

OALC NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2019



The National Training Strategy
for Town & Parish Councils

THE HEADLINES

Sensible tip of the month - page 2 – New OALC Executive Committee, nominations sought

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Training Programme 2019

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

- **Risk Management** – 17th April, Didcot (morning)
- **Strategic Planning** – 17th April, Didcot (afternoon)
- **Allotments** – 15th May, Didcot, full day
- **Roles & Responsibilities** – 19th June, Didcot

See the rest of the year's training on page 18

Vacancies this month

- Stonesfield PC – Clerk
- Sandford St Martin PC – Clerk
- Faringdon Town Council – Deputy Town Clerk and Clerks Assistant
- Sutton Courtenay PC - Clerk

SENSIBLE TIP OF THE MONTH – OALC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE COMES TO THE END OF TERM OF OFFICE – NEW NOMINATIONS SOUGHT

1. Members who serve on our Executive Committee have a four year term which mirrors that of parish councillors. Their term of office comes to end this May.

Our Executive Committee is made up of:

- A Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, Hon.Treasurer (still vacant) a President and Vice-Presidents.
- A representatives from each of the district councils (5) and one from the County Council
- Three town or parish council or parish meeting representatives from councils/meetings in each of the district councils (3 x West Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire, Cherwell and Vale of White Horse except Oxford City Council that have 1 representative (13 in total).

It is the representatives from the town and parish councils and parish meetings whose term of office has come to an end.



Do you have the skills to be one of the pieces of the jigsaw that make up the Executive Committee?

We are looking for new and enthusiastic members who want to contribute to the work of our Executive Committee. It meets four times per year on a Monday afternoon in a central location (Kidlington), plus an evening AGM in July. The Executive Committee needs people who can see the bigger picture into which town and parish councils fit, with skills in finance, personnel and local government. We are looking for constructive, collaborative and innovative people that can help to ensure the continued future of this organisation

You need to be nominated by your parish council. The nomination form is [here](#)

The timetable for electing the new Executive Committee after 2nd May elections is:

- We will seek nominations for new term (2019-2023) of OALC Executive Committee in this Update in March, April and May. **PLEASE ENSURE THIS IS AN AGENDA ITEM FOR YOUR MAY COUNCIL MEETING**
 - Nominations will be open from 1st May – 3rd June, send completed forms to info@oalc.org.uk
 - Nominations received will to be reported to 3rd June Executive Committee meeting.
 - If there are more nominations than places an election will take place at the OALC AGM on 1st July 2019.
2. OALC still needs an Honorary Treasurer, we have tried all routes and avenues we can think of without success, so we ask again – **IS THERE ANYONE OUT THERE THAT CAN HELP OALC AND BE OUR HON. TREASURER?**



County Council budget 2019/20

The Oxfordshire County Council budget which will be in place from April 2019 includes the following notable changes:

- Children’s social care budgets will have doubled by 2023.
- £1bn boost over the next decade for the county’s highways, school buildings and other infrastructure.
- Youth groups will be invited to bid in to a £1m fund over two years

In his statement, Ian Hudspeth, Leader of the council, said “We have taken difficult decisions in the past as we have to produce a balanced budget every year. Taking those tough decisions has meant we are in a more solid financial position.

“However, budgets are still tight, and the council will need to continue to change so we can improve services and free up resources needed to meet the rising demand for services – particularly for vulnerable children and adults.”

For further detail about the budget, the press release can be found [here](#).

Council has a Peer Review

Peer challenges are run by the Local Government Association and support a council’s own performance and improvement goals.

The county council’s corporate peer challenge took place on 19-22 March. A nine-member peer team spoke to more than 200 councillors, staff, residents and stakeholders to develop a rich picture of our challenges, strengths and areas for improvement. This activity included a focus group of town and parish councillors held in Kidlington and we are very grateful to all those who were able to take part.

The team’s initial recommendations will form the basis of a formal report back to the council. For more information please contact robin.rogers@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Purdah has begun

District Council, along with parish and town council elections are taking place on Thursday 2 May 2019 in all of the districts except the City.

There are no planned elections for the County Council but some county councillors are likely to be standing for election in the district and/or parish/town elections.

During the pre-election period (purdah), special restrictions apply to the publicity and activities that can legally be carried out as a council. The formal purdah period will run from **Tuesday, 26 March – Thursday, 2 May** this year (Election Day). More information about this later in the bulletin.

Guiding staff or residents through the EU settlement scheme

This is the latest information on the [EU Settlement Scheme](#) for EU citizens living in the UK.

The full opening of the EU Settlement Scheme will go ahead on 30 March 2019. Applications will be free, as announced by the Prime Minister on 21 January 2019. Those who have already paid an application fee will receive a refund after 30 March 2019.

If you are due a refund you do not need to do anything. The Government will automatically refund the fee to the card that was used to pay it. An email will be sent to the contact address provided in the application, confirming when the refund has been processed.

To apply to the EU Settlement Scheme, applicants will only need to prove their identity, demonstrate their UK residence, and declare any criminal convictions. Regardless of whether the UK leaves the EU with or without a deal, EU citizens will have until at least 31 December 2020 to apply.

Different ways to apply

EU citizens applying to the Scheme from 30 March 2019, will be able to send their passport or other identity documents by post if they do not wish to or cannot use the EU Exit ID Document Check App.

Face to face help is available at [identity scanner locations](#) where applicants can be helped to use the app, and via an Assisted Digital network for people who would like more support.

From 9 April 2019, EU citizens and certain family members will be able to apply to the Scheme from outside the UK, free of charge and based on their previous residence in the UK, without needing to travel here to make an online application.

Resident citizens of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland and their family members will also be able to apply to the scheme.

More information is available [here](#).



Oxfordshire Recycles is a partnership of the councils of Oxfordshire who work together to continuously improve waste management services within the county

For #Compost Awareness Week they are organising tours to food and garden waste processing plants in the county:

7th May 2pm: tour of Ardley In Vessel Composting Plant

8th May 10.30am: tour of Wallingford Anaerobic Digestion Plant

For more info/to book email waste.management@oxfordshire.gov.uk

ELECTIONS

	Necessary action
Tuesday 26 March 2019	Publication of Notice of Election & Nominations open PURDAH starts - see notes below
Wednesday 3 April 2019 (4 pm)	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)	Polling Day
Tuesday 7 May 2019	Day that councillors retire and new councillors come into office following the elections (this date does take account of the bank holiday)
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 (Parishes)
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

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 26th 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 19th, Saturday July 6th or Wednesday 18th 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 Council's Standing Orders and its Financial Regulations
- A copy of your Council's 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 <https://www.oalc.org.uk/events>

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.

CANDIDATE'S HOME ADDRESSES

NALC wanted to draw your attention to a letter from Rishi Sunak MP sent to local authorities regarding publication of councillor's and candidates' home addresses.

In the letter he confirms that he is taking forward a recommendation from the Committee on Standards in Public Life Review of Intimidation in Public Life that the Government should bring forward legislation to remove the requirement for candidates standing as local councillors to have their home addresses published on the ballot paper. Accordingly, Parliament has now amended the rules that apply to local government, parish council, and local and combined authority mayor elections, removing the

requirement that each candidate's home address must be published during the election process and be included on the ballot paper. The requirement for each candidate's qualifying address to be published during that process has also been removed and Returning Officers and other electoral administrators should take care to avoid disclosing such addresses during an election count.

The full letter can be viewed [here](#).

OXFORDSHIRE'S CITIZEN SCIENCE WATERBLITZ

The 8th Thames WaterBlitz will take place on 26 - 29th April 2019. This bi-annual Citizen Science event, first launched in September 2015, involves hundreds of volunteers carrying out quick and easy to use tests for phosphates and nitrates in local ponds, lakes, ditches, springs, streams and rivers. The Water Blitz is timed to coincide with tests carried out on the non-tidal River Thames by scientists from the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH). Sharing the data with the Environment Agency, CEH and Catchment Partnerships helps to fill gaps in knowledge about our local environment. The intensive testing done by volunteers can help to identify key pollution sources or clean water spots that act as refuges for some wildlife that's more sensitive to water quality, such as the beautiful but rare fen violet.

Registration is now open for the next Thames WaterBlitz between the 26th and 29th of April. Please [go here](#) to register for the event and request your free Freshwater Watch kit

Oxfordshire's Citizen Science WaterBlitz 26th - 29th April - the next ones are 20th-23rd September 2019 and 24-27th April 2020

If you are interested in seeing the data collected during previous WaterBlitz events and getting to know more about your local freshwater environment, please visit the Freshwater Links [website](#)

This year's WaterBlitz is funded by Thames Water as part of its ongoing commitment to local water quality through the Community Investment Fund.

- **Waterblitz information:** water@earthwatch.org.uk if you have any further questions.
- **Evenlode Catchment Partnership or Natural Flood Management:** ann@wildoxfordshire.org.uk www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk

FREE ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS AND UPDATES FOR OXFORDSHIRE.

To hear the latest news, events, training and volunteering opportunities, sign up to Wild Oxfordshire's fortnightly Environmental Bulletin. It's free of charge and it's easy to sign up on www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk

NATIONAL NEWS

CONGRATULATIONS TO THREE OXFORDSHIRE PARISH COUNCILS FOR GETTING POCKET PARK FUNDING

The Government announced the list of winners of £3.75 million fund to create new pocket parks and refurbish existing parks. The list includes Stratton Audley, Chinnor and Drayton St. Leonard Parish Councils.

Over 40 unloved, neglected or derelict urban spaces across the country will be transformed into new green spaces for the whole community to use, Parks and Green Spaces Minister Rishi Sunak MP confirmed on 26th March 2019.

In addition, through the £3.75 Pocket Parks Plus programme over 150 community-led groups will receive funding to help bring parks that have fallen into disrepair back into use.

More information [here](#)

The Pocket Parks Plus Programme called on local communities to bid for a share of up to £15,000 to build new 'pocket parks' and up to £25,000 to renovate existing parks. Bidding for funding closed January 2019.

NEW (SMALL) FUNDING BOOST FOR RURAL PUBS ANNOUNCED

Rural pubs across England will be expanded to include Post Office facilities, grocery shops and libraries thanks to £188,000 of government funding.

Minister Jake Berry announced on 25th March, 76 new projects will receive money through [Pub is The Hub](#), a ground-breaking organisation that supports rural pubs to diversify and help pubs bring communities together by expanding their services beyond food and drink.

More information [here](#)

NEW STRONGER TOWNS FUND - QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

This publication is available [here](#)

1. What is the fund? The government acknowledges not all parts of the country have shared in the growth of the UK economy. This new fund will be targeted at towns to create new jobs, help train local people and boost growth.

2. How much is in the fund and for how many years? The Stronger Towns Fund is a new £1.6 billion fund from 2019 to 2026.

3. How will the fund be allocated? The fund will be allocated via 2 methods. £1 billion will be allocated using a needs-based formula and £600 million which can be bid for competitively.

4. How were formula allocations calculated? The formula is based on a combination of productivity, income, skills, deprivation metrics and proportion of the population living in towns. This targets funding at those places with economies that are performing relatively less well to the England average, whose residents are living on lower incomes, and where larger proportions of the population have low skill attainment. The South East region will receive £37m

5. How will competitive allocations be decided and delivered? The government recognises that some of our most prosperous regions have pockets of deprivation and neighbourhoods that have not fully benefited from the success of their wider regional economy. That is why we are retaining a portion of the fund to be allocated competitively. As with any competition, the strongest proposals will be supported.

6. What can the fund be spent on? We want partners across local areas to come together and put forward ambitious proposals that can achieve long-term growth for their towns. Once these proposals become clearer the government will agree specific investments with places.

7. Will you set out any more detail on the fund and how it will be administered? Government will publish a prospectus to inform the development of local proposals. We want areas to ensure those proposals and their emerging Local Industrial Strategies are aligned, so that these new investments can demonstrate lasting impact. The role of Local Enterprise Partnerships to coordinate these proposals across functional economic areas will be key.

PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS INCREASE APRIL 2019 – PENSIONS REGULATOR

Your duties as an employer

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.

STAR COUNCIL AWARDS 2019 - MAKE **YOUR** APPLICATION BEFORE 28TH JUNE

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has launched its prestigious Star Council Awards for 2019 to recognise the achievements of the parish and town council sector and celebrate the positive impact councils, county associations, local councillors and clerks make to their communities.

NALC is open to nominations and is calling on councils who have gone above and beyond to serve their community to apply. The awards are looking for individuals and organisations that are making a real and positive difference locally.

Oxfordshire councils have always been represented in the nominations in the categories since the award started. What has your council done? Have you done an interesting or innovative project? Do you have a young councillor (under 30!) that has rocked the boat? What about your clerk, have they passed their Cilca, done something different, made the council think or act differently?

PLEASE RECOGNISE TALENT AND INNOVATION, MAKE A NOMINATION.



This year the categories include:

- young councillor (aged 18-30),
- councillor,
- clerk,
- council and
- county association project of the year.

NALC chairman, Cllr Sue Baxter said “This is the fifth consecutive year NALC has run the awards and we are expecting it to be our biggest and best yet. Local councils work on a daily basis to deliver vital services to their residents and the NALC Star Council Awards are a chance to celebrate all they do for their communities.”

“I encourage every council, county association, councillor and clerk who thinks they have done something special for their community to put themselves forward. Have you got what it takes to be a winner?”

The deadline for nominations is Friday 28 June 2019, with the awards ceremony taking place at the NALC Annual Conference on 28 October 2019 in Milton Keynes

The application form is [here](#)

JPAG, AGAR FORMS AND LATEST EDITION OF GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Joint Practitioners Advisory Group (JPAG) met at the end of February and agreed on some small changes to The Practitioners' Guide (usually known as *Governance and Accountability for Small Authorities*) which is issued annually to support the preparation by councils of statutory annual accounting and governance statements found in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

The new edition for 2019 has just been published and is in the Members Area of the OALC website; it applies in respect of financial years commencing on or after 1 April 2018.

The 2018-19 versions of the AGAR form have been distributed by SAAA to the external audit firms. These were distributed by e-mail link from Moore Stephens to you all in the week commencing 25th March. PDF versions of all the AGAR forms are also available which can be completed electronically but they still require a 'wet' signature.

Part 1 AGARs are personalised to each audit firm.

The main AGAR changes for 2018-19 are:

- There is a separate version of AGAR forms in 2018-19 for Parish Meetings only, due to the slightly different legislative requirements for Parish Meetings from all other authorities. Only Parish Meetings will be sent the link to the Parish Meeting versions of the AGAR – councils should only receive the link to the main AGAR forms.
- 2 new control objectives (K & L) have been included on the Annual Internal Audit Report agreed by JPAG.
 - If an authority certified itself as exempt in 2017-18, the internal auditor should check that it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt.
 - The internal auditor should check that the publication/public rights requirements were correctly met. **(This may not be possible this year for 2018 as the dates have passed, therefore the box is pre-completed as n/a this year.) It is included for information to alert the internal auditor that the requirement will need to be checked next year for 2019 publication**

Flowcharts for completion of the AGAR have been produced with separate versions for Parish Meetings, including a detailed version and a simplified 'step by step guide' with key dates.

There is useful material including a training video on the PKF Littlejohn website: <https://www.pkf-littlejohn.com/services-limited-assurance-regime-useful-documents-and-links>.

PKF are not the external auditors for Oxfordshire but nevertheless the Youtube should be of assistance to you.

SAAA are currently finalising their annual report on last year. This was a significant regime change and there were some major teething problems (!!!). We hope that lessons have been learned by the external auditors. To assist them please remember:

1. Clerks/RFO's should read the instructions and guidance provided by their auditors and in the AGAR before attempting to complete the appropriate form.
2. Completed forms **MUST** be returned to the auditor by the statutory deadline, 30 June, either by email or post, not both. Failure to comply will result in authorities being faced with additional costs.
3. If an authority fails to respond to the auditor's reminder letters, the auditor is likely to issue a Public Interest Report, the minimum cost being £200 plus VAT and the authority will be required to have a limited assurance review the following year with a minimum cost of £200 plus VAT
4. Authorities must inform their auditor of a change of contact details of the Clerk/RFO and Chairman.
5. Authorities should be able to be contacted through generic email addresses

CONSULTATIONS

The National Audit Office has issued a [consultation on the new Code of Audit Practice](#) which is due to come into force by 1 April 2020. NALC will be responding.

Context & proposals

Additional powers and duties are considered in Chapter 5 of the Code. Chapter 6 of the Code relates specifically to smaller authorities (includes all sizes of local council), with which the appointed auditors must comply. NALC is minded to highlight:

1. The difficulty for smaller councils of the potentially high and disproportionate cost on a small authority when a concerted number of electors decide to raise a high number of minor or technical objections of a vexatious nature.
2. That there should be the inclusion of a principle relating to proportionality in respect of smaller authorities, especially where the authority has an annual budget / turnover below £25k and is potentially exempt (i.e. smaller and subject to the Smaller Authorities' Transparency Code); &
3. Agree retention of the current bullet under clause 5.4 that the auditor should consider "the costs of dealing with the matter, bearing in mind that these are borne by the taxpayer" where to a smaller council the costs of an audit investigation could cost more than the council's annual precept.

Consultation questions

NALC will be responding to the below consultation questions and is interested in your council's views:

Question 17 Do you think the Code should include more with respect to when auditors might be expected to use their additional powers?

Question 18 Do you think the current approach set out in the Code to undertake work at smaller authorities under specified procedures will enable auditors to continue to respond to the challenges at smaller authorities?

Question 19 Do you think the current approach to considering economy, efficiency and effectiveness at smaller authorities is appropriate and proportionate to the size of the bodies being reviewed?

Your views are sought by NALC. Please email your responses to this consultation to chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk by 17.00 on Tuesday 30th April 2019.

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.

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 if not on 29 March 2019 then at some point some.

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](#)

GREAT BRITISH SPRING CLEAN – TAKE PART



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!

Lots of councils are taking part and thousands of bags of rubbish have already been collected. Keep up the good work!

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 relates to annual leave, very pertinent as your annual leave year may be coming to an end.

Personnel

Advice &

Solutions Ltd

Does the Use It or Lose It Principle Apply to Annual Leave Entitlement?

Most Councils holiday years end on the 31st March. For those Employees who have not fully used their annual holiday entitlement by then the Council either allows them to carry over a limited number of days, or treats the unused entitlement as having been forfeit. The NALC template contract allows up to five days to be carried over.

There are some exceptions to this principle for staff on Maternity Leave or Long Term Sickness, who have been prevented from taking their holiday, however the general principle is use it or lose it.

This has recently been challenged in the Courts of Justice of the European Community (CJEU) (*Max-Planck-Gesellschaft v Shimizu*) who ruled that the Working Time Directive entitles an Employee to carry over all unused holiday entitlement unless the Employer has "diligently" informed the Employee that they will lose it. The burden of proof is upon a Council to demonstrate that they have informed their Employees of this risk.

A Council does not have to force staff to take holidays, but simply demonstrate that they have been warned that they may lose their holiday.

Employment contracts which clearly inform Employees that there is either no right to carry leave over, or that a specific number of days can be moved to the new holiday year may entitle a Council to claim that it has taken "diligent" steps to warn Employees of the risk of losing unused leave.

However, if an Employer wishes to be doubly sure that they have informed their staff, the following notice could be issued:

HOLIDAY REQUESTS

I would like to draw everyone's attention to the Holiday Entitlement section of your contract, which states that no unused holiday / only up to five entitlement can be carried over from one year to the next.

This means that if workers have not fully used up their holiday entitlement for the year, by the end of the holiday year on the 31st March, they will lose that entitlement.

The contract also says that we can refuse holiday requests if other staff have already booked the same days off. Therefore, there is no point in waiting until the end of the year to try to book holiday, as you may find that other staff have already booked the same dates that you have requested.

All workers have the whole of the year to book holiday and take it; therefore, there are no excuses for people who have left it too late.

We would only make an exception to this rule if workers were prevented from being able to take their holiday for perfectly legitimate reasons. For example if a female employee who is on maternity leave at the end of the holiday year and is unable to use unused holiday entitlement before the 31st March. Alternatively if a worker has a chronic health problem which prevents them from using all of their holiday entitlement.

In these circumstances, we would allow them to carry it over into the following year. Each case would be assessed individually.

Further information and advice for Councils can be found by visiting www.personneladviceandsolutions.co.uk/factsheets

NEW PAY SLIPS

On 8 February 2018, a new statute was laid before Parliament: The Employment Rights Act 1996 (Itemised Pay Statement) (Amendment) Order 2018. Guidance published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is [here](#)

Under the Order, which comes into force on 6th April 2019, employers must itemise payslips for all workers' wages which vary depending on how much time they have worked. This right has been extended from employees to all workers. This must include the number of hours they are paying the employee for.

The employer must either:

- Show the combined number of hours worked for which payment is being made; or
- Itemise the figures for different types of work worked and/or different rates of pay.

This change to legislation is aimed at employees who work varied hours and whose pay changes accordingly. Itemised payslips will increase transparency for both employers and employees alike.

What action should the council as employer take?

Before the order comes into force, employers should;

- Ensure payroll processes are adjusted to collect the new information required; and
- Amend the format of payslips to include this new information, where appropriate.

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) 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 a further update on making tax digital, dated 12th March 2019

Making Tax Digital - Update

This update amends our advice for VAT-registered councils with a taxable turnover less than £85,000, having sought opinions from the CIPFA VAT committee.

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 AND have taxable income exceeding the £85,000 threshold 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.

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. Software providers in the local council sector have addressed this and should be ready for VAT returns being submitted by the software.

VAT registered councils above the threshold 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 for

Councils below the £85,000 VAT registration threshold do not have to comply but may wish to look at the benefits of digital submission if they use compatible software.

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

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-when-a-business-must-follow-the-rules-for-making-tax-digital-for-vat>

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>

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 April 17th	7. Risk Management for parish councils	Half/morning	Peter Cooper	Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot OX11 7JN
	8. Strategic Planning. Where is your council going? Thinking more strategically about serving your community	Half/afternoon		
Wednesday May 15 th	9. Allotment management for parish councils	Full day	NAS	Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot OX11 7JN
Wednesday June 19 th	10. Roles and Responsibilities for	Full day	Elizabeth Howlett	Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot OX11 7JN

	new councillors and clerks			
Saturday 6 th 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 th	12. Chairmanship skills	Full day	Elizabeth Howlett	Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot OX11 7JN
August				
Wednesday September 18 th	13. Roles and Responsibilities for new councillors and clerks	Full day	Elizabeth Howlett	Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot OX11 7JN
Wednesday October 2 nd	14. Budgeting and financial management for councillors	Half/ morning	Steve Parkinson	Begbroke Science Park, Woodstock Room, Begbroke OX5 1PF
	15. VAT for clerks (and councillors!)	Half/ afternoon		

Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA)



The National Training Strategy
for Town & Parish Councils

We always encourage Clerks to undertake relevant training and for 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 recognized 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 9th September 2019 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 9th September, 8th October, 12th November and 2nd December, 9.30am – 3.30pm

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



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.

[Fire Warden/Marshal Training Level 2](#)

Tuesday 23rd April 2019 (4hrs) £80 - £110

Please Note: Registration for this workshop will close on 9th April at 12pm

This level 2 course is aimed at anyone who requires a course as a Fire Warden or a Fire Marshal. The course covers the latest fire safety regulations and the roles and duties of employees and their responsibilities on Fire Safety.

The QA Level 2 Award in Fire Safety (QCF) is a regulated and nationally recognised qualification that has been specifically designed for anyone who has a specific responsibility for fire safety in the workplace, such as designated fire wardens/fire marshals.

[Health and Safety Level 2](#)

Wednesday 15th May 2019 (6hrs) £95 – £125

Please Note: Registration for this workshop will close on 1st May at 12pm

The QA Level 2 Award in Health and Safety in the Workplace (QCF) is ideal for all employees, as it helps candidates develop a greater understanding of Health and Safety issues and the role that everyone plays in maintaining a safe working environment. 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 2 Award in Health and Safety in the Workplace from Quasafe. The qualification is valid for 3 years but annual refreshers are considered best practice.

Please click on title links for full details and online booking or If you have any further questions or need help with booking, please email training@ocva.org.uk or call **01865 251946**

EXPO 2019

Building on the success of EXPO 2016 working with NALC and a range of partners, LGRC is again staging a major one day EXPO for the local council sector. This will be the largest single gathering of local councils in 2019. We aim to provide an opportunity for Clerks, Councillors and others interested in Local Councils to see the complete range of products and services that a Council might need, all in one place. If you will be looking for a supplier of anything from tractors to IT equipment, or signage to stationery, in the next year or two this is the ideal place to start. If you need to review your banking or insurance, or create a new website, we expect all the major players to be here.

<http://www.lgrcexpo.com/>

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.

STONESFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Vacancy for a Clerk to the Council and a Responsible Financial Officer

Working from home plus attendance at evening meetings usually held on the second Wednesday of every month. Occasional attendance at meetings held in the community.

15 Hours per week

Salary dependent on experience and qualifications

Previous experience as a Clerk would be an advantage

The Clerk provides administrative and clerical support to the Council and as the Responsible Financial Officer is 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 Council is up to date with policies, assessments, training, and data protection rules.

Ensuring planning applications are considered and responses are submitted to the District Council.

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

Allotments – collecting annual rent

Applicants need to be computer literate, have some administrative experience and able to maintain accurate accounts.

A high standard of oral and written communication skills is required. Proficiency in Microsoft Office especially Word and Excel is needed. be capable of working independently and have the ability to deal with a range of issues. The ability to work independently and handle a number of different issues.

CVs should be emailed to stonesfieldpc@gmail.com

SANDFORD ST MARTIN PARISH COUNCIL – CLERK & RFO

Working from home plus attendance at evening meetings, usually held 4 times a year.

Approximately 8 hours a month

Salary dependent on experience and qualifications. Previous experience as a Clerk would be an advantage

Job description: 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.

To apply please send your C.V. with a covering letter to: Sandfordclerk@hotmail.co.uk

Or for further information please email: sandfordclerk@hotmail.co.uk



1. Faringdon Town Council requires a full time Deputy Town Clerk

We are looking for a person with flexible and positive attitude to join our team. Candidates must have good communication skills and be computer literate. Relevant experience would be an advantage although training will be provided.

Duties will include:

- To deputise for the Town Clerk
- To act as Clerk to two committees
- To act as Clerk to Tuckers Recreation Ground Trust
- To act as Clerk to Faringdon War Memorial Trust
- Website Management

The post includes some evening work.

Salary SCP: 18-23 (£24,313 – 26,999) depending on experience.

Closing Date: 12th April 2019

Interviews week commencing 15th April 2019

2. Faringdon Town Council requires a part-time **Clerk's Assistant 14 hours per week**

We are looking for a person with flexible and positive attitude to join our team. Candidates must have good communication skills and be computer literate. Relevant experience would be an advantage although training will be provided.

Duties will include:

- To minute all Town Council meetings
- To produce action lists
- To update website
- To assist the Town Clerk

The post includes evening work on a Wednesday 6.30pm to 9.30pm.

Salary SCP 4 – 8 (£18,426 - £19,945 pro rata) depending on experience.

Closing Date: 3rd May 2019

Interviews week commencing 13th May 2019

For further details on both jobs please visit www.faringdowntowncouncil.gov.uk

or contact Sally Thurston on 01367 240281 or by email sally@faringdowntowncouncil.gov.uk

Sutton Courtenay Parish Council

Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

Sutton Courtenay Parish Council wishes to recruit a home-based, part-time parish clerk and responsible financial officer for up to 80 hours per month, to take over from the present clerk later in the year. Hourly salary rate £10.37 - £10.57 dependent on qualifications and experience. The Council will provide office equipment and support training. The Council is undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan with the assistance of a separate steering group. It is planning to renovate its recreation ground which has a pavilion, sports pitches, children's play area, youth shelter, and skate park. It is also responsible for a cemetery.

The successful candidate will have good administrative skills to prepare agendas, minutes, reports, deal with correspondence and upload to the website, as well as financial records, preparing budgets, and managing audit.

For further information or for an informal discussion, please contact the present clerk Linda Martin info@suttoncourtenay-pc.gov.uk or telephone 01865 391833

Closing date for return of applications is Friday 10th May, 2019. Shortlisting and interviews will take place after Council elections in May, and the formation of the new Council. Applicants will be informed of the timetable thereafter.