, and to put in place the conditions for continued improvement.

The scheme has been designed to provide the tools and encouragement to those councils wishing to self-reflect on their processes and governance, as well as promoting and recognising councils that are more ambitious.

The Local Council Award Scheme will be reviewed in 2020, as will Cilca. Local councils must meet the criteria in place at the date they submit their completed application form to their local accreditation panel at OALC.

There are three levels of LCAS – Foundation, Quality and Quality Gold.

For the Foundation Award the council has to demonstrate that it has the documentation and information in place to operate lawfully and according to standard practice by confirming that it has:

**GOVERNANCE:**

Criteria demonstrating good governance in managing the business and finances of a council

* Its standing orders and financial regulations
* Its Code of Conduct and a link to councillors’ registers of interests
* It’s publication scheme
* It’s last annual return
* Transparent information about council payments
* A calendar of all meetings including the annual meeting of electors
* Minutes for at least one year of full council meetings and (if relevant) all committee and sub-committee meetings
* Current agendas
* The budget and precept information for the current or next financial year
* Its complaints procedure
* A risk management policy
* A register of assets
* Contracts for all members of staff
* Up to date insurance policies that mitigate risks to public money

**COMMUNITY:**

Criteria representing a council’s role in the community and how it engages with the community

* Council contact details and councillor information in line with the Transparency Code
* Its action plan for the current year
* Evidence of consulting the community
* Publicity advertising council activities
* Evidence of participating in town and country planning

**DEVELOPMENT:**

Criteria representing council improvement through the management and development of staff and councillors

* Disciplinary and grievance procedures
* A policy for training new staff
* A record of all training undertaken by staff and councillors in the last year
* A clerk who has achieved 12 Continuing Professional Development Points (CPD) in the last year.

## CILCA new mentoring session starting March 2020 - witney

This Level 3, (equivalent of an A level) qualification provides you, the Clerk with a broad knowledge of all aspects of your work – roles and responsibilities, the law, procedures, finance planning and community involvement.

The Society of Local Council Clerks recommend that you’re in post for a minimum of 12 months before starting this qualification. ImportantlyCiLCA is one of the qualifying criteria for the council to gain the General Power of Competence, a very wide ranging power which opens up all sorts of possibilities for a dynamic and ambitious council. Find out more about the General Power of Competence [here.](https://www.slcc.co.uk/the-general-power-of-competence/)

We would encourage all clerks to attain CiLCA . It helps you to:

* Make confident, informative decisions for your council and your community
* Advise the council on its duties and powers
* Adapt to changing circumstances
* Ensure your council is compliant with proper financial practices
* Set a vision for the future for your council and your community
* Respond to questions and problems with a dynamic, ‘can-do’ attitude
* Advise and support the council as it identifies and implements plans for the future

OALC has a four module mentoring session starting on 17th March 2020 at the offices of Witney Town Council. This is ideally placed for clerks to the west and centre of the county. The mentoring supports you to complete the 30 topics of the Certificate, which are grouped into five units. [Registering with SLCC costs £350](https://www.slcc.co.uk/qualification/cilca/).

The cost of the mentoring is £275 per person for the four sessions. The mentoring will only run if we have at least 4 people signed up. Please contact us for more information. Before you begin the mentoring there is a brief training needs assessment to make sure this qualification is appropriate for your current skill level. Kim Bedford is a sympathetic, knowledgeable and experienced trainer, her mentoring will support you as you complete each of the study units.

The dates of the sessions will be 17th March, 21st April, 23rd June and 1st September.

Please contact [info@oalc.org.uk](mailto:info@oalc.org.uk) for more information or to sign up to attend.

# Vacancies

All vacancies can be found on the [Local News section](http://www.oalc.org.uk/localnews.htm) of the OALC website, scroll down to the very bottom of the page. We do not charge councils to advertise their jobs but we do expect all adverts to provide the basic information in the template we can provide.

Sibford Gower PARISH COUNCIL VACANCY FOR PART TIME CLERK & RFO

Sibford Gower Parish Council A picture containing grass, outdoor, tree, sky

Description automatically generated

**Posted: Thursday 19th December 2019**

Applications are invited for the part-time position of Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer to Sibford Gower Parish Council. We are a small but friendly community, with an electorate of just under 400. There are currently four Councillors with a co-option to be made in due time later in the coming year, 2020.

The successful applicant will maintain the accounts of the Council and oversee payments to local contractors; be the principal point of contact with Cherwell District Council for planning purposes and prepare the paperwork for and organise the quarterly parish council meetings and the annual parish meeting; and provide guidance and professional support to parish councillors. We enjoy close working relations with the local Town Estates charity and with the neighbouring Parish Council in Sibford Ferris, for both of which the applicant too would be the principal point of contact.

The Gower Council has its own section of the Sibfords website, which we share with the Ferris Council: <https://thesibfords.uk/pc/sgpc>. This carries details of our activities and services and how we operate. There is a section there on our priorities (Section 3), and the successful applicant would be expected to be very much part of their further development and evolution.

The applicant will work from home and must be self-motivated and have excellent administration, IT and communication skills. Previous experience is desirable but not essential. Training, support and advice is available from the Parish’s membership of the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, and the relationship between local councils and Cherwell District Council is also a highly supportive one.

The post is notionally for 5 hours per week and will include attendance at Council meetings, currently held in the village’s Primary School, but the hours are otherwise flexible and include normal personal and statutory holiday provision.

Salary for the year is presently set at **£2,696.20** being based on the NALC National Salary Award rates for 2019/20 at the New Spinal Column Point 8 + all expenses incurred in the role. This would be subject to review on an annual basis.

Please email your CV and an expression of interest in a covering letter to Cllr Hugh Pidgeon at: [cllr.hugh.pidgeon@thesibfords.org.uk](mailto:cllr.hugh.pidgeon@thesibfords.org.uk)

The closing date for applications is **5.30pm Friday 31st January 2020**. Interviews will be held in the first week in February.

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| **North Newington Parish Council, Parish Clerk**  **Location:** The new clerk will be required to work from home plus attend  monthly evening Parish Council meetings, usually the 1st Tuesday of each month,  excluding August.  **Hours:** The role is for approximately 3 hours per week and attracts a salary of  £9.743 per hour (LC1 SCP 19) starting point depending upon experience and  transferable skills  **Specific responsibilities:** The clerk provides administrative and clerical  support to the council and duties include managing the meetings of the council  including preparing the agenda, taking minutes, monitoring actions and  decisions, managing communications with councilors, other organisations and  the public.  To apply please send your CV with a covering note to the clerk at: [northnewingtonparishcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:northnewingtonparishcouncil@gmail.com)  Or for further information or an informal chat please call the clerk, Elaine  Boswell on: 01295 738803 |

**Whitchurch on Thames Parish Clerk**

**Location:** Work from home  except for monthly Council meetings, the second Thursday of each month and periodic visits to the village as required including Village Hall and new Pavilion team meetings.

**Hours:** 8 hours per week, average of 35 hrs per month.

Salary is expected to be in the region of £300 to £500 per month, depending on previous experience, plus expenses.

The Parish Council seeks to employ a home-based, part-time parish clerk. The successful applicant will have to organise monthly parish council meetings, support parish councillors and maintain accounts including those of the village hall and new pavilion teams. A full list of responsibilities is available on request.

**Qualities**

* Previous Clerk experience preferred - Strong administrative skills - Experience with financial packages - Proficient with MS Word and Excel.
* Knowledge of and passion for parish council related local issues.
* Strong interpersonal skills to work with the team of councillors, stakeholders in the village, as well as representatives from the Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and South Oxfordshire District Council.

**How to apply** Please email your CV and a covering letter to the Chair, Cllr. Jim Donahue, [cllrdonahue.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com](mailto:cllrdonahue.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com)