

# OALC NEWSLETTER

## AUGUST 2022

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**OALC** – Hon.Treasurer, Chair's sessions, an audit tale

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NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT  
STRATEGY FOR PARISH  
& TOWN COUNCILS

### Training Programme 2022

<https://www.oalc.org.uk/events>

See page 39 onwards for details  
of our courses and which have  
places still available

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- Chipping Norton TC – Facilities & Events Manager
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- Ardington & Lockinge PC – Clerk/RFO
- South Stoke PC – Clerk/RFO

## CORONA VIRUS

On 2nd August the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) added an easy read version to the guidance on the ventilation of indoor spaces to reduce the spread of respiratory infections, including COVID-19.

Letting fresh air into indoor spaces can help remove air that contains virus particles and prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and other respiratory infections such as flu.

To be honest the advice is pretty simplistic – open doors and windows, not exactly rocket science!

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ventilation-to-reduce-the-spread-of-respiratory-infections-including-covid-19>

## OALC



### 1. **OALC still need an Hon. Treasurer !**

We find ourselves without an Hon. Treasurer again. We would really welcome anyone with financial expertise to act as a critical friend to OALC. We do all the heavy lifting in the office but need another pair of eyes and ears (and a financial brain too!) to act as a sounding board.

Please contact us at [info@oalc.org.uk](mailto:info@oalc.org.uk) to find out more about the role or give us a call on 0774 6943076

### 2. **Don't forget the regular Chair's session**

All Chairs, new and experienced, are very welcome to join the zoom session

This one hour session for Council Chairs is an opportunity for you to raise issues, discuss, share or even just listen. The sessions are intended to improve communication and help resolve any issues you may be experiencing in your council. There is no fixed agenda but OALC will highlight current important matters, both national and local, which we think you should know about. We will hold the sessions alternatively during the day and in the evening so those who are working can join too.

### **OALC virtual monthly Chairs Q&A session – sixth session was on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2022 6.30pm**

17 Chairs joined from:

- **Cherwell DC** – Fritwell, Deddington
- **West Oxfordshire DC** – Woodstock, Wootton, Brize Norton, Bladon, Coombe
- **South Oxfordshire DC** – Chalgrove, Stoke Row, East Hagbourne, Pishill, Nettlebed, Kidmore End
- **Vale of White Horse DC** – Cumnor, Grove, Wantage, North Hinksey

The County Officer outlined two current topics:

- The shelving of Oxfordshire 2050 Plan. Joint statement by all district councils  
[https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/2240/a\\_joint\\_statement\\_from\\_the\\_leaders\\_of\\_cherwell\\_district\\_council\\_oxford\\_city\\_council\\_south\\_oxfordshire\\_district\\_council\\_vale\\_of\\_white\\_horse\\_district\\_council\\_west\\_oxfordshire\\_district\\_council](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/2240/a_joint_statement_from_the_leaders_of_cherwell_district_council_oxford_city_council_south_oxfordshire_district_council_vale_of_white_horse_district_council_west_oxfordshire_district_council)

- Joint NALC & SLCC Civility and Respect Project

Other topics raised were:

- poor behaviour and the difficulties of dealing with it (training is available )
- poor attendance by councillors – reminders and nudges help!
- Shortage of Clerks and Councillors – need to sell the work of the PC as widely as possible to encourage, through education and illustration, what councillors do – positive engagement. OALC to consider running ‘Do you want to be a councillor session?’
- Cllr Jim Sibbald, Mayor, Wantage offered to help councils with Civilian – Military Covenant
- Need for training on correct/positive use of social media by councillors/councils – be careful how you respond, keep to facts, keep it civil and respectful
- Need for play inspection training – it’s on our list for next year

#### **OALC Chair’s Q & A Zoom sessions 2022**

We will ask you to observe good online meeting etiquette – keep your camera on, be on mute except when speaking and display your name and council. Please do not pass this link on. Only Chairs of member councils will be allowed to join the session. Any problems which concern personal details will be taken offline.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2483078242?pwd=ZU9Fb2l2ZzdlampQN3BRT3ZMZnl2UT09>

Meeting ID: 248 307 8242      Passcode: oalclic

<b>September</b>	<b>Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> 2.30pm</b>	
<b>October</b>	Tuesday 11 <sup>th</sup> 6.30pm	
<b>November</b>	Monday 7 <sup>th</sup> 2.30pm	
<b>December</b>	Tuesday 6 <sup>th</sup> 6.30pm	

#### **OALC TIPS - A PARISH COUNCIL’S FAILINGS – A CAUTIONARY TALE ABOUT AUDIT**

Please read this tale about what can go badly wrong at audit time if the council doesn’t have a generic email address. It can cost the council time, money and embarrassment –

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/nalc-blog/entry/2191-a-parish-councils-failings-a-cautionary-tale-from-the-smaller-authorities-audit-appointments>

#### **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE STUDENTS TRAINING EVENT – HENLEY SEPTEMBER 15TH**

A group of students currently doing their Community Governance degree are organizing a training event in Henley next month. The event is titled Conflict Management and relates very closely to the joint NALC & SLCC Civility and Respect Project currently running.



# Conflict Management

## MANAGING CONFLICT AND DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

**The aim of the training is to identify what conflict is, why it happens and what to do if you need to have a difficult conversation.**

*Of particular interest to Clerks, providing knowledge and competencies to manage conflict in the workplace*

### Course Objectives

- What is meant by destructive and constructive conflict
- Why conflict happens
- Difficult conversations – perceptions and pre-suppositions
- Emotional intelligence and conflict
- Components of conflict
- Strategies to manage difficult conversations using a coaching approach

### Training Details

**Wednesday 14th September 2022**

10am to 3pm

Henley Town Hall, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire,  
RG9 2AQ **£90 per person (lunch included)**

#### Booking, agenda and information:



Online at: <https://www.slcc.co.uk/event/managing-conflict-and-difficult-conversations-14-9/>

### Networking & Wine Tasting

Join us after the event for an opportunity to share experiences with colleagues and hear about further training opportunities whilst sampling delicious wines from Oaken Grove (no extra charge)



Training supports the Civility and Respect Project, founded by the Civility and Respect Working Group and supported by representatives from across our sector including SLCC, National Association of Local Councils (NALC), County Associations, One Voice Wales (OVW) and councils.



# OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

If your council wants to keep informed about what the County Council is up to, register on their website here - <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>

## 1. Bus Service Improvement Plan grant

Oxfordshire CC is announcing the £12.7m it has received from the Department of Transport in response to its Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) bid [Oxfordshire awarded millions of pounds for bus improvements](#)

Unfortunately, the bid was for £56m but I suppose we have to be grateful! The press release says the monies “will support measures over the next three years, including cheaper fares for under-19s, new rural services, bus priority improvements across the county and proposed traffic filters to reduce journey times and support the introduction of new zero emission electric buses.”

We don't know which part or parts of the Bus Service Improvement Plan will be implemented with only 23% of the grant being received. The original Plan talked about [improvements in rural services](#) through pre-bookable routes and ‘mobility hubs’, but we will have to wait and see what the County Council see as priority for the reduced funding. The wording in the BSIP is -

### 1.4.9. *Routes linking rural villages with County towns.*

*These are some lower frequency inter-urban routes, passing through various intermediate settlements, including Tetworth, Culham, Berinsfield. Bampton and Standlake. This category of low-frequency bus service does not have evening and Sunday bus services*

*2.4.10 Away from the main inter-urban bus routes along main roads, there are many Oxfordshire villages which have no local bus service. There are some infrequent services provided to some communities by community transport providers, however. Generally, these services provide access to retail and some other opportunities.*

*2.4.11 The lack of access to the public transport network for people living in these settlements is a significant problem, which Oxfordshire aims to address by investing in two types of new facility:*

- *Several pre-bookable routes in areas of the County where there is currently no bus provision. These routes will operate on a flexible basis, but to a fixed timetable between termini. Typically, one end of each route will terminate in a market town, offering interchange with the inter-urban bus network, with through network tickets available. It is expected these routes would operate between 0700 and 1900 six days per week.*
- *A number of ‘mobility hubs’ to be developed along the Inter-urban Premium Route network, providing access to the core public transport network for nearby settlements.*

## 2. OCC Cllr Priority Fund

Each Oxfordshire County Councillor was allocated £15,000 to be spent in the two financial years ending in March 2023. **Last applications will be accepted by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023.**

There is money still left in this fund. Your council needs to be talking to your own County Councillor. Has your councillor spent their allocation? If not, there is scope for a serious discussion to be had with them! More information here -

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/community-and-living/thriving-communities/councillor-priority-fund#:~:text=The%20fund%20supports%20councillor%20priorities,%C2%A315%2C000%20for%202021%2D2023.>

## OXFORDSHIRE 2050 PLAN SCRAPPED

**Published:** Wednesday, 3rd August 2022

A joint statement from the leaders of Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council:

*"The five Local Planning authorities in Oxfordshire have been working together on a joint plan for Oxfordshire to 2050. It is with regret that we were unable to reach agreement on the approach to planning for future housing needs within the framework of the Oxfordshire Plan.*

*"Local Plans for the City and Districts will now provide the framework for the long term planning of Oxfordshire. The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 work programme will end and we will now transition to a process focused on Local Plans. The issues of housing needs will now be addressed through individual Local Plans for each of the City and Districts. The Councils will cooperate with each other and with other key bodies as they prepare their Local Plans."*

Much has been written in the Oxford Mail and elsewhere commenting on the situation. We will watch and wait. In some ways each district's Local Plan is more accessible to town and parish councils. The Oxfordshire 2050 Plan seemed remote with parish council voices drowned out by larger, louder voices when it came to engagement/consultation.

## SOUTH AND VALE DISTRICT COUNCILS TO BE TEMPORARILY BASED IN ABINGDON

Press release 18<sup>th</sup> August

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils will soon be moving on from the office building that has been their home for the past seven years.

At the end of September, to significantly reduce unnecessary costs, the two councils will be moving to some temporary office space in the Vale's Abbey House building in the centre of Abingdon where the councils plan to stay for a couple of years while South Oxfordshire District Council completes the development a new office building at Didcot Gateway.

The two district councils have been based at Milton Park since the summer of 2015, a few months after an arson attack at their headquarters at Crowmarsh Gifford, near Wallingford.

The majority of council staff now have hybrid working arrangements, meaning they can work from home or other remote locations, or in the office. This means the councils need significantly less office



space than before, and so the building they're occupying at Milton Park is now much too big for their needs.

They've taken an opportunity to bring the lease to an end now, meaning they'll save significant sums in rent while operating out of the much smaller, more appropriately sized, office space at Abbey House, which is owned by the Vale.

Most of that building is being leased by Oxfordshire County Council, but there is a small amount of available office space on the ground floor, which the district councils last used as emergency arrangements in the immediate aftermath of the Crowmarsh fire.

While Abbey House will be a suitable office location for the short term, over the longer term, the councils will need more collaboration and non-desk based space, in a more energy efficient building. This will help them meet their targets to become carbon neutral councils and will also help both councils to continue to improve their financial sustainability and offer the flexibility they need to recruit and retain staff in an increasingly challenging jobs market.

**The doors will open at the Abbey House offices on Monday 3 October.** We will be reminding customers through our website, social media accounts, newsletters and the local press and media.

Cllr David Rouane, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, said: *"This is an important step towards a long-term carbon-neutral and financially sustainable future for our council. Milton Park has served us well since the fire, but the building no longer suits our needs, which have changed significantly in the past two years. We are fortunate to have Abbey House as a steppingstone towards our energy-efficient new headquarters at Didcot Gateway."*

Cllr Emily Smith, Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council, said: *"Milton Park has been an excellent temporary home and is an asset to the Vale. However, as our needs have changed, it makes sound financial sense to temporarily move into a building we own that gives us enough space for the short term."*

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE NEW CONSULTATION PLATFORM

Following a recent change in political administration, West Oxfordshire District Council is updating both its Local Plan and Council Plan. They are seeking the views of local residents, organisations and businesses on what areas they should focus on within these plans. This early engagement will help to ensure that they address the most important and relevant issues for West Oxfordshire.

To make this consultation user friendly, they have divided it into six areas of focus.  
<https://yourvoicecounts.commonplace.is/>

You can click on tiles to read more about each area of focus and rate their importance by answering seven quick fire questions. You can also add comments in the textboxes or use the new voice note technology.



## Welcome to the West Oxfordshire District Council 'Your Voice Counts' consultation

Here you can read more about the Local Plan and Council Plan consultation and give us your views to really make your voice count.

Keep me updated

Your email will be used to contact you about project updates. You can unsubscribe at any point. Please read our [privacy policy](#).

[About the consultation](#)

[Have your say](#)

[Latest news](#)

[FAQs and Glossary](#)

[Team](#)

Why are we consulting?



## SOUTH & VALE DC'S DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY- SURVEY

Press release:

We know that everyone's personal circumstances mean they experience the world differently, and sometimes people need organisations like ours to go that bit further to help them. That's why we've launched a consultation to help us to create our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

We'd like your views on how we can make it easier for people with different needs to access our services. We already do what is required of us legally, but we want to go further to help ensure everyone is able to find out information they need in the best possible way.

[The survey is open on our website](#) and will run until 11.59pm on 19 September. Posters, Easy Read leaflets, paper copies of the strategy and survey are now available in local libraries, District Community Centre on Great Western Park, The Beacon and Cornerstone.

Alternative formats and languages are available by contacting us at [haveyoursay@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:haveyoursay@southandvale.gov.uk) or calling 01235 422 425.

## SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE FOOD PRODUCTION AND REDUCING FOOD WASTE IN SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE

Councillors at South Oxfordshire District Council have agreed a series of steps to help sustainable food production and the reduction of food waste. These include supporting local farming businesses, encouraging developers to include community gardens and allotments in their plans, and supporting food charities in the district.

At their meeting on 14 July councillors voted in favour of a motion which looked to use different means to help influence food production, support sustainable farming and distribution, reduce food waste, and promote healthy eating for the benefit of residents and the environment, while also supporting action to address climate change, building on the council's corporate plan objectives.

The plans follow the development of a new countywide food strategy, which has been developed in partnership between Oxfordshire's local authorities, Good Food Oxfordshire, community groups, local



farmers and other food businesses to improve Oxfordshire's food system and make it more sustainable, affordable and resilient.

## OX-CAM ARC AND EAST – WEST RAIL LINK



For those in the east of the county the fate of the Ox-Cam ARC and the East-West rail link are vitally important.

The Stop the ARC group has summarised really well in their latest newsletter the

confusion, indecision and disrupted leadership at national level. With the current hiatus at the heart of government as a new Prime Minister is appointed together with the dubious case for either the massive investment required for the rail linkages or the case for the eye watering number of houses, we can but hope that the project dies a quiet natural death. Private Eye reported (no 1578) that Grant Schapps, Transport Secretary in his brief bid to be Tory leader indicated that he wants to axe most of East-West Rail.

We suggest you sign up to the Stop The Arc newsletter via their website <https://stopthearc.org/>

## OXFORD RAILWAY STATION EXPANSION

Network Rail are currently finalising plans to expand Oxford station with a new platform and western entrance. This development means better speeds on trains and increased capacity for additional services.

Over four weekends in September and October Network Rail will be working on the track at Oxford North Junction, between Walton Well and Aristotle bridges, meaning all lines in and out of station will be closed. During these weekends, buses will replace trains in and out of Oxford.

Further details of the bus services that will be operating will be announced over the coming weeks.

You can visit [Network Rail's website](#) for more information about forthcoming work at the station.

## FUNDING AVAILABLE FROM THE TRUST FOR OXFORDSHIRE'S ENVIRONMENT



If you don't already know us, TOE is Oxfordshire's independent funder. For over ten years, TOE has successfully attracted funds

to enable us to distribute over £2.4 million to some 400 projects. These projects have made a real difference enhancing biodiversity and improving people's access to nature.

Typically, TOE's Local Environment Fund awards grants for the cost of practical work. This year we've awarded the following grants to local councils -

- **Didcot Town Council** – awarded a grant of £5,409.76 in June for tree planting in Ladygrove Park
- Haseley Earthshot Action Group, in partnership with **Great Haseley Parish Council** – awarded a grant of £6,060 in April to restore their Millennium Wood

- **Uffington Parish Council** – awarded a grant of £3,658 in March to replace stiles with gates on popular footpath used by many people to get from one side of the village to the other as it provides off-road access to the primary school and the church
- **Sydenham Parish Council** – awarded £1,000 in January for path surfacing and a new gate in the centre of the village... before and after photos –



There are case studies about these and other projects on the TOE website

[www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk/main-fund](http://www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk/main-fund) from where our detailed guidance and application form can be downloaded.

So, if your Council, or a community group in your parish, is planning a project, email [admin@trustforoxfordshire.org.uk](mailto:admin@trustforoxfordshire.org.uk) to arrange a chat about the grants available for not-for-profit organisations (including parish and town councils), and check that your idea meets our funding criteria. **Grants are awarded quarterly and the next deadline is 12 October.**

## THAMES WATER HOSEPIPE BAN FROM 24<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST

After months of drier than normal conditions, Thames Water has announced a hose pipe ban from Wednesday 24th August, but sensible water usage is encouraged already.

Please don't use your hose for:

- ✗ Watering your garden, allotment or plants
- ✗ Filling or maintaining your paddling pool, swimming pool or hot tub
- ✗ Cleaning your vehicles
- ✗ Cleaning windows, walls, paths, patios and other artificial outdoor surfaces like artificial grass
- ✗ Recreational use like water fights and water slides

There are some exceptions to the ban and you can find more information on Thames Water website here - [Water restrictions | Help | Thames Water](#)

## WATER SITUATION: AREA MONTHLY REPORTS FOR ENGLAND 2022

On 10th August, the July water situation reports have been added to the monthly local reports on rainfall, soil moisture deficit, river flows, groundwater levels and reservoir levels for most areas.

These reports collect information from the Environment Agency, the Met Office and water companies that measure and monitor:

- The amount of rain that falls
- How dry the soils are and how much rain they can soak up
- The amount of water flowing in rivers
- Amount of water stored below ground in aquifers and above ground in reservoirs

They also present the outlook for river flow and groundwater. The report for the Thames area is here - [Thames Area Water Situation Report July 2022 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

## CODE OF CONDUCT

All councils will have been contacted by their Monitoring Officers, all councils by now should have adopted the new Code, it is the same one across all tiers of local government within Oxfordshire.

The new Oxfordshire code is based on the [LGA model](#) and has been adapted by the local Monitoring Officers jointly to reflect local circumstances. LGA guidance on the Code is [here](#)

The Monitoring Officers are all offering training to town and parish councils. Most have offered a date or dates in September – **PLEASE ENCOURAGE ALL YOUR COUNCILLORS TO ATTEND THE TRAINING IN YOUR DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA.**

The Code does actually state that

### *6.8 Compliance with the Code of Conduct*

#### *A Councillor:*

<b>6.8.1</b>	<b><i>Shall undertake Code of Conduct training as required by the local authority.</i></b>
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The new Code does not allow suspension of councillors for poor behaviour. We know this is a significant weakness and all groups in local government recognise this; unfortunately the current government line is that sanctions such as suspension require legislation and this is not a priority for them.

- Patrick Arran, MO has already done an online session for Clerks in South and Vale, recording available from Steven Corrigan, Democratic Services
- Oxford City parishes have training programmed for 14<sup>th</sup> September
- South and Vale parishes have training for councillors on 28<sup>th</sup> September
- West Oxfordshire parishes have training for councillors on 30<sup>th</sup> September
- Cherwell's training has been postponed as a new Monitoring Officer Shiraz Sheikh has been appointed and will start on 17<sup>th</sup> October; rescheduled date tbc.

## OLD MARSTON PARISH COUNCILLORS HANDBOOK

In the first week of August we sent all our member councils an ecopy of the Councillor's Handbook which Tim Cann, Clerk to Old Marston Parish Council had put together for his councillors.



2017

THE GOOD COUNCILLOR'S GUIDE

Tim is happy to receive suggestions for improvement, notice of any typos and positive comments.



Don't forget NALC produce a series of publications which could be useful to you and your council including – The good councillor's guide; available to download from our website or in printed form £4 + p&p from OALC

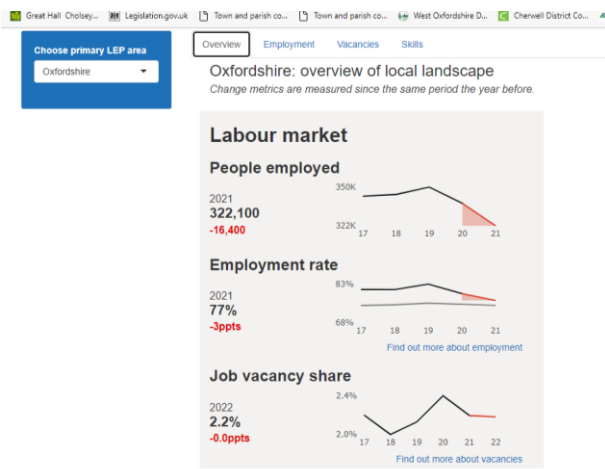
## NATIONAL NEWS

### INTERESTING NUMBERS

#### Did you know that in the last 25 years there have been 20 housing ministers!

Is it any wonder there is no continuity or stability, as each seeks to put their stamp on the office? The current incumbent is Marcus Jones MP.

PS. Greg Clark is Secretary of State, Department of Levelling Up, Homes & Communities (following Michael Gove) and Paul Scully MP is Minister of State for Local Government, Faith and Communities (following Kemi Badenoch) or they were when this was written.



We have been experiencing a shortage of applicants for Clerks jobs in Oxfordshire for some time now. The [Dept. for Education Skills dash board](#) shows that in one year 2020-21 16,400 people have left the work force in the county. This represents an 84% change in online vacancies between Jan 2020- Jan 2021

<p>Oxfordshire covers 1,006 sq. miles (2,605km<sup>2</sup>)</p> <p>By land area it is the 23<sup>rd</sup> largest ceremonial county with North Yorkshire being the largest county at 3,341 sq.miles (8,654km<sup>2</sup>)</p>	<p>There are 249 parish councils in Oxfordshire and 68 Parish Meetings.</p> <p>North Yorkshire and Norfolk both have the largest number of parish councils per county - 448</p>
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## CATCH THE BUS MONTH - SEPTEMBER

### Catch the Bus Month relauches for September 2022

Bus Users UK is calling on operators, local authorities, passenger groups, community transport providers and passengers to get on board for 'Catch the Bus Month' this September.



This is the first year the charity has hosted the campaign since Greener Journeys handed over the baton in 2020. While many people have now returned to schools, offices and social events, bus passenger numbers have remained below pre-pandemic levels.

Read more here on the Rural Services Network website [It's back!](#)

[Catch the Bus Month relauches for September 2022 - Rural Services Network \(rsnonline.org.uk\)](https://rsnonline.org.uk)

## INTERNAL AUDIT FORUM WEBSITE LAUNCHED



In mid-August the Internal Audit Forum's website was launched, have a look at it here [Internal Audit Forum](#)

The Internal Audit Forum is formed from a committed group of Internal Auditors. Their aim is to raise standards in the profession.

Every council must have an External Auditor – nationally appointed – in Oxfordshire it is [Moore](#) although their 5 year contract has ended and we await confirmation from SAAA Ltd as to which audit company they have appointed for the

next 5 year contract. And an Internal Auditor, who is engaged by the council itself.

### What does an Internal Auditor do?

The Internal Auditor is not making sure the accounts add up and that the bank reconciliation tallies, they are looking at your processes and procedures to ensure the council is open, transparent and professional. The Internal Auditor looks at internal financial controls.

**STRONG HINT: OALC HAS TRAINING ON INTERNAL CONTROLS ON 20th OCTOBER online 10am. Strong internal controls help to prevent fraud. Book here - <https://www.oalc.org.uk/event-detail/00000000158>**

The Internal Auditor signs off the council's AGAR form. The fourth page of the AGAR is a tick box table which the Internal Auditor has to sign off. It asks questions such as these



- Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year. .
- This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.
- This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.
- The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.
- Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.
- Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.
- Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.

And more.

The role of the Internal Auditor is hugely important when external audit is becoming a lighter touch process. For councils under the £25,000 threshold, the internal audit may be the only professional external scrutiny the public body will receive.

**OALC support the work of the Internal Auditors Forum.**

**We expect every council in future to only employ an Internal Auditor that is accredited to IAF; to check the references of any Internal Auditor the council employs, and to change Internal Auditors every 3-5 years to ensure a fresh pair of eyes is examining your council procedures.**

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## THE IAF OBJECTIVES

1. To ensure Councils which contract Internal Audit from members receive a uniform, high standard of service.
2. To support Council Internal Auditors and assist with development of the sector.
3. To review and assist with the updating of the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioners' Guide.
4. To liaise with the External Auditors and the SAAA (Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments Ltd)

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## OUR AIM, PURPOSES AND VALUES ARE:

1. To promote the provision of high-quality Parish and Town Council internal audits.
2. To promote the provision of high-quality internal auditors.
3. To foster good working relationships between internal auditors, councils and external auditors

More information here - [Internal Audit Forum](#)

## UPDATED GUIDANCE FROM THE CHIEF PLANNING OFFICER

### Nutrient Neutrality and Habitats Regulation Assessments Update

On 20 July, the Secretary of State for the Environment laid a [Written Ministerial Statement](#) setting out the action government is taking to address the issue of nutrient pollution. This consists of two key



elements; obligating the upgrade of wastewater treatment works in nutrient neutrality areas and a strategic mitigation scheme. There was also clarification on the application of Habitats Regulations Assessments for post-permission approvals and the deliverability of sites in nutrient neutrality catchments for housing land supply considerations.

The Chief Planner wrote to all Local Planning Authorities setting out these matters, as well as highlighting the support from the Planning Advisory Service and the ongoing support from DLUHC to affected catchments. You can read the letter in full [here](#).

Please find further information below:

- Natural England blog on nutrient mitigation scheme [Nutrient mitigation scheme can help provide the nature and housing we need - Natural England \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

## WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE PLANNING SYSTEM WHILE THE LEVELLING UP AND REGENERATION BILL GOES THROUGH PARLIAMENT?

[The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill](#), colloquially referred to as LURB, promises a lot of rearranging of the chairs on the Titanic with rumours of tight timescales (December 2022) for completion of any outstanding Local Plans.

The planning system has never been free from political tinkering, no Secretary of State can resist attacking the planning system in an attempt to win cheap points. From Michael Heseltine in 2012 who accused planners of locking up jobs in filing cabinets to the ill-fated Chris Pincher MP, who's demise arguably precipitated Boris Johnson's exit from office, last year urging local planning authorities to take a positive approach to engagement with supply chain stakeholders to make sure that planning controls '*are not a barrier to the supply of all goods and services*'. And of course Robert Jenrick's short lived and unlamented zoning proposals.

LURB was introduced in May and is currently at the Committee Stage. The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) has a long but useful summary of the content of the Bill under 6 headings on its website here - <https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/our-work/levelling-and-regeneration-bill> :

- A genuinely plan-led system
- Delivering Infrastructure
- Creating beautiful places and improving environmental outcomes
- Regeneration
- Market reform
- Wider improvements to DM procedures

So while politicians, lobbyists, pressure groups and developers seek to make their points at the Committee stage what are planners on the ground doing – apart from sighing in despair and tearing their hair out as the goalposts are changed yet again? In Oxfordshire the demise of the joint Oxfordshire 2050 Plan puts the focus back onto each district and each Local Plan. You will have seen earlier in this Update that West Oxfordshire DC is seeking views on what areas it should be focusing on in the review of its Local Plan, particularly as there has been a change in the political majority party. For planners for the moment it is business as usual but with an eye on the horizon to try and guess what the next shuffling will result in.

A blog written by planners on the PAS website gives some thoughts on how they might have to cope with a plan preparation timetable of 30 months rather than the current average of 5 years, what does this mean in reality? Have a read...

[Transitional Arrangements for Local Plans: Top Ten 'asks' – Planning Advisory Service \(wordpress.com\)](#)

NEXT (13<sup>TH</sup>) EDITION OF CHARLES ARNOLD-BAKER DUE OUT IN OCTOBER – 20% DISCOUNT AVAILABLE

## Arnold-Baker on Local Council Administration

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has secured a 20% discount for member parish and town councils and county associations off the purchase price of the new 13th edition of Arnold-Baker on Local Council Administration.

The publication has long been established as the critical text for local councils in local government and public and administrative law. The new thirteenth edition includes:

- Complete updates with the most recent and up-to-date information regarding legislative and government departments
- New chapters on both finance and audit

The purchase price will be £164.99, reduced to £131.99 with a member discount. To purchase your copy, please contact Lewis Williams at [lewis.williams@lexisnexis.co.uk](mailto:lewis.williams@lexisnexis.co.uk) or on 01133 571 578.

### Charles Arnold-Baker 1918 - 2009

Did you know the author of the 'yellow bible' was christened Wolfgang Charles Werner von Blumenthal, the second son of Baron Albrecht von Blumenthal in Berlin during the last years of Kaiser Wilhelm II's reign (June 1918)

His English mother, Wilhelmine, following her divorce from the Baron, moved to England and married a solicitor Percy Arnold-Baker.

Charles went to Cambridge. He became a British citizen and served in the army during the Second World War. He was recruited by MI6 where his fluent German was useful.

After the war he read for the Bar but found the intermittent and unpredictable pay from practicing in shipping and parliamentary affairs not suitable. So in 1953 he became the Secretary-General of the National Association of Local Councils. His first edition of *Local Council Administration* was published in 1975.

The dedication inside reads: "To the Knowledgeable Amateurs Without Whom Democracy is Impossible".

His autobiography *For He is an Englishman: Memoirs of a Prussian Nobleman* was published in 2007.

COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP FUND ROUND TWO – REMINDER

A reminder that Dept. of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities Community Ownership Fund is open for expressions of interest.

The expression of interest stage is a new element of round 2. There is a short form that that needs to be completed which includes 26 questions. If successful, DLUHC will invite the community group to submit a full application for the fund. There is no deadline for expressions of interest or applications.

The government is providing £150 million over four years to support community groups to take ownership of assets and amenities at risk of being lost such as community centres, parks, pubs and post office buildings. Voluntary and community groups can bid for match funding to acquire important assets and run them for the benefit of the local community.

Councils are encouraged to share this information with voluntary and community groups.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/new-levelling-up-and-community-investments#the-community-ownership-fund>

## NOMINATIONS FOR THE BIRTHDAY 2023 HONOURS ROUND – CLOSING VERY SOON

DLUHC is inviting councils to submit nominations for the Birthday 2023 Honours list which will be published in June 2023.

This is an opportunity for those in local government to celebrate colleagues and stakeholders who go above and beyond their roles.

Nominations can be made using the online form here [DLUHC Birthday 2023 Honours nomination form](#) [Deadline: Noon, 1 September 2022 \(Page 1 of 4\) \(office.com\)](#) you will also need to submit two letters of support to [Honours@levellingup.gov.uk](mailto:Honours@levellingup.gov.uk). The Honours team in DLUHC is available to help guide you through the process.

Members of the public can also nominate someone for an Honour or award.

The deadline to submit an application is 1 September. This is obviously very short notice but we wanted to bring to your notice that anyone can make a nomination for a person to receive an Honour at any time.

This link <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/honours-how-to-write-citations/how-to-write-a-nomination-html> takes you to the .gov.uk website where it explains who can receive an Honour, how to make the nomination, what is involved and how the system works. If there is someone in your community that has done exemplary work that has gone beyond the norm why not consider making a nomination?

## COUNCIL TAX LEVELS FOR 2022-23

Each year NALC does analysis of parish precepts. Here are a few highlights:

- There are 10,239 local bodies which have the power to raise a precept; this includes parish and town councils, charter trustees and Inner and Middle Temple.
- Of these 8,859 are precepting town and parish councils.

Precept	2021-22	2022-23
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	No. of councils	No. of councils
£0	1,360	1,339
£1-24,999	5,606	5,686
£25,000 -£124,999	2,142	2,105
£125,000 - £249,999	513	500
£250,000 - £999,999	529	511
£1m- £1,999,999	62	58
£2m - £2,999,999	5	5
£3m - £6,499,999	3	3

- The overall amount raised by principal precepting authorities is £35.6 billion, an increase on the previous year of £1.8 billion.
- The overall amount raised by town and parish councils is £653,661,821 an increase of 6.01% on the previous year
- 2,180 or 24.6% of local councils did not increased their precept; 568 or 6.4% reduced their precept (!)
- Of the 6,109 councils that increased their precept, 45% increased it by less than £1,000
- There are 83 local councils that raise a precept of £1m+ most of these are major towns or cities such as Daventry, Falmouth, Weston super Mare, Salisbury, Weymouth etc.
- The average Band D council tax for all local councils is £77.21 an increase of £2.86 (3.85%) on the previous year
- In Oxfordshire the average precept increase was +8.03% (Northumberland was the highest at +10.34%, Hertfordshire lowest at +2.13%) and the average Band D increase was +5.31% (Cleveland was highest at +9.47%, lowest County Durham +1.18%)

## STRICTER RULES TO REDUCE TAKEAWAY LITTER

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities set out new guidance on 7 August which will help make sure takeaway food businesses contribute to keeping high streets cleaner.

The updated guidance clarifies the powers councils in England have to set stricter litter rules for new hot food takeaways when considering planning applications.

The guidance will give councils clear and consistent advice on what rules they can enforce when new takeaways open, such as ensuring they install more bins and anti-litter signs around shops or have staff members pick up litter regularly. Failing to adhere to these rules could result in financial penalties. Guidance - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/health-and-wellbeing>

## HOW CAN LOCAL AUTHORITIES HELP CONTROL THE LITTER ASSOCIATED WITH HOT FOOD TAKEAWAY?

Changing the use of land or a building to a hot food takeaway will require a planning application. Local Planning Authorities should consider seeking details from applicants, setting out what measures will be put in place to reduce the litter associated with a proposed development, to ensure there is no unacceptable impact from litter on the amenity of the area. Details can include proposals to install litter

bins, commitments to undertake litter picking and advisory signage. Litter generated from such premises may be deposited away from the immediate vicinity of the premises. Councils can consider the wider effect this has on local amenity – such as by asking for premises to undertake litter picking to collect litter (generated from off-sales from that premises) which has been deposited further away from the immediate vicinity. It will, subject to meeting the relevant [tests](#) of conditions, often be appropriate to impose conditions to require ongoing compliance with any measures proposed.

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## OTHER REGULATORY TOOLS

In terms of broader regulation, the relevant legislative framework is extensive and includes criminal sanction (see the [Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse](#) for details on criminal offences, powers open to local authorities including in relation to enforcement, and the standards expected of local authorities and certain landowners/occupiers with regard to their duties to keep land clean and clear of litter and refuse). For example, section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 empowers Local Planning Authorities to require owners/occupiers tidy up a site if it is adversely affecting the amenity of the neighbourhood. There are also relevant powers available to local authorities contained in the [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#) and the [Licencing Act 2003](#). It may be appropriate for Local Planning Authorities to make applicants aware of these powers in order to emphasise the importance of ensuring appropriate measures are put in place to avoid non-compliance with standards and obligations.

## THE WAY THAT LANDLINE TELEPHONES WORK IN THE UK IS CHANGING

The Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) is being replaced by Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) by the end of December 2025

It is important that all telecoms users, including councils, and third party providers identify what services they provide to residents (particularly the vulnerable) and business using the PSTN and what changes may be required.

All councils are encouraged to contact their telecoms provider(s) or service providers as early as possible to begin to understand what changes will be required.

As well as traditional telephones, currently many devices rely on the PSTN for routing calls or services. This may include emergency phones in lifts, intruder alarms, payment machines, identifying traffic light faults, remote health monitoring devices and many more. It is possible that some of these devices will not be compatible with replacement Voice over IP connections.

Network Providers – including Openreach, KCOM and Virgin Media – are replacing legacy copper-based telephone services delivered over the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) with services which rely on Voice over IP (VOIP) technology. The new services carry voice calls and data over an internet connection at the same time. Unlike the legacy copper network that would operate in the event of a failure in the local electricity supply the new full fibre network relies on an electricity supply.

Support and information is available from telecoms companies. Many Communications Providers and Network Providers are offering a range of services to support migration including support for auditing existing use of PSTN technology and ‘test labs’ for trialing equipment with new VoIP lines. While this change is industry-led, Government is working with Ofcom, and the telecoms sector to identify issues and solutions, including the sharing of best practice, and identifying opportunities for communicating the change with customers and communities.

Further information –LGA : <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/sector-support-offer/supporting-financial-resilience-and-economic-recovery/digital/switchover>

Ofcom: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/future-of-landline-calls>

## FOR THOSE COUNCILS WITH A SMALL SCHOOL IN THEIR PARISH

Small schools, many of which are in rural areas, face particular challenges and there is now widespread and growing concern for their future. The challenges associated with funding of small schools in England have been acknowledged by the DfE (2021) along with the position of small schools in the Academy system and the new OFSTED inspection framework.

The Manifesto for Small Schools and associated briefing notes, published by the National Association of Small Schools (<https://www.smallschools.org.uk/>) and the University of Plymouth, is a declaration of **why small schools are so important for children, families and communities**.

Small schools in England were under significant threat from the 1970s to the end of the 1990s. The steep decline in school numbers during this period and the impacts of school closures on localities and communities, raised concern. There has been a 'presumption against closure' status to rural (not necessarily small) schools in England since 1998. The 'period of grace' offered by the 'presumption against closure' gave schools some protection but there is renewed concern amongst small school leaders that their schools are under renewed threat from academisation of schools, an invigorated push for 'economic efficiencies' and the new OFSTED inspection framework.

The Manifesto for Small Schools has been produced to declare the value of small schools and raise awareness of the threats to their existence. Anyone working in or with schools in rural communities is welcome to make use of the manifesto and information in the briefing notes.

### The Manifesto for Small Schools

'Small schools are assets, centres for innovation in education and communities and treasuries for their localities'. This manifesto calls for:

- acknowledgement of and support for small schools as centres for research, innovation and development in teaching and learning and in their communities and localities.
- support for collaborative practices amongst schools; collaboration by choice, not through force or coercion
- recognition of the importance of schools to the communities and places they serve and the importance of communities to schools: Schools do not exist in isolation, this fact calls for acknowledgement of situated contextual factors which interact with the school and its locality such as housing, employment and provisions of services.
- acknowledgement and celebration of and support for a commitment to building a wide range of relationships in education settings as an integral part of the UK's Levelling Up agenda.
- a fair funding system for all schools. It calls particularly for a system that acknowledges and funds small schools and other schools that challenge standard financial efficiency models.

The Manifesto and briefing notes can be found here: [Learning and Social Justice through the Lifecourse Research Group - University of Plymouth](#)



# Small Schools **MANIFESTO**



*Small schools are* **ASSETS, CENTRES FOR INNOVATION in EDUCATION and COMMUNITIES and TREASURIES for their LOCALITIES.**

## *Small schools are*

**ideal places for research, innovation and development; in teaching and learning, curriculum development, leadership and for developing quality practice in education through collaboration and partnership.**

### *This manifesto calls for:*

- ✓ Acknowledgement of and support for small schools as centres for research, innovation and development in teaching and learning and in their communities and localities.
- ✓ The recognition and celebration of and support for collaborative practices amongst schools; collaboration by choice, not through force or coercion.



## *Small schools are*

**connected with, central to and assets for communities through their influential relationships with pupils, parents and extended families and as such provide opportunities for adult learning, developments in technology and sustainability.**

### *This manifesto calls for:*

- ✓ The recognition of the importance of schools to the communities and places they serve and the importance of communities to schools: Schools do not exist in isolation, this fact calls for acknowledgement of situated contextual factors which interact with the school and its locality such as housing, employment and provisions of services.
- ✓ Acknowledgement and celebration of and support for a commitment to building a wide range of relationships in education settings as an integral part of the UK's Levelling Up agenda.

## *Small schools must* **be funded fairly.**

### *This manifesto calls for:*

- ✓ a fair funding system for all schools. It calls particularly for a system that acknowledges and funds small schools and other schools that challenge standard financial efficiency models.



**Contacts:** Dr Cath Gristy, Plymouth Institute of Education, University of Plymouth • [cath.gristy@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:cath.gristy@plymouth.ac.uk)  
Neil Short, National Association of Small Schools • [uep@btinternet.com](mailto:uep@btinternet.com)

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**UNIVERSITY OF  
PLYMOUTH**



## SCRIBE (ACCOUNTS SOFTWARE) IS RUNNING A FREE CONFERENCE

Free conference for Clerks, RFO's and Councillors – with valuable training on a range of different topics, this open-to-all event includes 14 expert speakers, live shanty songs, a prize draw, and a book launch!

It will be live on zoom on **Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September**, from 9.45am to 3pm, highlights include:

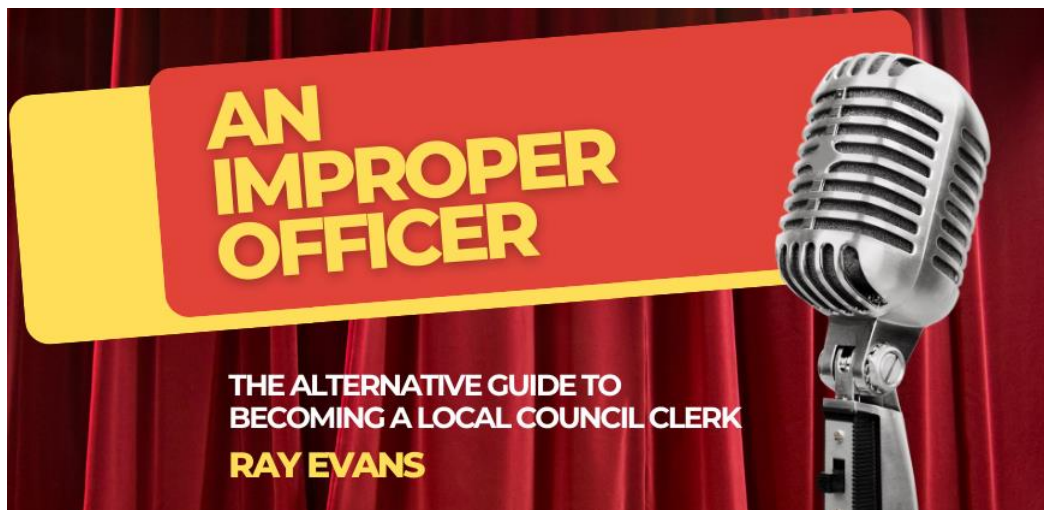
- Performance by the Sheringham Shantymen
- Keynote by Duncan Baker, MP for North Norfolk
- 14 expert speakers
- 8 lightning rounds
- Prize draw
- Book Launch \* (see below)\*
- 400+ attendees

Topics:

- Healthy Neighbourhoods
- Sustainable Buildings & Transport
- Bullying & the Law
- JPAG Practitioner's Guide & Auditing
- Happiness & Mental Wellbeing
- Web Accessibility & Social Media
- Creatively Engaging Your Community

View the agenda & register for the event here: <https://scribe-fest.com/>

\*as light relief – heaven knows we certainly need it; see the blurb about this forthcoming book “An Improper Officer” by Ray Evans, the alternative guide to becoming a local council clerk. Ray shares his top ten tips - <https://www.scribeaccounts.com/blog/sneak-peak-the-improper-officers-new-book>



## ACTIVE TRAVEL: LOCAL AUTHORITY TOOLKIT UPDATE

On 10<sup>th</sup> August the Department for Transport [updated guidance](#) on how principal councils can promote active travel within local communities, adding new information about the second statutory Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

The guidance is to help councils understand the benefits of active travel and how to promote it in local communities, this includes advice on how councils can work with local government associations to:

- Develop local cycling and walking infrastructure plans
- Develop and implement travel demand management plans
- Plan for and improve active travel infrastructure
- Promote behaviour change to enable active travel



*Active travel* is definitely the phrase of the moment, it was used heavily in the latest Oxfordshire Local Transport & Connectivity Plan which was consulted upon earlier this year. The Plan set out the County Councils vision to “replace or remove” one in four of the county’s car trips by 2030 and one in three by 2040 as part of a “zero-carbon transport network”.

The transport user hierarchy makes it clear that in order to deliver the vision behind the Plan the County Council’s approach prioritises walking and cycling, in conjunction with sustainable public transport for longer journeys.

The gap between everyday life in a rural parish and that of someone living in the centre of a town or Oxford is huge. The reality of diminishing public transport and escalating fuel prices is not adequately addressed by the mantra of ‘active travel’.

#### NALC POINTS OF LIGHT - 2022 EDITION YOUR CHANCE TO SHINE

For those of you who don’t know what NALC’s publication *Points of Light* is, it is a collection of case studies highlighting the range of work that local councils undertake. The 2021 [edition](#) is here.

For this year’s edition, NALC would welcome help in identifying councils that have done work in the following areas:

- Loneliness
- Cost of living
- Sport, especially football
- Parks
- Libraries
- Markets
- Young People

- Civic pride e.g. making places clean, attractive to visitors

If your council has done an interesting or innovative project on one of these topics please send any weblinks or documents you have to us so we can forward to NALC who will write up an 80-150 word case study for inclusion in the booklet.

## NALC'S SOLICITORS LEGAL HINTS, TIPS AND COMMENTS

### **40C heat – cancellation of council meetings?**

We were asked last month on the afternoon of the hottest day of the year (so far) if a council meeting had to go ahead later that evening, with the likely temperature to still be well into the 30s. Councillors were keen to postpone because of the heat and the anticipated conditions in the room. The clerk believed that a council meeting must go ahead once the summons has been sent/ notice requirements complied with.

We confirmed that the clerk's view was correct; once a council meeting has been called it cannot be cancelled. There are no exceptions. Our practical suggestion was that members did not attend except for the chair who would then declare the meeting inquorate and adjourn it. A new date could be set at a future date.

### **Resignation by email – copying in the chair?**

We were recently asked about the validity of a councillor's resignation. The councillor concerned had emailed his resignation to the clerk, copying in the chair to his email. S.84 (1) (c) of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that a person elected to any office under the 1972 Act may at any time resign their office by written notice delivered in the case of a parish or community councillor, to the chairman of the parish or community council.

Our view was that this was a resignation, even given the potential grey area. The email (the written notice for the purpose of s.84) went to the chair even though it also went to the clerk.

### **Co-opting non-councillors to committees - qualification criteria**

The question came up recently of whether the residency councillor qualification criterion under s.79 of the 1972 Act applies to non-councillor members of committees. The answer is contained within Legal Topic Note 7 (reissued last month). The qualification provisions in s.79 do not apply to non-councillor members of committees.

### **Co-opting councillors**

We have had a couple of queries after reissuing LTN 8 on the position of co-opting candidates where there are an equal number of candidates and vacancies. Essentially it is our longstanding view and position as set out in LTN 8 that a council cannot decide not to co-opt a person where there are the same number of vacancies as candidates and the persons are not disqualified from being councillors. Rule 5 of the Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 also states that the parish council must, as soon as practicable after the expiry of the period of 14 days for seeking an election, co-opt a person to fill the vacancy. The definition of practicable is "able to be done" and therefore it is practicable to fill a vacancy as soon as there is a qualified candidate.

### **Legal Topic Note Updates**



Since June we updated and reissued LTN 8 and LTN 7 to take account of the new disqualifications for specific sexual offences. And now refreshed and reissued LTN 40 with changes including new information on electronic signatures and updated links.

Many councils now keep most of their Minutes, records and documents in electronic form rather than paper/hard copy. So the opening paragraph of the Note sets out NALC's guidance which is pretty much the same for hard and soft documentation -

*"Many documents are now only held electronically so the same arrangements for keeping records and copies should be applied to an electronic document as for a paper document. An electronic document can be signed by the relevant person typing their name on it. Documents that have specific requirements, such as witnesses to a deed, must comply with those requirements when in electronic form."*

All 89 NALC Legal Topic Notes are available in the NALC Members Area (username and password are available via our Members Area, go to the Legal Topic Notes tab).

## EXTERNAL AUDIT – OPTION TO OPT OUT

On 9<sup>th</sup> August your Clerk should have received an email from SAAA Ltd that looked like this:

*Under the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015, SAAA is responsible for appointing external auditors to all applicable opted-in smaller authorities, for setting the terms of appointment for limited assurance reviews and for managing the contracts with the appointed audit firms. Smaller authorities are those whose gross annual income or expenditure is **less than £6.5 million**.*

*The next 5-year appointing period runs from 2022-23 until 2026-27 and SAAA has undertaken a procurement exercise to appoint auditors to each County area from 1 April 2022. Now that the submission deadline for the 2021-22 Annual Governance and Accountability Returns has passed, this is to advise you of the option to opt-out of the next round of 5-year audit appointments.*

**All authorities require an appointed external auditor** even if the authority meets the criteria to qualify for exemption, as a Certificate of Exemption is required to be submitted to the external auditor and the auditor must be in place in case of objections from local electors

*During the previous 5-year period **all** smaller authorities were 'opted-in' to the central procurement regime managed by SAAA - no authority decided to 'opt-out' and follow the various complex procedures required under statute to appoint their own external auditor. **If you wish to continue as part of the SAAA sector led auditor appointment regime then no action is required, you will remain part of central scheme.***

*However, all authorities must be given the option to opt-out of the central procurement and appointment scheme and appoint their own external auditor for the next 5-year period, although the process is onerous for smaller authorities.*

*This is communication is to advise that whilst all smaller authorities are opted into the central procurement of external auditors by default, any authorities who do not wish to be part of the SAAA arrangements must formally notify SAAA that they wish to opt out within **8 weeks** of this communication but no later than **28 October 2022**; this decision must be communicated to SAAA via e mail to [admin@saaa.co.uk](mailto:admin@saaa.co.uk).*

*If notification of your decision to opt out is not received within this 8-week period, then your authority will be regarded as opted-in for the next five-year period beginning on 1 April 2022 and ending on 31 March 2027.*

## **Opting-out**

Opting out is a significant decision which requires careful consideration; to assist authorities considering opting out further guidance has been developed to clarify what opting out means in practice. This detailed information can be found at [www.saaa.co.uk](http://www.saaa.co.uk)

An authority that wishes to opt out must formally reach and record that decision in a way that meets the requirements of its own governance framework, by convening a full council meeting or an extraordinary council meeting.

Key implications are:

- an opted-out authority regardless of size (including exempt authorities) **MUST** appoint an appropriate external auditor;
- the appointed auditor **must** be a registered auditor as defined by the Companies Act and a member of Institute of Chartered Accountants (England and Wales).
- an opted-out authority **must** convene an appropriate independent auditor panel which meets the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (LAAA). Detailed guidance on auditor panels is available in Schedule 4 of the LAAA Act and from CIPFA;
- an opted-out authority will need to develop its own specification for its external audit contract, will need to negotiate the price for this work on an individual basis and will need to manage the contract, including any disputes, and any independence issues that may arise;
- an opted-out authority must ensure full compliance with the relevant requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act and supporting Regulations;
- any opted-out authority that does not successfully appoint an appropriate external auditor in the correct manner and notify SAAA who their external auditor is by **30 November 2022** will have an external auditor appointed for it by the Secretary of State through SAAA. **This will result in additional costs of £300 which will have to be met by the authority.**

Regards, [admin@saaa.co.uk](mailto:admin@saaa.co.uk)

If your council did not receive this email then I can only assume there is a glitch in their system or your council has changed its email address and not informed Moore, the current external auditors whose current 5 year contract is coming to an end. Email Moore [oxon.sa@mooreuk.global](mailto:oxon.sa@mooreuk.global) and let them know the correct email address for your council.

Your council should have also received an email from us putting the SAAA Ltd. email into context, explaining that SAAA awards external contracts on a five year basis; SAAA are formally required to allow an 8 week window for councils to exercise their right to opt out of using the external auditors that SAAA appoint.

**We would strongly advise your council NOT TO OPT OUT.** The requirements that a council would need to fulfil to appoint their own external auditors are well set out in SAAA's email, they are onerous and as there are no economies of scale are likely to be very expensive too.

**The audit fee scales for 2022-23 to 2026-27** are published on the SAAA website at <https://saaa.co.uk/fees.html> - the fees have increased by 5% from the previous 5-year period.



Scales of fees for smaller authorities are based on bands of annual income or expenditure, whichever is the higher. This means that the fees are broadly proportionate to the public funds involved and the ability of each authority to pay.

Table 1 sets out the scales of audit fees for smaller authorities that complete their Annual Returns fully and accurately within the required timescales, and provide the necessary supporting information and any explanations sought.

Note that an authority with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000 that is not able to certify that it is an exempt authority as it does not meet the qualifying criteria, or if the authority wishes to have a limited assurance review by the external auditor, then the fee payable will be £200. Authorities with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £200,000 will be subject to basic limited assurance audit review.

Authorities with either income or expenditure exceeding £200,000 will be subject to intermediate limited assurance audit review.

Table 1 - Fee Scales 2022/23 to 2026/27	
INCOME/EXPENDITURE BAND (£)	FEE FOR LIMITED ASSURANCE REVIEW (LAR) (£)
0 - 25,000	0*
0 - 25,000	210 †
25,001 - 50,000	210
50,001 - 100,000	315
100,001 - 200,000	420
200,001 - 300,000	630
300,001 - 400,000	840
400,001 - 500,000	1,050
500,001 - 750,000	1,365
750,001 - 1,000,000	1,680
1,000,001 - 2,000,000	2,100
2,000,001 - 3,000,000	2,520
Etc.	

\* If a Certificate of Exemption is submitted

† If a LAR is requested

Scale fees may be subject to review during the period.

### Reminder letters

Where the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) is not submitted by the authority to the external auditor by the required date, a reminder will be sent.

Where the auditor is required to send a reminder to any authority, the auditor will charge the authority £40 for each reminder.

### Additional work and variations to the scale fees

If an active authority fails either to submit its Annual Return to the external auditor for review by 30 September or (if it is an exempt authority) to provide a certificate of exemption, the auditor will consider making a statutory recommendation and/or issuing a public interest report, the cost of which

will be payable by the authority pertaining to the fee income band of that authority as in Table 1 (above).

Extra fees may also be charged, subject to SAAA's approval, in other circumstances, for example where auditors have to:

- consider objections to the accounts from local electors, from the point at which the auditor accepts the objection as valid;
- exercise special powers in relation to the review, such as issuing a report in the public interest; or
- undertake any special investigations, such as those arising from disclosures under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

Extra fees will be calculated and charged according to the work required.

More information is here [Part 3 - Scales of Fees 2022-23 to 2027-28 21 July 2021 p1 \(saaa.co.uk\)](#) on the SAAA Ltd website.

**Don't forget to budget at precept time for the 5% increase in audit fees.**

## PROTECTING PARKS AND GREEN SPACES WITH FIELDS IN TRUST

Parks and green spaces are places of joy and togetherness valued by the entire community from pre-school children to retired adults. We all have fond memories of our favourite places to play, enjoy sport and experience the natural world. Parks provide places for exhilarating fun or a moment of quiet reflection. Yet we know that these much-loved green spaces are vulnerable to development if they are not protected. Once a park is gone, it is gone forever.



Parks and green spaces have a key role to play in:

- Mitigating climate change
- Connecting communities
- Benefiting health and wellbeing
- Providing accessible recreational space
- Pandemic recovery

To continue to fulfil this role, they need to be protected.

Fields in Trust champions and supports parks and green spaces by protecting them for people to enjoy in perpetuity. Our Deed of Dedication ensures that protected land remains owned and managed by the landowner and provides flexible yet robust protection against non-recreational development.

More information here - [www.fieldsintrust.org/what-is-protection](http://www.fieldsintrust.org/what-is-protection)

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY NEGOTIATIONS

The National Employers for local government services have made final, one-year pay offers to the unions representing NJC 'Green Book' employees [Emp circular 25 July – local government pay 2022 | Local Government Association](#)

The National Employers on 15<sup>th</sup> July agreed unanimously to make the following one-year (1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023), final offer to the unions representing the main local government NJC workforce:

- with effect from 1 April 2022, an increase of £1,925 on all NJC pay points 1 and above
- with effect from 1 April 2022, an increase of 4.04 per cent on all allowances (as listed in the 2021 NJC pay agreement circular dated 28 February 2022)
- with effect from 1 April 2023, an increase of one day to all employees' annual leave entitlement
- with effect from 1 April 2023, the deletion of pay point 1 from the NJC pay spine.

**UPDATE** - The LGA have confirmation of the unions' pay offer consultation timetables:

- UNISON's consultation will run from 15 August to 19 September and it will be neutral on whether the offer should be accepted or rejected.
- GMB will remain neutral on whether the offer should be accepted or rejected and its consultation will start on 22 August and run to 21 October.
- Unite will be consulting its members with a recommendation that the offer should be rejected and its consultation will run from the end of August to 14 October.

As the main unions timetables for consultation run until late October there is little prospect of a decision on pay before November. Be reassured if and when a decision is made it will be back dated to 1<sup>st</sup> April.

## CIVILITY AND RESPECT PROJECT - SIGN THE PLEDGE NOW



IN COLLABORATION WITH SLCC, NALC, OVW, COUNTY ASSOCIATIONS

### CIVILITY AND RESPECT PLEDGE

The Civility and Respect Pledge is being introduced because **there is no place for bullying, harassment and intimidation within our sector**. The pledge is easy for councils to sign up to; it will enable councils to demonstrate that they are committed to standing up to poor behaviour across the sector and to driving through positive changes which support civil and respectful conduct.

**We invite all councils to put the Civility and Respect Pledge as an agenda item on the next council agenda –**

*'To pass a resolution to sign up to the civility and respect pledge'*

By signing the Pledge, your council is agreeing that the council will treat councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, and representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect in their roles.

In addition to the Pledge councils are encouraged to go further and ensure they have in place policies and processes which embed good professional behaviour into council life and activity. The table below is a tick box for all councils to follow...

Statement	Tick to agree and action
Our council has agreed that it will treat all councillors, clerk and all employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.	
Our council has committed to training councillors and staff.	
Our council has good governance arrangements in place including, staff contracts, and a dignity at work policy. (A copy of this policy has been sent to your clerk)	
Our council will commit to seeking professional help in the early stages should civility and respect issues arise.	
Our council will commit to calling out bullying and harassment when if and when it happens.	
Our council will continue to learn from best practice in the sector and aspire to being a role model/champion council e.g., via the Local Council Award Scheme.	
Our council supports the continued lobbying for the change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge, including sanctions for elected members where appropriate.	

Sign here on the NALC website - [Civility and Respect Project \(nalc.gov.uk\)](https://nalc.gov.uk)

### **Civility and Respect Project Training Courses**

A raft of training packages to support councillors, clerks, and other employees experiencing difficulties with bullying and harassment is planned and available, see below.

They are all virtual webinars. Please click on the links for more details:

**OALC IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR RUNNING ANY OF THESE WEBINARS  
WE ARE SIGNPOSTING YOU TO THEM BUT WE ARE NOT TAKING BOOKINGS OR  
PAYMENT**

An update from the Civility and respect Training team -

We have received a high level of demand for the councillor webinar 'Civility and Respect – Uncovering the issues for the public sector' and the advertised date of 12<sup>th</sup> September is now fully booked. In response to the demand we have scheduled an additional date 19<sup>th</sup> September at 11am (60 minutes), the delegate fee for the webinar is £15. This session is for councillors only and can contacting [sue@haptc.org.uk](mailto:sue@haptc.org.uk).

More details about the session can be found on the NALC and SLCC websites [CIVILITY AND RESPECT PROJECT \(nalc.gov.uk\)](https://nalc.gov.uk) and [SLCC | Civility & Respect Training](https://slcc.org.uk)

Course	Booking for Clerks & Staff	Booking for Councillors
Resilience and emotional intelligence; what it means in practice for clerks and council officers	<a href="https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect/">https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect/</a> <i>multiple dates available</i>	<a href="https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect/">https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect/</a> <i>multiple dates available</i>
Leadership in challenging situations dealing with challenging situations and working with others effectively	<a href="https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect/">https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect/</a> <i>multiple dates available</i>	<a href="https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect/">https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect/</a> <i>multiple dates available</i>
Respectful social media; how to deal with attacks and negative engagement	<a href="https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect/">https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect/</a> <i>multiple dates available</i>	<a href="https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect/">https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect/</a> <i>multiple dates available</i>
Uncovering the issues for public sector	8 <sup>th</sup> September 11am -12 midday <a href="https://www.slcc.co.uk/event/civility-and-respect-08-09/">https://www.slcc.co.uk/event/civility-and-respect-08-09/</a>	12 <sup>th</sup> September 1.30 - 2.30 <b>FULLY BOOKED additional date on 19<sup>th</sup> September available</b>  Clerks to email <a href="mailto:sue@haptc.org.uk">sue@haptc.org.uk</a> copying-in your delegates  This contact email address is Hertfordshire Association of Town and Parish Councils
Managing conflict and difficult conversations for Clerks	14 <sup>th</sup> September 10am-3pm <a href="https://www.slcc.co.uk/event/managing-conflict-and-difficult-conversations-14-9/">https://www.slcc.co.uk/event/managing-conflict-and-difficult-conversations-14-9/</a>	Not applicable
What makes people become challenging?	22 <sup>nd</sup> September 11am -12 midday <a href="https://www.slcc.co.uk/event/civility-and-respect-22-09/">https://www.slcc.co.uk/event/civility-and-respect-22-09/</a>	26 <sup>th</sup> September 1.30 - 2.30  Clerks to email <a href="mailto:sue@haptc.org.uk">sue@haptc.org.uk</a> copying-in your delegates

Personal resilience and self-protection	6 <sup>th</sup> October 11am - 12 midday <a href="https://www.slcc.co.uk/event/civility-and-respect-06-10/">https://www.slcc.co.uk/event/civility-and-respect-06-10/</a>	3 <sup>rd</sup> October 1.30 - 2.30 Clerks to email <a href="mailto:sue@haptc.org.uk">sue@haptc.org.uk</a> copying-in your delegates
Understanding psychopathic and narcissistic behaviour	20 <sup>th</sup> October 11am – 12 midday <a href="https://www.slcc.co.uk/event/civility-and-respect-20-10/">https://www.slcc.co.uk/event/civility-and-respect-20-10/</a>	17 <sup>th</sup> October 1.30 - 2.30 Clerks to email <a href="mailto:sue@haptc.org.uk">sue@haptc.org.uk</a> copying-in your delegates
Code-of-conduct	28 <sup>th</sup> September 10am – 12midday <a href="https://www.slcc.co.uk/event/civility-respect-the-new-code-of-conduct-28-09/">https://www.slcc.co.uk/event/civility-respect-the-new-code-of-conduct-28-09/</a>	19 <sup>th</sup> October 7.00 - 9.00pm Clerks to email <a href="mailto:sue@haptc.org.uk">sue@haptc.org.uk</a> copying-in your delegates

## CLIMATE ACTION

### PUBLIC SECTOR DECARBONISATION SCHEME PHASE 3B

Salix Finance announced, at the beginning of August, Phase 3b of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, in partnership with the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

Phase 3 of the Public Sector Decarbonisation scheme (PSDS), announced in September 2021 has already awarded £555.7 million to public sector bodies to upgrade public buildings with low carbon heating and energy efficiency measures.



Up to £635 million of government funding will be made available under Phase 3b to public sector organisations so they can install low carbon heating, such as heat pumps, and energy efficiency measures including double glazing and loft insulation.

Phase 3b guidance notes, application form, eligibility criteria, FAQs, key dates, and terms and conditions have been published on the [Salix website](#). Salix has also released a series of videos about the scheme alongside a series of client testimonial videos.

The Phase 3b Application Portal is expected to open in September.

PSDS funding will allow low carbon heating systems, including heat pumps and electric heating to be installed in public buildings, with many projects also installing energy efficiency measures such as wall and roof insulation, double glazing and LED lighting, and renewables such as solar panels.

The funding is provided by the Department for Business, Energy and industrial Strategy and delivered by Salix Finance. The PSDS supports the Government's net-zero and clean growth goals. The funding



is available through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme with organisations such as NHS Trusts, schools and local authorities available to apply for grants from September.

More information here [Phase 3b Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme | Salix Finance](#)

The website states that local authorities are eligible. Town and parish councils are local authorities so the logic follows that your council could be eligible for grants under this Public Sector Decarbonisation scheme.

## THE TREE COUNCIL - BRANCHING OUT FUND



Branching Out is an umbrella term for all The Tree Council's Community Tree, Orchard and Hedge planting grants.

Your parish council can apply for trees, hedges, orchards, or any combination of these.

You can apply for between £200 and £2,000 (excluding VAT)

Key requirements of this fund are that there is strong community involvement, and that children and/or young people up to the age of 21 are involved in the planting, and ideally the planning and aftercare of the project. The Tree Council particularly favour projects which are planned with specific and special emphasis on wildlife and biodiversity.

Opened on Monday 18 July, **closes on Sunday 4th December 2022** – the end of National Tree Week.

More information here - [Branching-Out-Guidance-final.pdf \(treecouncil.org.uk\)](#)

## NATIONAL HEDGEROW WEEK 17-25<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER

- Hedges are homes to approx. 80% of our woodland birds.
- 50% of UK hedgerows have been lost since WWII and of those that remain, 60% are badly-managed
- a new hedgerow can absorb the carbon produced by a car travelling over 1,000 kilometres

This is the second year of National Hedgerow Week. Follow these top ten hints for healthy hedgerows:

1. Keep it thick and dense
2. Cut at the right time – late winter
3. Don't cut too often or too tight#
4. Encourage native birds
5. Encourage flowers and grasses at the base and margins
6. Look after trees or plant new ones
7. Rejuvenate your hedge
8. When establishing a new hedge plant suitable species
9. Link the hedge with other wildlife habitats and fill in the gaps
10. Explore your hedge

Have a look at the Hedgelink website <https://hedgelink.org.uk/grants-funding/> for sources of funding for hedge planting and other useful information.

## CLOSELY FOLLOWED BY GREEN WEEK 2022 24<sup>TH</sup> SEPT – 1<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER

Green Week 2022 runs from 24 September - 1st October. One of the key themes for this year will be energy.



<https://greatbiggreenweek.com/>

#### Grants available...

The Oxfordshire CC Great Big Green Week small grants programme supports community groups to organise local events, activities and festivals during the Great Big Green Week 2022. These should engage the local community and celebrate action and progress being made on climate change.

The County Council wants to support activities and events that empower local groups to create new connections and raise awareness in order to support new people, local businesses and organisations to take climate action.

More information here - [Oxfordshire Great Big Green Week: Small Grants programme \(cagoxfordshire.org.uk\)](https://cagoxfordshire.org.uk) on what can and can't be funded, what groups can apply and what the CC require in return.

Grants of £200 are available, up to the value of £4,400. The deadline for grant applications is Thursday 8th September.

#### CLIMATE ACTION OXFORDSHIRE – NEW WEBSITE

A new website offering practical advice for Oxfordshire people wanting to reduce their carbon footprint and save energy has gone live.

Climate Action Oxfordshire – [www.climateactionoxfordshire.org.uk](http://www.climateactionoxfordshire.org.uk) – lists measures people can take and rates them according to effort, impact, and cost. It also gives people an idea of what financial savings they can make and includes tips and links on how to get started.

From small changes such as washing your clothes on a cold cycle, creating a wildflower area or using rechargeable batteries, to recycling more, eating less meat, and – for those with a bigger budget – getting solar panels or an electric vehicle, the website is full of practical things you can do with the time and money you have to spare.

It is a joint venture set up by Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council, Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, West Oxfordshire, and the Vale of White Horse district councils, and OxLEP – the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

The one stop shop has sections aimed at individuals, communities, and organisations, including businesses, and advice on transport, lifestyle, shopping, home and biodiversity matters.

The Climate Action Oxfordshire website contains filters so that users can tailor it to their own circumstances. It will be regularly updated with new information and advice to help the county's residents do what they can to reduce their carbon footprint.

**Climate Action Oxfordshire**  
your choices matter

Individual   Community   Organisations

☐ I'm not a car driver   
 ☐ I'm not a home owner   
 Effort:    
 Impact:    
 Cost:    
 Savings:    
 Sort by:    
 Order:   

**Lifestyle**

**Adopt a plant-based diet**

Effort: ● ● ● ●

Impact: ● ● ● ●

Cost: ● ● ● ●

**Lifestyle**

**Choose ethical banking, pensions & investments**

Effort: ● ● ● ●

Impact: ● ● ● ●

Cost: ● ● ● ●

Savings: ● ● ● ●

**Lifestyle**

**Join a Community Action Group**

Effort: ● ● ● ●

Impact: ● ● ● ●

Cost: ● ● ● ●

Savings: ● ● ● ●

## CONSULTATION

### DCMS CONSULTATION ON SHORT TERM HOLIDAY LETS

On 29<sup>th</sup> June the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) issued an open call for evidence with the aim of trying to understand the impact of an increase in short-term holiday lets in England following the rise in use of rental booking websites and apps, and is apparently seeking to improve the holiday letting market for those living in popular tourism destinations. This is part of the governments post covid [Tourism Recovery Plan](#)

The review will look at the market and the opportunities and challenges presented for consumers and tourism communities.

Airbnb listing data showed a 33 per cent increase in UK listings between 2017 and 2018

The scheme could involve physical checks of premises to ensure regulations in areas including health and safety, noise and anti-social behaviour are obeyed.

Further measures the Government is considering include a registration 'kitemark' scheme with spot checks for compliance with rules on issues such as gas safety, a self-certification scheme for hosts to register with before they can operate, and better information or a single source of guidance setting out the legal requirements for providers.

A lot of villages in Oxfordshire experience the second/holiday home situation. The sharing economy can bring benefits, but it has also prompted a range of concerns. Which include the impact on the housing market and questions around health and safety standards. Other countries and cities have introduced measures to address some of these concerns and the government believes the time is now right to look at the situation in England.

The call for evidence seeks views and data on the size and shape of the market, as well as the positive and negative impacts of short term lets.

There are 12 questions which can be answered on line via this link

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/developing-a-tourist-accommodation-registration-scheme-in-england>

Alternatively NALC would like to receive copies of your responses so they can compile an England wide response. Please email to [chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk](mailto:chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk) by 30<sup>th</sup> August.

NALC will be arguing strongly that any review must include mandatory registration and strengthened legislation to bring AirBnB under the same ambit as other landlord systems. Powers of local inspection and monitoring to be delegated to local planning authorities. But they must be properly funded to do this work.

**The consultation closes on 21<sup>st</sup> September.**

## REVISIONS TO INDICES OF DEPRIVATION

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is considering how best to update the Indices of Deprivation (IoD) from the most recent publication in 2019. It is important that any future release continues to meet the broadest range of user needs, whilst also continuing to draw on the most up-to-date and relevant data available to measure multiple deprivation at a small-area level.

The Department is keen to hear directly from users regarding their use of the IoD, including feedback on its methodology, data sources and outputs. Responses will feed directly into any future planning process for IoD releases.

This may appear to be dry stuff but a huge number of decisions particularly around funding and grants hinge on whether there is perceived to be deprivation and the IoD is one of the generally accepted measures.

[Indices Futures: Updating the English Indices of Deprivation \(IoD\) - consultation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/indices-of-deprivation-2020)

DLUHC strongly encourage responses via the online survey.

Alternatively, you can email your response to each relevant question in this consultation to: [Indices.Deprivation@levellingup.gov.uk](mailto:Indices.Deprivation@levellingup.gov.uk).

**The deadline for all responses is midnight on 23 September 2022**

## EMPLOYMENT BRIEFING



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

**Chris will be running training for OALC on Conduct Issues and Employee Relations on 13<sup>th</sup> September starting at 10am.**

Conflict between elected members and employees is unfortunately not uncommon, and can be extremely disruptive to the running of the council

To help councils respond to such problem we are delivering a 60 – 90 minute interactive seminar which helps councillors to understand

- The need to address the poor conduct by individual councillors
- The potential risks to the council of litigation.
- How a council can respond to problem behaviour within the legal frame work of the Localism Act 2011, the Ledbury authority and latest recommendations by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.
- Managing health problems caused as a result of unacceptable behaviour
- Dealing with conduct issues involving the internet / social media.

Book here - <https://www.oalc.org.uk/event-detail/00000000150>

This month Chris writes about -

**Calculating Holiday Pay for Casual Staff**

Many councils employ “Summer Casuals” to carry out work such as grass cutting and landscaping work. Usually such people are employees who are engaged by the council for a short fixed term period of typically 4 to 6 months, with variable hours depending on demand.

During this period the casual worker accrues holiday entitlement, but the puzzle for the council is calculating what that entitlement is.

Historically such people don’t take paid leave during the fixed term period when they are working, but receive a payment in lieu for their untaken holiday entitlement at the end of the contract. Many Councils and payroll providers have traditionally calculated that payment based on 12.07% of the total pay earned by the employee over the period of their contract.

The figure of 12.07% is derived from 5.6 weeks of the total working year of 46.4 weeks (52 weeks – 5.6 weeks holiday = 46.4;  $5.6/46.4 = 0.1207$  or 12.07%)



This method has been challenged at the Supreme Court ([Harper Trust v Brazel](#)) and recently been judged to be illegal, as it undervalues holiday the worker's holiday pay entitlement.

Instead a Council needs to calculate a fixed term workers' holiday entitlement on a pro-rata basis of 5.6 weeks per annum.

For example, if the fixed term period is for 6 months, the pro-rata entitlement would be 2.8 weeks (50% of 5.6). The Council would then need to check on what the workers' average weekly wage had been during the fixed term period, and multiply that by 2.8 to calculate the unused leave entitlement.

Other HR considerations for fixed term casual staff:

- 1 They need to be issued with an Employment Contract from day one; typically a zero hours, fixed term contract for the summer period.
- 2 They must be given a full health and safety induction, which needs to be documented and signed by the Employee to confirm that they have received this training.
- 3 They cannot bring their own tools to work with them, unless they have been properly checked, and are properly tested, such as PAT tests.
- 4 The Council still needs to check their entitlement to work in the UK, as with all employees, and keep a record of the evidence.
- 5 Part of their induction can include a health and fitness check to ensure that they have the capability to do the work they have been employed to do. If this reveals long term health problems that affect the employee's capability, the Council cannot simply dismiss them, as this could risk claims for Disability Discrimination.
- 6 If the employee is sacked part way through their fixed term period, they may be entitled to payment for the whole expected term of that contract, unless the contract contains early termination clause.

#### PROFILE

Chris Moses LLM Chartered FCIPD is Managing Director of Personnel Advice & Solutions Ltd. He is a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, and has a Master's Degree in Employment Law. If you have any questions regarding these issues please feel free to contact him on (01529) 305056 or email [p.d.solutions@zen.co.uk](mailto:p.d.solutions@zen.co.uk)

[www.personneladviceandsolutions.co.uk](http://www.personneladviceandsolutions.co.uk)

## NALC EVENTS

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### WORKING BETWEEN THE TIERS

28 September 2022 — 12.00 – 13:15

Local (parish and town) councils are not just at the heart of communities but also the first tier of local government. Their actions make a massive difference in the quality of life for residents. Over the last decade, due to changes in the legislative backdrop of localism, working relationships between local government tiers have changed. How principal authorities engage with local councils varies greatly; different drivers often include financial, political and place-based priorities.

There is a need for effective local governance in communities. Local councils are instrumental in sustaining their communities and ensuring the well-being of residents. The pandemic only exacerbated systemic challenges, such as financial restrictions and devolved services. What does this mean for the local council sector? How can we ensure principal authorities engage with local councils

on devolution matters? And how can we ensure local councils have the resources to deliver more services?

Join us to learn more about the different frameworks that can facilitate a better connection between local councils and principal authorities and improve local service delivery.

Speaker: Tony Blake (Shared Intelligence)

Book tickets here [WORKING BETWEEN THE TIERS Tickets, Wed 28 Sep 2022 at 12:00 | Eventbrite](#)

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## EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

7th November 2022 — 10.00 – 16:00

Communities across the country need to be empowered. The government's levelling up white paper recognises the vital role local (parish and town) councils have in shaping those communities. There is a pressing need to create more councils, give them more powers to make a change and more funding to support those changes. The time for empowerment is now.

Joining one of the biggest one-day hybrid conferences in the local council sector will allow attendees to engage in a wide-ranging programme focussing on the hottest topics in the sector, such as civility and respect, climate change, community resilience, health, housing, levelling up, and representation. You will have opportunities to put your questions to speakers and panellists, visit the sector-specific exhibition, network with your peers, and share good practices.

Speakers: Jon Alexander (New Citizenship Project), Cllr Sara Butler (Mayor of Frome), Paul Hoey (Hoey Ainscough Associates Ltd), Andrew Maliphant (The Community Works) and Miriam Turner (Friends of the Earth)

Buy in person tickets here [EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES \(IN-PERSON TICKETS ONLY\) Tickets, Mon 7 Nov 2022 at 10:00 | Eventbrite](#)

Buy virtual tickets here [EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES \(VIRTUAL TICKETS ONLY\) Tickets, Mon 7 Nov 2022 at 10:00 | Eventbrite](#)

## OALC TRAINING PROGRAMME

### 1. Last call for those who want mentoring to assist with CiLCA



Our next tranche of Cilca mentoring sessions starts on 19th September. There will be five morning sessions, 9.30am -1pm:

19<sup>th</sup> September, 31<sup>st</sup> October, 12<sup>th</sup> December, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023 and 6<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

The training assists and supports your own learning, giving direction on what the modules are looking for and how to approach answering them (but it doesn't give you the answers!)

We ask new students to complete a training needs assessment before starting, also we advise you not to register with SLCC until Session 1 has been completed. Registering with SLCC starts the clock ticking on the year you have in which to complete your work.

Prior to each session, each student registered with OALC, will receive a work sheet detailing any preparation and documents needed in the mentoring session. Please ensure you have printed a copy of the recent **Portfolio Guide 2021**. It's a good idea to have a skim through it prior to each session to gain an overview of the course.

Each mentoring session will commence with a review of previous sessions and any issues arising. Followed by exploration and discussion on a specified unit from the **Portfolio Guide 2021**. This will enable students to complete the Learning Outcomes before the next mentoring session.

The cost is unchanged from previous years at £275 + VAT. Book here - <https://www.oalc.org.uk/event-detail/00000000155>

## *Congratulations!*

to Luci Ashbourne, Town Clerk, Chipping Norton Town Council on gaining your Cilca qualification. It takes dedication, determination and professionalism.

Well done!

### **2. Calling all Responsible Finance Officers (RFO's)**

This new online qualification is for you! The Financial Introduction to Local Council Administration (FILCA) is a Level 2, sector specific learning tool to support all new Responsible Financial Officers (RFO's) or officers who have a financial element to their job role. The aim of the course is to provide an introduction to council finance.



The course is in five modules based on the annual round of financial activities. It costs £120 +VAT.

More details on the SLCC website here

<https://www.slcc.co.uk/qualification/filca/>

### **3. Training for councillors, and clerks too.**

The majority of OALC training is delivered via Zoom although we will have one or two face to face training events this year depending on the topic, the location and the trainer.

Our Zoom training courses are limited to 14- 20 participants, depending on the trainer. We do training **not** webinars and our trainers are always experienced and knowledgeable practitioners, they know their subject and they know this level of local government. Our courses fill up quickly and as a consequence we often have waiting lists.

**Bookings close one week before the date of the course. When bookings have closed we will then send to all those booked on the course the Zoom joining instructions, the presentation (where appropriate) and any other papers. We ask that you confirm your attendance, no shows are annoying and a waste of taxpayer's money especially when there is a waiting list.**

Please note our revised cancellation and late payment policy which is on the website

All courses can be booked online here <https://www.oalc.org.uk/events>

date	subject	time	trainer	location
September 13 <sup>th</sup>	Conduct issues and employee relations	10-11.30am	Chris Moses OALC HR consultant	Zoom –lots of places
September 28 <sup>th</sup>	Roles & Responsibilities	10-12 and 1-2.30pm	Liz Howlett	Zoom 5 places available
October 10 <sup>th</sup>	Emergency Planning		OCC Emergency Planning Team	FULL
October 20 <sup>th</sup>	Internal Controls Budgeting	10-11.30am 1-2.30pm	Steve Parkinson	Zoom lots of places Zoom lots of places
November 8 <sup>th</sup>	Councillor Fundamentals	10am -12 noon	Kim Bedford	Zoom lots of places
November 21 <sup>st</sup>	Planning	10am -1pm	Phil Shaw	West Oxfordshire DC offices Witney lots of places

## VACANCIES

If your council has a vacancy or anticipates having a vacancy OALC has a number of resources which can assist your council:

- A template for the advert to ensure your council provides all the necessary information and has thought about a job and person specification
- Information on salary scales
- A step by step guide to recruitment
- Copies of generic job contract

- NALC publication *Being a Good Employer* (in members area of the website)
- Access to OALC HR/Employment consultant for advice or an independent job evaluation (chargeable service)
- Library of employment briefings (in members area of the website)

## PARISH COUNCIL CLERK AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER VACANCY

### Claydon with Clattercote Parish Council

Working from home

Hours: 15 per month

Salary: NJC Scale LC1 or 2 scale points 5 to 21 (£10.04 to £13.78 per hour), starting point depending upon experience, CiLCA qualification and transferable skills. 8% pension contribution subject to employee making 1% contribution.

#### 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. Duties will include:

- Managing the meetings of the council meetings and trustee meetings including preparing the agenda, taking the minutes, monitoring actions and decisions
- Ensuring planning applications are considered, and submitting responses to the District Council
- Managing the Parish Council's finances, preparation of accounts and reconciliation, payroll and PAYE, 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

#### Qualities

You will be required to work from home and attend evening meetings on the second Thursday of every other 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.

#### How to apply:

To apply or for further information please e-mail [cwccclerk@outlook.com](mailto:cwccclerk@outlook.com)





## **Chipping Norton Town Council**

### **Facilities and Events Manager**

Salary: LC2 SCP J8 24-28; £29,174-£32,798 (£23,655-£26,593 pro -rata)  
Part time post 30 hours per week to include some evening and weekend working.

This an exciting opportunity to join an active Town Council in a beautiful Cotswold town on the brink of substantial expansion and change.

Chipping Norton Town Council is one of the largest and busiest Town Councils in West Oxfordshire. The Council seeks an aspiring and initiative-taking officer to help lead it into the future.

Chipping Norton Town Hall is a beautiful Grade II\* Listed Building in the heart of the Town. This is an exciting opportunity for the right person to lead the Town Hall to its full potential in terms of accessibility, facilities, community engagement and generating funds and revenue. As well as project managing the Town Hall, the Facilities and Events officer will help deliver a year-round programme of sustainable cultural activities and events, which will be accessible to the whole community. You will need to be creative, friendly, and approachable with excellent management and communication skills.

Applicants should have previous experience in a similar role or demonstrate transferrable skills and be able to have a flexible approach to their working week

Benefits include: Competitive salary, automatic enrolment into the Local Government Pension Scheme (subject to eligibility), supportive working environment and 22 days annual leave. This is a real opportunity for an experienced and solution-focused manager, who is innovative, has an eye for detail, and who will collaborate with Councillors to meet the aspirations of the people of Chipping Norton.

**Closing date for applications is Monday 12th September 2022.**

For an informal chat to discuss your suitability for the role please contact Luci Ashbourne, Town Clerk on 01608 697142 or email [townclerk@chippingnorton-tc.gov.uk](mailto:townclerk@chippingnorton-tc.gov.uk)

More information here - [We are recruiting! - Chipping Norton Town Council \(chippingnorton-tc.gov.uk\)](https://www.chippingnorton-tc.gov.uk)

## **Sandford-on-Thames Parish Council**

### **Vacancy for Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)**

Sandford-on-Thames is a small village in South Oxfordshire on the outskirts of Oxford and mostly within the Green Belt. It has a population of about 1300 and a community centre consisting of a shop / cafe and village hall. The Parish Council own the shop and hall premises, but the day-to-day running is by separate committees. There are 7 Parish Councillors including a chair and vice chair.

**Salary and Hours:**

The role is for 10 hours each week. (520 hours per annum). Extra hours up to a maximum of an additional 2 hours per week if needed can be paid subject to approval by the Council. The salary is in line with the National Joint Council (NJC) salary scale and will be approximately £11.30 per hour (£5,876.00 per annum / SCP11) subject to previous experience and qualifications with annual increments up to SCP 17.

**The Candidate:**

We are seeking to appoint an enthusiastic person, preferably with some knowledge of the village and the workings of local government. This is a part-time home-based job. A laptop computer and printer are provided.

The applicant should be computer literate, have good administration skills and be able to manage the annual budget of £45,000. Training and support will be provided on an ongoing basis.

**The job:**

- Managing the work and meetings of the parish council including attendance at the monthly PC meetings on first Mondays.
- Overseeing grounds maintenance contracts.
- Preparing budgets, financial transactions, VAT reclaim according to best financial practices which includes internal and external audit processes.

For more information and / or a more detailed job and person description contact the Clerk at [sandfordparish@gmail.com](mailto:sandfordparish@gmail.com)

**The closing date for applications is September 18th** and the interviews would be held by the end of September at a mutually convenient time.

**ARDINGTON AND LOCKINGE PARISH COUNCIL  
VACANCY FOR A PARISH CLERK AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER  
(RFO)**

**SALARY:** 1. Depending on experience, in the range £13.21-£14.67 per hour (LC2 (18-23)). 2. A home office allowance of £26 per month.

**HOURS:** 5 hours per week (of which 28 hours per year are paid holiday).

**LOCATION:** generally working from home, but with regular physical inspection of Council assets in the two villages. A laptop and printer are provided.

The villages of Ardington and Lockinge, two miles east of Wantage, share a single Parish Council and lie within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

**DUTIES:** The Clerk provides administration and clerical support to the Council and, as RFO, manages the Council's finances. The Clerk also provides guidance on the Council's legal powers and duties.

**SKILLS:** - Basic knowledge of local government (training will be provided if needed) - IT skills including Word, Excel and PAYE tools - Good verbal and written communication skills - Strong organisational ability. - Tact and diplomacy.

Please contact the Chairman ([hugharoberts@btinternet.com](mailto:hugharoberts@btinternet.com)) if you have any questions.

Or if you wish to apply for the post, please send the Chairman a covering letter and a CV by email.

**The closing date for receipt of applications is the close of business on Friday 30th September 2022.**

## **South Stoke Parish Council – Clerk & RFO**

### **Vacancy for Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)**

The parish of South Stoke is located in the district of South Oxfordshire, within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with an electoral roll circa 400.

South Stoke Parish Council is a small active Council that seeks an organised, enthusiastic person to take on the post of Clerk to the Council and RFO. We are however willing to consider applicants who would prefer to take on a more limited set of responsibilities as we appreciate that the full Clerk and RFO role is a substantial commitment.

The full role is part time, up to 35 hours per month. Working mainly from home, the hours of work are flexible except for attendance at evening meetings on a monthly basis. Our Clerk's pay scale is typically NJC Scale LC2 (18-23). Salary is dependent upon qualifications and experience.

Applicants should have previous experience in a similar role or demonstrate transferrable skills and be able to have a flexible approach to their working week. Knowledge of local government legislation would be an advantage and ideally the postholder will possess or would be willing to obtain a Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA). Training will be available.

To request an application form or if you have any further questions or want to discuss the role, please contact Victor Meyer (Councillor): [victor.meyer@southstoke.org.uk](mailto:victor.meyer@southstoke.org.uk)

**The closing date for receipt of applications is the close of business on Friday 30th September 2022**