

# OALC NEWSLETTER

## FEBRUARY 2019



The National Training Strategy  
for Town & Parish Councils

### Training Programme 2019

#### THE HEADLINES

**Sensible tip of the month** - page 2 – OALC Subscription invoices have been sent out

**Oxfordshire County Council** – page 2 - Oxfordshire 2050

**Elections** – vital dates - page 4; purdah – page 5; welcome pack & insurance – page 7; share your opinions – page 8

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**Employment Briefing** – page 18 - OALC has a new HR advisor

**Finance briefing** – page 19 - making Tax Digital

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**BOOK NOW DON'T LEAVE UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE, BOOKING CLOSES ONE WEEK BEFORE THE EVENT**

- **Minutes and agendas** – 13<sup>th</sup> March, morning, West Oxfordshire DC
- **The Clerks Year** – 21<sup>st</sup> March, Burford (full day)
- **Risk Management** – 17<sup>th</sup> April, Didcot (morning)
- **Strategic Planning** – 17<sup>th</sup> April, Didcot (afternoon)
- **Allotments** – 15<sup>th</sup> May, Didcot, full day

See the rest of the year's training on page 20

#### Vacancies this month

- Ambrosden PC - Clerk/RFO
- Community Development Worker- Heyford Park
- Tetsworth PC – Clerk/RFO
- Wallingford TC – temp. Neighbourhood Plan Coordinator

## SENSIBLE TIP OF THE MONTH – SUBSCRIPTION INVOICES

Subscription invoices were sent out **by post** on 13<sup>th</sup> February. Thank you to the 40+ councils that have already paid. If you haven't received yours by now, one can only assume it must have got lost in the post, let us know and we will send a replacement copy invoice.

There is no compulsion to pay the invoice before the end of the financial year but please do pay before the end of June!

## LOCAL NEWS



# OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## OXFORDSHIRE PLAN 2050 WILL SHAPE FUTURE OF COUNTY WITH HELP FROM RESIDENTS



### OXFORDSHIRE PLAN 2050

Oxfordshire residents have the opportunity to shape the long-term future of the county through a major public consultation to develop the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, backed by the six local authorities.

As part of the £215m Housing & Growth Deal secured by the Oxfordshire Growth Board from the Government, the spatial plan will set out the county's future for the next 30 years.

It will consider what makes Oxfordshire great and look to preserve these qualities, while helping address some of the challenges facing us and secure a better future for our children and grandchildren.

Through consultation with different stakeholder groups and the public, we will listen to what is important to our residents and their families, what aspirations they have for the future and plan for the best way to deliver a better quality of life for all, be it rural, urban or market town communities.

A bus roadshow has been touring the county seeking the views of Oxfordshire.

From Monday 11 February until Monday 25 March people can read the first draft document and leave their comments online on our [consultation website](#). There are three dates left to see the exhibition in Witney, Banbury and Oxford (see the poster below)

More information [here](#) on the Oxfordshire 2050 website.



# Introducing the Oxfordshire Plan

Don't miss your chance to help us make a better Oxfordshire

Join us to have your say

### Bus roadshow with family activities:

**HENLEY-ON-THAMES** - Market Place  
Mon 18 February, 9am-11.30am

**THAME** - Leisure Centre  
Mon 18 February, 1pm-3.30pm

**WANTAGE** - The Beacon  
Tues 19 February, 9am-11.30am

**FARINGDON** - Old Town Hall  
Tues 19 February, 1pm-3.30pm

**CHIPPING NORTON** - Leisure Centre  
Wed 20 February, 9am-11.30am

**CARTERTON** - Town Hall  
Wed 20 February, 1pm-3.30pm

**KIDLINGTON** - Exeter Hall  
Thur 21 February, 9am-11.30am

**COWLEY\*** - Templars Square Shopping Centre  
Thur 21 February, 1pm-3.30pm

**BICESTER** - Sheep Street  
Friday 22 February, 9am-11.30am

**SUMMERTOWN** - Ferry Leisure Centre  
Friday 22 February, 1pm-3.30pm

\*Cowley event will not include bus activities

### Plan exhibitions:

**ABINGDON** - Guildhall foyer  
Mon 25 February, 3pm-8pm

**DIDCOT** - Cornerstone  
Wed 27 February, 3pm-8pm

**WITNEY** - Corn Exchange  
Mon 4 March, 3pm- 8pm

**BANBURY** - Town Hall  
Wed 13 March, 3pm-8pm

**OXFORD** - Town Hall  
Thur 14 March, 3pm to 8pm



For more details visit [www.oxfordshireplan.org](http://www.oxfordshireplan.org)

LEADER - REOPENED FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST ON 3RD JANUARY 2019



So far, Oxfordshire LEADER has awarded over £1 million to over 30 projects. However, they are in the last stages of the programme and still have some funding available.

They have a rolling programme of accepting Expressions of Interest (EOI) from 3 January 2019, until they have secured enough bids to use up the remaining

funding. As funds are limited they ask that you contact them directly to discuss your EOI.

Applications for grant funding are a two stage process, requiring an EOI to be submitted first. If successful at this stage, you will be invited to submit a Full Application. Further guidance can be found on the '[Application Process](#)' page on the LEADER website.

**They need to allocate all of their funding by 30 June 2019**, so they recommend that you submit your EOI quickly. Grant funding can help pay for:

- **projects that develop towns and villages in rural areas and their rural services**
- projects that involve visits to farms for educational purposes so that the public has a greater understanding of the countryside and rural areas
- **creation, improvement or expansion of small-scale village infrastructure, including amenity buildings and village access (for example footpaths)**
- **developing village infrastructure and access to key services, which may include tourism projects that increase services for the local community and contribute to village renewal**
- **setting up, improving or expanding essential services (for example transport) for the local community**

## ANNUAL SOUTH AND VALE VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY SECTOR CONFERENCE, 13 MARCH 2019

This free annual event takes place each March and is an opportunity for people from local community groups and voluntary organisations to meet, discuss ideas and share advice in a relaxed setting. The date for this year's event is Wednesday, 13 March 2019 and will be held at Cornerstone Arts Center in Didcot. If you know of a voluntary or community sector organisation who might be interested in attending please encourage them to register.

To register for this event please book online <https://vcs-conference-2019.eventbrite.co.uk>

## ELECTIONS

	Necessary action
Tuesday 26 March 2019	Publication of Notice of Election & Nominations open <b>PURDAH starts - see notes below</b>
Wednesday 3 April 2019 <b>(4 pm)</b>	Deadline for receipt of nomination papers and withdrawal of candidature

Thursday 4 April 2019 (4 pm)	Deadline for publication of Statement of Persons Nominated
Wednesday 24 April 2019	Publication of Notice of Poll
Thursday 2 May 2019 (7 am to 10 pm)	<b>Polling Day</b>
<b>Tuesday 7 May 2019</b>	<b>Day that councillors retire and new councillors come into office following the elections (this date does take account of the bank holiday)</b>
Between Tuesday 7 May and Tuesday 21 May inclusive	Period during which the annual meeting of the Town or Parish Council must be held
Before or at the first meeting of the Council following the election (which will be the annual meeting)	All councillors to sign declaration of acceptance of office
Thursday 30 May 2019	Last day for delivery of returns of elections expenses <b>(Parishes)</b>
By Tuesday 4 June 2019	All councillors to have completed their registration of interests and returned to the Monitoring Officer of the District or City Council

## OALC GUIDANCE IN THE RUN UP TO THE ELECTIONS – THE PERIOD OF ELECTORAL PURDAH

The provisions of the [Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity 2011](#) apply to all town and parish councils.

During the run up to an election the Code contains relevant provisions which you need to be aware of paragraphs 33 – 35 (see below). This is often referred to as the "purdah" period and will start on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2019 and continue until the election.

*“Elections, Referendums and Petitions. The period between the notice of an election and the election itself should preclude proactive publicity in all its forms of candidates and other politicians involved directly in the election. Publicity should not deal with controversial issues or report views, proposals, or recommendations in such a way that identifies them with individual councillors or groups of councillors. However, it is acceptable for the authority to respond in appropriate circumstances to events and legitimate service enquiries provided that their answers are factual and not party political. Councillors holding key political or civic positions should be able to comment in an emergency or*

*where there is a genuine need for a member level response to an important event outside the authority's control. Proactive events arranged in this period should not involve councillors likely to be standing for election".*

During this period no town or parish council should publish publicity relating to particular individuals involved directly in the election. Publicity refers to any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public, or a section of the public, and could include news releases, newsletters, items on websites, advertising etc. The Code of Recommended Practice seeks to ensure that council resources and facilities are not perceived by the public to have been used for election campaigning or political purposes during the purdah period and that the political impartiality of employees has also been maintained.

The Local Government Association (LGA) have published in the past (2018) helpful advice on purdah on their website here <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/purdah> and answers to FAQ's [here](#), albeit the advice is aimed at councillors of principal councils.

The following points summarise the guidance for Councillors and council employees:

### GREEN LIGHT: Acceptable Practice

Usual Business Matters:

- Publicity with Council quotes from Clerk only.
- Reactive publicity can include Councillors holding Civic positions if commenting in an emergency or a major news event outside the Council's control.
- Councillors can create their own individual, non-political publicity.
- Councillors can attend events arranged by other organisations, but the same restrictions apply about quoting such events in any Council publicity.
- Decision-making will continue as usual, and the decisions will be publicised, subject to the restrictions about quotes.

### AMBER LIGHT: Acceptable Practice; Proceed with Caution/ Seek Prior Advice

Quotations (direct / indirect):

- Councillors not involved in the election may make quotes or may be quoted if there are no political tones or references contained within the quotes.
- Avoid proactively scheduling events attracting public and media interest. Events that are unavoidable should not publicise individual councillors or their respective political parties and policies.

### RED LIGHT: Unacceptable Practice; Do not Proceed

- Councillors involved in the election will not be quoted in proactive news releases issued by the Council.
- Councillors involved in the election should not attend any events organised by the Council that may attract significant numbers of members of the public, or media interest.
- No election materials, political posters or leaflets must be displayed on any Council premises or property (including street furniture, notice boards, market stalls, web-site etc.).

## GET A WELCOME PACK READY FOR YOUR NEW COUNCILLORS

**Book all new councillors a place on one of our Roles and Responsibilities courses**, there are three dates to choose from Wednesday June 19<sup>th</sup>, Saturday July 6<sup>th</sup> or Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September book here <https://www.oalc.org.uk/events>

If you have some more experienced councillors re-elected consider pairing them up with a new councillor and asking them to be a mentor for the first 6 months.

The new councillor pack needs to have in it (but adapt to your council):

- A copy of *The good councillor's guide* (available from OALC printed copy £4 + £1.20 p&p) or download from the OALC website in the Members Area under Resources for Councillors
- A copy of your Councils Standing Orders and its Financial Regulations
- A copy of your Councils Code of Conduct, [DCLG Guide on Openness and Transparency](#), Register of Interests, Acceptance of Office and Publication Scheme.
- A map of the parish, with boundaries, footpaths, land owned by the parish, listed buildings, TPO's, AONB, SSSI and other relevant planning designations. Links to Neighbourhood Plan/Local Plan and other current planning documents of your district council
- A list of council policies
- A copy of the council budget, strategy documents and forward plans
- Contact details of councillors, clerk and relevant people at the District Council
- Dates of meetings, terms of reference for any committees
- Training courses available from OALC

**When councillors leave office**....don't forget that councillors should clear/delete council business from their home computers if they are no longer councillors after May. This is another sound argument for having generic council email addresses and perhaps changing passwords too.

## ARTICLE BY CAME AND COMPANY, INSURERS, ON ELECTIONS AND INSURANCE

As with all elections, we hope that the result demonstrates a good balance between new and experienced Councillors.

With insurance, specifically, these challenges can be significant especially in relation to bank signatories. It is noted that the average length of time required by banks to change authorised signatories often leaves Councils without the means to issue payments.

This is especially important due to the majority of Councils' insurance policies falling due in June. As we all know, if the insurance premium is not paid by the renewal date, the insurance company may not be of financial assistance in the event of a claim. Hopefully, changes to the way the Council can make payments will ease this potential issue, and this may be something a Council should consider as a contingency.

It is important for newly-elected Councillors to understand how their Council's insurance policy provides protection and support; and it is often advantageous to utilise this period of training to review the Councils requirements and for existing Councillors to refresh their knowledge.

The Council's insurance policy should provide cover for Public Liability (injury to a member of the public or damage to their property subject to negligence being proven) and almost more importantly, cover for Officials Indemnity (errors and omissions or breach of duty that has caused a financial loss) and Libel and Slander (the written or verbal word that has caused a financial loss).

These sections can provide reassurance that newly elected Councillors are not left personally exposed and liable simply by putting their head above the parapet for the benefit of the community.

The Councils' insurance advisor should not only provide a comprehensive policy and but also continue to demonstrate an offer of support and advice to Councillors, especially through what is potentially a challenging time.

## SHARE YOUR OPINIONS ON... ELECTIONS

LCR (Local Councils Review) is a high-quality, glossy quarterly magazine with in-depth articles and features offering you advice and good practice, along with regular spotlights on parish and town councils and top tips information to help assist you with the real issues affecting local councils and communities.



For the Spring issue, NALC would like you to answer three questions on elections:

1. Who should pay for local council elections? Principal authorities or local councils? Why?
2. Are you engaging with your community to encourage more people to stand as councillors?
3. Should voters at local council elections be allowed to vote electronically?

We would be grateful if we could have your thoughts by **29 March 2019**.

Fill in the survey [here](#)

If you aren't currently receiving LCR magazine and would like to find out more and subscribe, visit: [www.nalc.gov.uk/lcrmagazine](http://www.nalc.gov.uk/lcrmagazine)

## TIME TO GET ALL PARISH COUNCIL LAND REGISTERED (AND MAPPED)

86% of land in England and Wales is registered. However, there are significant areas of land that are unregistered. The Land Registry aims to get full registration of all freehold land by 2030.

### What does this mean for you as a parish council?

Land is generally only registered when it is sold and probably much of the land your council owns is very unlikely to ever be sold. However, what if the ownership is disputed and someone seeks adverse possession? Registering your land ownerships would mean your asset register would be more

comprehensive. Also if your council uses digital mapping (which we recommend see Digital Mapping toolkit in the Members Area of the website under NALC Briefings) then your mapping provider should be able to access all the Land Registry records together with those of the Environment Agency, Historic England, Ordnance Survey, Defra, Dept. of Transport etc.

A [list of unregistered public sector land](#) was recently published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, using data from HM Land Registry and the Office of Government Property. This list is not definitive but is intended to make the data open and transparent.

### **How HM Land Registry can help local authorities**

Land Registry can help with costs by working on a project basis, rather than charging to register each piece of land individually. For example, most local authorities who have fewer than 90 parcels of unregistered land do not spend more than £680 registering their assets. Land Registry will discuss needs on a case-by-case basis. Land Registry can also help the public sector to register their land by:

- helping to analyse data to understand what's left to register. In some cases we can offer practical help, such as deed retrieval and lodgement;
- assigning a project manager to work with each public sector organisation who will be a single point of contact throughout the process; and
- updating ownership details in existing registration data..

[Read more about the benefits to local authorities of registering their land and property assets.](#)

## **SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DC EXTEND VOLUNTEERING GRANT DEADLINE**

The closing date for the volunteering grant scheme has now been extended to Friday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2019 (unless the budget is allocated beforehand).

Why have we extended the closing date?

We passionately believe volunteering offers many benefits for local groups and charities, the volunteers themselves and the wider community. We want to support even more organisations to apply and to help remove some of the costs when volunteering.

Take a look at the [volunteering grant scheme](#). Just one hour of application time.

This scheme is open to small voluntary, community and social enterprise groups operating in South Oxfordshire. Eligible organisations can apply for a grant from £250 to a maximum of £750.

If you have any questions, please contact Suzi Wild – Community Liaison Officer  
[suzi.wild@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:suzi.wild@southandvale.gov.uk) 01235 422171

## **INTERNAL AUDIT**

Following our training sessions on Internal Audit in January we are compiling a list of Internal Auditors working in Oxfordshire. Being included on the list does NOT imply endorsement by OALC in any way merely that we are aware of the existence of the auditors which may be helpful when councils ask us.

**If your council's Internal Auditor would like to be included on this list please forward this article to them** and encourage them to contact OALC ([info@oalc.org.uk](mailto:info@oalc.org.uk)) with their name, address – postal and email and telephone number and any details about size or location of councils that they would prefer to work with). All those who attended the course have been contacted to ask if they would like to consider this role, thus we have a number of new names on the list.

If you want a copy of the list or if you want to be added to the list please contact us.

## COMMUNICATIONS WITH YOUR COMMUNITY – A FEW THOUGHTS



**How do you communicate with your community?** – Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or good old fashioned newsletter/magazine, Chairman's blog?

**What does your council need/want to say/communicate?**

- Recruiting new councillors
- Explain a specific project or precept increase?
- Increase understanding and involvement?
- Explain an unpopular decision?
- Prove democracy is happening?

There is the **basic minimum** that the [Transparency Code](#) requires to be placed on a freely available website but what else can the council do?

This is the minimum Transparency Code requirement:

- all items of expenditure above £100
- end of year accounts
- annual governance statement
- internal audit report
- list of councillor or member responsibilities
- the details of public land and building assets
- Minutes, agendas and meeting papers of formal meetings

Do you explain how to contact the clerk or councillors? Generic council email address or phone number

Do you explain what the council does, and just as important - doesn't do?

Do you clearly state when meetings are – don't make people search for it. Have a clear/uncluttered website. People give up after a couple of clicks.

At meetings do councillors have name plates? At meetings are you facing the public (is there any public to face?) Don't assume everyone knows who you are, have a name label at events. Speak to people before the meeting starts. Don't assume people understand when or if they can speak at a meeting. Be friendly, patient and explain what is happening.

## COTSWOLDS AONB GRANTS...



**We are accepting applications for funding**

**CARING FOR THE COTSWOLDS. DEADLINE 5/4/19**

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND DEADLINE 3/5/19**

**MORE INFO:  
EDWARD.BONN@COTSWOLDSAONB.ORG.UK**

**NATIONAL NEWS**

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE**

A year-long Parliamentary inquiry into ethical standards in local government, was published on 30th January, it backed calls for reforms to the current regime aimed at improving behaviour in 10,000 parish and town councils.



NALC has campaigned for a range of measures, including the re-introduction of sanctions, greater emphasis on training and development, and a single code of conduct for all tiers of local government based on NALC's own model code.

Measures recommended in the independent Committee on Standards in Public Life report on ethical standards in local government, presented to the Prime Minister, include:

- a new power for principal authorities, such as district and county councils, to suspend councillors from all tiers of local government
- revised rules on declaring interests, gifts and hospitality
- an updated model code of conduct, in consultation with representative bodies of councillors and officers of all tiers of local government
- a right of appeal for suspended councillors to the Local Government Ombudsman
- greater transparency about the number and nature of complaints.

Cllr Sue Baxter, chairman of NALC, said: “Since the Localism Act was introduced in 2010, NALC has called for its review, including the standards regime it introduced, and therefore strongly welcomed this inquiry into local government ethical standards.

“Whilst the present regime is not fundamentally flawed, it does require some strengthening, therefore I am pleased the Committee on Standards in Public Life has listened to the concerns of NALC, county associations of local councils, and local councils themselves.

“The Committee rightly acknowledges it is a minority of local councillors who engage in bullying or harassment, or other highly disruptive behaviour, therefore NALC is delighted the Committee agrees with our proposal for the regime to have more teeth through the re-introduction of sanctions for breaches of the code.

“We support the recommendation to develop an updated model code of conduct to reflect the proposed changes, but given over half of local councils and many principal authorities use NALC’s model code of conduct, this should be the foundation for the development of an updated model code of conduct for all tiers of local government. NALC looks forward to further dialogue and engagement with the Committee and the government over taking forward the report’s recommendations.”

The full report can be read [here](#)

## PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS INCREASE APRIL 2019 – PENSIONS REGULATOR

### Your duties

By law, the total minimum contributions your organisation must pay into its staff workplace pension scheme increase on 6 April 2019. You need to be ready for this increase, and make sure you’re set up to pay the correct amounts into your staff pension scheme - so the council, as employer, complies with the law, and your staff receive the pension payments they’re entitled to.

### Are you ready?

From 6 April, the total minimum contribution including employer and employee payments must be no less than 8% of qualifying earnings. Your council must pay a minimum of 3%, with staff making up the rest of the 8%.

The council can choose to pay more than its 3% minimum contribution if it wishes. If so, staff won’t need to pay in as much to meet the total minimum contribution of 8% of qualifying earnings.

Date effective	Total minimum contribution	Employer minimum contribution	Staff contribute the remainder
Current rates	5%	2%	Up to 3%
6 April 2019	8%	3%	Up to 5%

You should be ready to calculate contributions using the new rates the first time you run payroll from 6 April.

### Next steps

- a. it should be simple for the new rates to be applied, but you should prepare now by speaking with your payroll team and software service providers, to make sure your systems are ready

- b. we recommend that you write to staff to let them know about the increase in contributions - letter templates are available on our [website](#).

Please note, if your organisation already contributes more than the total minimum of 8% into staff workplace pension schemes, or it uses a defined benefit (DB) scheme for automatic enrolment, it doesn't need to take any action. And if any staff asked to be put into a scheme that your organisation doesn't pay into, the increases don't apply to them.

## A PRACTICAL IDEA TO TACKLE LONELINESS – THE FRIENDLY BENCH™

At the NALC [Spring Conference](#), Tracey Crouch MP, ministerial lead on loneliness spoke about its effects on individuals and the wider community. Parish councils are increasingly considering what they can do to address this issue particularly from a health and wellbeing angle. Below is one very practical approach, it's called The Friendly Bench. There are obviously many more ideas from lunch clubs to meet up's which parish councils could become involved with. We are always happy to hear about new and imaginative schemes which councils are involved in – please give us a little case study which other councils could learn from.

It is a purpose designed kerbside community garden, with integrated seating, created to help connect the elderly, socially isolated and those with limited mobility to people, to places and with nature.

Their [website](#) says:

- It connects people

An accessible social space, The Friendly Bench™ helps grow and strengthen people's social networks with their wider community and improves wellbeing through friendship and is the focus for monthly community events and activities.

- connect places

Purposely designed, The Friendly Bench™ provides a convenient and comfortable place for those with limited mobility to rest, helping them to connect with local services and public places, whilst also encouraging independence and opportunities to participate in the wider community on their terms.

- And connects with nature

Enabling easy accessible interactions with nature, wildlife and the outdoors to help improve people's physical health, mental well-being, social behaviour, self-esteem and life satisfaction.

Building friendships and strengthening social connections is not only good for the individual's health, wellbeing and quality of life, it is also beneficial for their wider community, creating a public space that is actively used by a diverse range of people promotes a safer community, encourages more active citizenship, a sense of place, identity and pride, it can act as 'social glue'.

The space becomes an asset for the community, a shared resource where positive experiences and values are created a 'self-organising public service'.

## NALC PUBLISHES MATERIALS TO HELP LOCAL COUNCILS PROMOTE ELECTIONS

NALC has published some materials to help parish and town councils promote the local elections in May. It includes:

- Posters – Four editable promotional posters to help reach the community to recruit more candidates
- Flyer – An A5 flyer with further information on how to become a councillor, why become a councillor and what local councils do
- Guide – All about local councils is a handy guide for anyone wanting to know more about local councils with a collection of case studies
- Template – An editable press release to help spread the news about the upcoming elections
- Timetable – A timetable covering the activities for elections

Find out more [here on the NALC website](#)

OALC hope that ALL councils that are due to have elections in May 2019 have contested elections.

We hope that ALL parish councils encourage as many people as possible to stand for election, not just the 'usual suspects'. Contested elections show a healthy interest in village democracy and life. We know it can be hard to recruit new faces but identify the skills needed, find people that might have those skills and talk to them. New people move in that may have useful skills; people may retire and have more time to get involved, think laterally and encourage change.

Go out and talk to people, advertise as widely as possible, not just in the parish magazine.

Why not use this job description (borrowed from Norfolk ALC) as a starting point...

### Description of the role

<b>Role</b>	Parish Councillor
<b>Responsible to</b>	All people resident within the Parish
<b>Regular liaison with</b>	Other councillors, local authorities, residents
<b>Period of service</b>	Four year term of office, can be re-elected
<b>Salary</b>	This is a voluntary position, expenses can be paid

**Main purpose:** Representing the views of all residents within your parish

**Secondary purpose:**

- As part of a local council you will have responsibility for running local services which may include: open spaces, play areas, village halls, community car schemes and potentially much more.
- Deciding on how much to raise through the council tax in order to deliver your council's services.
- Influencing and shaping the long term development policy for the parish, and as part of the planning process, comment on planning applications in the parish.
- Improve the quality of life and the environment in the local area.
- Working to identify issues which are important to the lives of the residents you represent.
- Working to bring about improvements through local projects, lobbying other service providers and working in partnership with other parishes and agencies.

**History of parish councils**

The current system of parish councils was formed by the Local Government Act 1894. There are currently around 10,000 parish councils in the country.

Parish councils are the tier of local government which is closest to individual communities and therefore have the greatest potential for identifying, understanding and addressing the needs of the communities they serve.

While some larger councils are run along party political lines, there is no expectation that you have to join a political party. The vast majority of parish councils are not split by party politics.

**Person specification**

Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Over 18 and on the electoral register	Y	
A resident of the parish for which you are standing (although there are certain exceptions)	Y	
Able to attend regular evening meetings	Y	

Interest in local issues and things which affect people.	Y	
Keen to improve the local environment and quality of life.		Y
An understanding and willingness to represent the views of the whole community.	Y	
An interest in learning and developing your role in the community		Y

**Support and training** - Training and advice for parish councillors is available for Parish Councillors.

**How to find out more-** The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has a website [www.nalc.gov.uk](http://www.nalc.gov.uk) or preferably you could attend a parish or town council meeting and talk to existing councillors or to a clerk. Look at their website to find out when the next meeting is.

## BREXIT

We are told that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) continues to closely engage with local authorities so that they and their residents are well-prepared for the UK (possibly/probably/ or whatever) leaving the European Union on 29 March 2019.

To support this activity, a network of 9 local authority chief executives from across England has been established. They will engage with councils in their region to share information on preparations to support an orderly exit.

Simultaneously, the chief executives will be kept well-informed on national policy on EU exit that could have implications for local services, businesses and residents.

The government has set up what it calls a landing page where information about the potential effects of Brexit can be found - click on these .gov.uk links [here](#) and [here](#)

## ENFORCEMENT OF CIVIL PARKING REGULATIONS

Newquay Town Council is preparing to submit a proposal under the Sustainable Communities Act in relation to allowing local councils the power to enforce civil parking regulations. This will be supported by NALC which has a long standing policy position on this matter.

In Newquay there have been significant issues with anti-social on-street parking, which is compounded by a lack of enforcement in more remote or residential areas. This is creating serious safety issues, particularly at junctions or along narrow streets – preventing access to emergency services. Whilst a year-round issue, as a tourist destination, this worsens during the summer months where the road network is brought to a standstill.

Newquay is also embracing devolution and local service provision and as a result, has taken over land and some car parks as a means of generating income or providing important local facilities. However, with the lack of enforcement powers, the town council feels it has been unable to manage these assets effectively. This is mainly due to an increasing number of drivers deciding to ignore the terms of use and flouting the rules – especially when they know the town council was unable to enforce them. These are unsustainable and growing problems in Newquay (and across many market / coastal towns nationally) and we believe most other local councils will suffer similar issues.

Please help NALC gain a greater understanding of the scale of the issue by completing this [short survey](#) by 17:00 on Friday 15 March 2019 – it will only take 5 minutes.

## GREAT BRITISH SPRING CLEAN – TAKE PART

On Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> January, Keep Britain Tidy launched their [Great British Spring Clean 2019](#) in Westminster.



This year's Spring Clean will take place from 22 March – 23 April 2019 NALC is keen for as many councils as possible to get involved and join over 370,000 [#LitterHeroes](#) already cleaning up their community!

## STATE OF RURAL SERVICES REPORT – POOR TRANSPORT, POOR BROADBAND

Rural England's biannual [State of Rural Services report](#), finds that a third of rural households are unable to make a basic mobile call across the main network, and that more than half are unable to access 4G.



The report also highlights poor transport links outside of urban areas, finding that almost half of those living in rural parts now need to leave at least 30 minutes to reach their nearest town centre if they do not have a car.

Brian Wilson, the report's author, commented that 'nearly a fifth of people in England live in rural areas, yet evidence shows that many of them face inadequate services, such as being unable to make mobile phone calls or being without transport options'.

## EMPLOYMENT BRIEFING

For the past 4+ years OALC has offered its member councils free access to the advice of Bethan Osborne, an experienced HR and employment advisor. Bethan has now moved on to another job outside the local government sector. Bethan helped over 57 Oxfordshire councils with substantive advice, guidance and support as well as answering many, many smaller queries on a daily basis. She also worked directly with a number of councils to assist them with complex employment issues. Her monthly employment briefings are collected in the Members Area of our website, if you have a query please check there first the answer may well be in one of those briefings.



To replace Bethan we have sourced another very experienced HR professional to ensure the continuation of this service to our member councils. OALC has contracted with Chris Moses, Personnel Advice and Solutions Ltd. He holds a Masters Degree in Employment Law and is a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, he has over twenty years front line HR experience.

In addition he has over fifteen years' experience of helping town and parish councils comply with their legal obligations as employers. We will continue with the same level of service as previously. There are four hours per month of Chris's time 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.

This month's briefing from Chris illustrates the need for care by councillors if they make comments about an employee.

### **Can an employee be a Whistle Blower if they complain about defamatory comments made by members of the Council?**

A recent Employment Tribunal Appeal Hearing (*Ibrahim v HCA International*) found that an Employee's Formal Grievance concerning false allegations and defamatory comments, would entitle them to protection as a Whistle Blower, as long as the Employee could prove that their complaint was in the public interest.

This could be of particular concern to Town and Parish Councils, where the number of complaints by Council staff regarding false and offensive remarks being made about them, has shown a rapid increase with the advent of Social Media.

Of particular concern would be comments which have been published by Elected Members on Facebook or other platforms, regarding the Council staff.

If a Councillor's remarks fall foul of data protection legislation such as GDPR, or breaches the Malicious Publications Act 1988, or the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, they may have broken the law. In which case, when an Employee makes the Council aware of this conduct through a complaint or Formal Grievance, they may be informing their Employer that it is failing to comply with its legal obligations. Even if only one Councillor is responsible for this problem, the whole Council is liable for their conduct

To be able to claim that they are a Whistle Blower, an Employee has to be able to show that they have attempted to warn the Council that it is failing to comply with a legal obligation [Employment Rights Act 1996 S43(b)].

By issuing a complaint or Formal Grievance about such illegal conduct, the Employee may be able to claim that they have made a protected disclosure which entitles them to Whistle Blower protection. However this protection only applies if the Employee can demonstrate that their complaint is in the public interest, and not just a personal issue.

Such protection would enable an Employee to be submit a claim for Constructive Dismissal to an Employment Tribunal, without a two-year qualifying period, based on the Council's unreasonable conduct in not correcting the offensive and defamatory comments made on its behalf.

Furthermore, any dismissal resulting from an Employee's protected disclosure could result in a claim for Unfair Dismissal.

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...

### **Making Tax Digital**

Councils have been asking about how Making Tax Digital (MTD) for VAT will affect them.

Where a council is not VAT-registered and reclaims using a VAT126 form, it will **NOT** be affected during 2019/20, nor does it seem likely this will change in 2020/21.

Councils that are VAT registered will have to comply from **1 October 2019**, although they may join the pilot scheme from 1 April 2019 if they wish. The 6-month deferral to 1 October 2019 for local authorities was announced by HMRC last October.

The new VAT Notice 700/22 implies that councils below the £85,000 VAT registration threshold do not have to comply. Our view is that the guidance does not fully reflect the legislation applying to local authorities (particularly S.42, VAT Act 1994) and **ALL** VAT registered councils should look at the implications of moving to digital submission.

Making Tax Digital will require all affected bodies to keep their records digitally and submit VAT return figures directly from the software, rather than logging into an HMRC account and entering the figures manually.

If a council uses an accounting package, they should check whether their provider is updating it to cope with MTD. Leading software providers in the local council sector have already addressed this issue and should be ready for digital VAT returns being submitted directly by the software from 1 April 2019.

VAT registered councils that keep their accounts on spreadsheets should consider whether an accounting package would be a better solution for digital record-keeping. At least one company has developed an interface for spreadsheets, but we do not recommend spreadsheets as a good way account for a VAT registered organisation.

The deferral to 1 October 2019 also applies to VAT registered trusts and not-for-profit organisations, unless they a company.

VAT Notice 700/22 (link below) gives more detail about what is meant by digital record-keeping and submission.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-notice-70022-making-tax-digital-for-vat>

This should be read in conjunction with the policy paper (link below), which refers to the deferral to 1 October 2019.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-tax-digital/overview-of-making-tax-digital>

## HOUSING MINISTER KIT MALTHOUSE HAS ANNOUNCED £6M FUND FOR COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING

The Community Led Homes Programme will be managed by four housing charities and provide funding to support individuals or groups seeking to develop their own local housing schemes.

It comes as a major industry group warned that community-led homes in the pipeline could go unfinished unless the government extends the deadline to its Community Housing Fund.

The £300m fund, which will run alongside the latest funding, was initially expected to run over five years when it was launched in November 2016. However following delays, [bidding opened last July and will close the end of 2019](#).

The government expects the community-led housing sector to supply more than 5,000 homes in the next five years

## TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The OALC Training programme until October 2019 is below

Please book your places via the website <https://www.oalc.org.uk/events> We have responded to your feedback, there is more training, in a wider range of locations and we have a new Saturday training session suitable for new councillors elected in May 2019.

date	subject	Half/full day	trainer	location
Wednesday 13 <sup>th</sup> March	5. Minutes and agendas; a guide to good practice	Half/ morning	Keith Butler	West Oxfordshire District Council OX28 1NB
Thursday March 21 <sup>st</sup>	6. The Clerks Year, essential tasks on a month by month basis	Full day	Kim Bedford	Warwick Hall, Burford OX18 4RY

Wednesday April 17 <sup>th</sup>	7. Risk Management for parish councils  8. Strategic Planning. Where is your council going? Thinking more strategically about serving your community	Half/morning  Half/afternoon	Peter Cooper	Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot OX11 7JN
Wednesday May 15 <sup>th</sup>	9. Allotment management for parish councils	Full day	NAS	Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot OX11 7JN
Wednesday June 19 <sup>th</sup>	10. Roles and Responsibilities for new councillors and clerks	Full day	Elizabeth Howlett	Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot OX11 7JN
Saturday 6 <sup>th</sup> July	11. Roles and Responsibilities for new councillors and clerks	full day note 9.30am start	Elizabeth Howlett	Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot OX11 7JN
Wednesday July 17 <sup>th</sup>	12. Chairmanship skills	Full day	Elizabeth Howlett	Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot OX11 7JN
August				
Wednesday September 18 <sup>th</sup>	13. Roles and Responsibilities for new councillors and clerks	Full day	Elizabeth Howlett	Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot OX11 7JN
Wednesday October 2 <sup>nd</sup>	14. Budgeting and financial management for councillors  15. VAT for clerks (and councillors!)	Half/ morning  Half/ afternoon	Steve Parkinson	Begbroke Science Park, Woodstock Room, Begbroke OX5 1PF



The National Training Strategy  
for Town & Parish Councils

## Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA)

We always encourage Clerks to undertake relevant training and councils to have a training budget for both staff and councillors. The more knowledgeable your clerk is the better the advice they can give the council! It might be one of the courses we run (see above) or one of the recognized courses run by SLCC.

The Certificate in Local Council Administration is one of the necessary qualifications for your Clerk if your council want to attain the General Power of Competence or get the Local Council Award. The online precursor to CiLCA is the Introduction to Local Council Administration (ILCA) this only costs £99 and is done entirely online, more information here

<https://www.slcc.co.uk/content/level-2-qualification-ilca/457/>

The next CiLCA mentoring run by SLCC will start on 9<sup>th</sup> September at Bicester Town Council. The cost is £350 to register and £340 +VAT for SLCC members for the mentoring. The mentoring is spread over 4 days 9<sup>th</sup> September, 8<sup>th</sup> October, 12<sup>th</sup> November and 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 9.30am – 3.30pm

More information on the SLCC website here <https://www.slcc.co.uk/course/cilca-portfolio/53/>



Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action

OCVA provide a lot of practical training <https://ocva.org.uk/all-courses/> They are mainly aimed at the third sector – charities and community organisations but if your council or village hall needs first aid, food handling or fire warden training they are the organisation to go to.

## Emergency First Aid at Work Level 3

The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 require all employers to make arrangements to ensure their employees receive immediate attention if they are injured or taken ill at work. This includes carrying out a risk assessment, appointing a suitable amount of first aiders and providing appropriate first aid training.

The QA Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work (QCF) is a regulated and nationally recognised qualification designed for those who have a specific responsibility at work, to provide first aid in a range of emergency first aid situations. It is also ideal for people who have a specific responsibility to provide basic first aid in voluntary and community activities.

During this one day course, learners will develop the skills and knowledge needed to deal with a range of emergency first aid situations, including: managing an unresponsive casualty, CPR, choking, shock, wounds and bleeding and minor injuries.

Candidates undertake 3 practical assessments during the course plus a multiple choice exam at the end of the course.

On successful completion of the course, candidates will achieve a Level 3 Award in Emergency First Aid at Work from Qualsafe. The qualification is valid for 3 years but annual refreshers are considered best practice.

There are no entry requirements for this course, but you will need to be able to read and understand as well as write English.

Thursday 28th March 2019 (approx. 6 hours) Please note: registration for this course will close on 14th March at 12pm

**Time:** 9.45 am -finish by 5 pm.

**Cost:** £95 per person for OCVA members  
£110 per person from a charitable organisation who are not OCVA members  
£125 per person from a non-charitable organisation

The course costs per person are inclusive of exam and registration fees.

**Venue:** OCVA, Oxford Office Furniture Training Suite, The Old Court House, Floyds Row  
St Aldates Oxford OX1 1SS

For online booking, please [click here](#).

## VACANCIES

All vacancies can be found on the [Local News section](#) 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.

### Ambrosden Parish Council

#### Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

**Location:** home based plus attendance at monthly Parish Council meetings, possible attendance at other community meetings dependent on PC involvement.

**Hours:** approximately 7 hours per week

NJC Scale LC1 or 2 (£9.341 to £12.404 per hour), starting point depending upon experience and transferable skills. Home working allowance, expenses. The PC provide a laptop and scanner.

The Clerk provides administrative and clerical support to the Council and, as the Responsible Financial Officer, will be required to manage the Council's finances. Duties will include:

- Managing the meetings of the council meetings including preparing the agenda, taking the minutes, monitoring actions and decisions

- Ensuring the PC are up to date with policies, assessments, training, FOI and data protection rules.
- Ensuring planning applications are considered, and submitting responses to the District Council. This Parish sometimes has large planning applications.
- Managing the Parish Council's finances, preparation of accounts and reconciliation, payment of invoices, banking, end of year accounts, submission of accounts for external audit, VAT reclaim, preparing for budget review and precept
- Dealing with a variety of correspondence and public notices
- Allotment management, some of which to be handed over to allotment committee.
- Maintaining the Parish Council website and Facebook page

This role would suit someone with previous clerk experience.

You will be required to work from home and attend evening meetings on the third Thursday of every month. You must be computer literate, have some administrative experience and able to maintain accurate accounts.

Candidates must possess a high standard of oral and written communication skills, be proficient in Microsoft Office software (particularly Word and Excel), be capable of working independently and have the ability to deal with a range of issues.

To apply please send your C.V. with a covering letter to the clerk - [ambrosden.parishclerk@gmail.com](mailto:ambrosden.parishclerk@gmail.com)

Or for further information please call or e-mail the clerk (Lynne Bustin) on 07843 729038 or email [Ambrosden.parishclerk@gmail.com](mailto:Ambrosden.parishclerk@gmail.com)

**Deadline** 15<sup>th</sup> March 2019

**Interview date** Flexible



## **Heyford Park - Community Development Worker**

**21-28 hours per week (hours negotiable). £24,471 pro rata. Fixed term contract to February 2021.**

Do you enjoy working with people? Are you a self-starter who likes getting things done?

CFO is a charity which helps communities to identify issues that affect them, find their own solutions and achieve improved provision of services.

We are working on an exciting 'placemaking' project with Cherwell District Council and Dorchester Living and wish to appoint a Community Development Worker (CDW). The CDW will be based in Heyford Park and will manage a programme of community development activity using an Asset-Based Community

Development approach (ABCD). This will include encouraging interest in volunteering and the creation of clubs and associations and promoting community cohesion, facilitating leisure and social opportunities and liaising with the developer and the local authority.

We are seeking someone with excellent communication skills, a flexible approach and a creative mind. Training and support will be offered for specific types of community development work.

**Deadline for application 4 March. Interviews will be held in the week of 11 March.**

For further details, please see our website: <https://www.communityfirstoxon.org/job-opportunity-community-development-worker>

**COMMUNITY FIRST OXFORDSHIRE**, South Stables, Worton Park, OX29 4SU

P: 01865 883488

W: [www.communityfirstoxon.org](http://www.communityfirstoxon.org)



## Tetsworth Parish Council

Tel: 01844 867166

Email: [clerk@tetsworthparishcouncil.co.uk](mailto:clerk@tetsworthparishcouncil.co.uk)

### **Vacancy for Parish Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer.**

Tetsworth Parish Council is looking to recruit a new Parish Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer from April 2019. The new clerk will be required to work from home, the Parish Council will provide a laptop and dedicated phone. The council meets on the second Monday of each month.

The role is for 36 hours per month plus agreed expenses and attracts a salary on NJC Pay Scale LC1 or 2 (£9.77 to £14.03per hour), starting point depending upon experience and transferable skills.

#### **Specific responsibilities:**

- Administering the council's financial affairs and keeping proper records in accordance with standing orders
- Administering all council business
- Attending all council meetings

- Managing communications with councillors, other organisations and the public.
- Circulating any correspondence received
- Maintenance of the PC website

Qualities:

Applicants should be computer literate, experienced in accounts and have proven organisational skills and able to work to deadlines.

To apply please send your C.V. with a covering letter to the clerk

[clerk@tetsworthparishcouncil.co.uk](mailto:clerk@tetsworthparishcouncil.co.uk)

Or for further information please call or e-mail the clerk on

01844 867166 or email: [clerk@tetsworthparishcouncil.co.uk](mailto:clerk@tetsworthparishcouncil.co.uk)

## **Wallingford Town Council temp. Neighbourhood Plan Coordinator**

Wallingford Town Council is looking for a temporary Neighbourhood Plan Project Coordinator for an immediate start.

The person needs strong administration skills with knowledge of local planning policies. Wallingford Neighbourhood Plan is nearing completion and needs a strong character to keep it on track. The role will involve some evening or out of office hours work. The candidate will need skills in multi-tasking as this role is a busy and demanding one.

If this sounds like you, please contact The Town Clerk on 01491 835373.