

OALC NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2022



NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT
STRATEGY FOR PARISH
& TOWN COUNCILS

THE HEADLINES

OALC – Chair's Q&A sessions, Hon. Treasurer, Christmas closure new copyright, bank holidays next year

LOCAL NEWS – pages 5-14

- **OCC** - transport hubs, emergency planning, cost of living, Civilian & military Covenant, 20mph, budget consultation, smoke free
- **ToE funding**
- **Oxford Station** – road closure
- **CFO transport access for Ukrainians**
- **Community building energy support**
- **Community share offer OCLT**
- **Cherwell DC**

NATIONAL NEWS - pages 14-24

- **Amendments to Levelling Up Bill**
- **Personal safety for Cllrs**
- **Declaring Personal Interests**
- **Numbers**
- **External Audit**
- **Legal fees survey**
- **And lots more...**

CLIMATE ACTION page 24

Consultation - two of them

Employment briefing - doing appraisals

Training Programme 2023

Details coming soon, topics for January 2023 on page 30

VACANCIES – page 31

- **Bourton on the Water PC – Clerk/RFO**
- **Ambrosden PC – Clerk/RFO**
- **Clerking help for Royal Agricultural Benefit Institution**



1. **Don't forget the regular Chair's session, next years dates available**

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

This one hour session for 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.

12 Chairs joined the November session:

- **Cherwell DC** – Deddington, Fritwell
- **West Oxfordshire DC** – Wootton (Woodstock), Enstone, Bampton, Swinbrook & Widford
- **South Oxfordshire DC** – East Hagbourne, Kidmore End, Thame
- **Vale of White Horse DC** – Kingston Bagpuize, Uffington
- **Oxford City** – Littlemore

The County Officer outlined two current topics:

- **Pay award for Clerks** – details were sent out by email to Clerks on 3rd November. The increase represents approx. £1 per hour increase which needs to be backdated to beginning of April 2022. Plus one extra days leave (pro rata for part timers)
- **Bank holiday for Coronation of Charles III on Monday 8th May 2023.** This will have a knock on effect on those councils with elections and when the Annual Meeting has to be held. More information will be supplied at a later date

The topics raised by Chairs were:

- Salary award for clerks – budgeting for next financial year, any ideas what it might be? No, in the current volatile financial situation it is difficult to judge. Anything between 2-5%?
- New and useful work on recruitment by the joint NALC & SLCC Civility & Respect project. The information will go in the OALC Members Area under the employment tab
- Planning as usual is a central problem for most councils.

- IT set up and security of data for councils and councillors was raised. Cloudy IT was volunteered as a company used by several councils. OALC had also had them do a presentation for our larger councils on streaming of meetings.

OALC Chair's Q & A Zoom sessions 2022 - 23

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

- December Tuesday 6th 6.30pm

- January 2023 Wednesday 11th 2.30pm

- February 2023 Tuesday 7th 6.30pm

- March Wednesday 1st 2.30pm

- April Wednesday 5th 6.30pm

- May Tuesday 23rd 2.30pm

- Wednesday 11th Jan 2.30pm

2. Welcome to our new Hon Treasurer

We are pleased to announce Cllr Anthony Church, Blackbird Leys PC has agreed to be our Hon. Treasurer. This vital role of critical friend is important in ensuring our financial processes are scrutinized, questioned and improved where we can.

Thank you to Anthony for volunteering for this role, it is much appreciated.

3. Christmas closure of OALC office

Please note we will close the OALC office from close of play on Friday 16th December and will reopen on Tuesday 3rd January 2022.

OALC TIP FOR NOVEMBER

1. Copyright of photos on your website

Please be aware that a council in Oxfordshire was recently contacted about an image in a report on their website, claiming copyright infringement. The report was not theirs and was several years old.

Please be aware that if you use images that they should be copyright free.

If you use Google Images. Click on 'Tools' , then 'Usage Rights', then click on 'Creative Commons' so you only use copyright free images.

OALC NEW ADDITIONAL TRAINING OFFER

We are pleased to announce that OALC has partnered with [Breakthrough Communications](#), who offer a wide range of online training sessions designed for local council clerks, officers and councillors.

We are currently planning next year's training programme and have decided to offer our member councils access to additional online courses via Breakthrough Communications. When we run courses we usually have twenty places we need to fill, sometimes that is hard work particularly if the subject is a little specialized. However, if the course is open to a much wider audience by virtue of it being on line then you have the opportunity to attend a greater range of courses, some of which are quite niche. Other attendees will come from different parts of the country but you will all be from town and parish councils.

Sessions must be booked direct with Breakthrough, not us. For course details and to make bookings please visit this link - [County Association Training Events - Breakthrough Communications \(breakthroughcomms.co.uk\)](https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk)

Or this link is also on our website too. Click here <https://www.oalc.org.uk/events> Available course titles include:

Council Communications and Community Engagement - 6 courses

1. Communicating with your community Part 1: Creating a communications strategy
2. Communicating with your community Part 2: Creating a communications strategy
3. How to recruit and retain more diverse pool of local councillors
4. How councils can more effectively engage with young people in their communities
5. Dealing with local and regional media
6. Crisis communications for local councils

Social Media and Digital Communications - 3 courses

1. Social media for councils: Getting started using Facebook, creating an effective social media strategy and getting the fundamentals right
2. Social media for councils: Advanced strategies and tactics across multiple platforms
3. Councillors: Social media skills

Data Protection and Freedom of Information - 5 courses

1. Data Protection for councils Part 1: Foundations and theory

2. Data protection for councils Part 2: Accountability and lawfulness
3. Data protection for councils Part 3: Dealing with data subject rights and information security
4. Freedom of information for councils
5. Councillors: Data protection training

Interpersonal Skills - 2 courses

1. Dealing with difficult people and conversations
2. Councillors: Chairing meetings effectively

Councils will be invoiced by OALC at £30 plus VAT per delegate, per course. Each course lasts 2 hours, is delivered via Zoom and is available on multiple dates.

One week's notice of cancellation required.

CORONATION, ELECTIONS AND BANK HOLIDAYS 2023

Monday 1st May 2023 is the normal May Day bank holiday,

Elections will take place in England on Thursday 4th May 2023

The coronation of King Charles III will be on Saturday 6th May 2023. Monday 8th May will be an additional bank holiday to mark the coronation.

So who will preside over the coronation celebrations in your village if you have elections??

As councillors remain councillors until four days after the election (LGA1972, ss 16(3) and 35(2)) your existing Mayor/Chair will still be mayor on the day of the Coronation. Councillors will be in place until Tuesday 9th May.

LOCAL NEWS



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. Transport hubs

Were you aware that Oxfordshire CC is proposing as part of the agreed (July 2022) [Local Transport Connectivity Plan](#) four types of transport hub? The aim being to support the active travel targets in the Plan.

The LTCP's stated intention is *'to deliver a net-zero Oxfordshire transport and travel system that enables the county to thrive while protecting the environment and making Oxfordshire a better place to live for all residents.'*

In order to track the delivery of the vision, the LTCP includes a set of headline targets to -

- reduce 1 in 4 car trips by 2030
- deliver a net-zero transport network by 2040
- and have zero, or as close as possible, road fatalities or life-changing injuries by 2050.

The LTCP plans to achieve this by:

- reducing the need to travel
- discouraging individual private vehicle journeys
- and making walking, cycling, public and shared transport the natural first choice.

There are a number of different strands to the [active travel strategy](#) which include existing cycling and walking design standards, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) for main towns such as Banbury, Bicester, and Kidlington etc. Plans are being devised and stakeholders such as bus companies are being consulted on four levels of transport hubs. These are the hubs -

1. Major interchange/Zoning Hub

Largest typology – busy railway stations, park and ride sites, high passenger numbers changing between different modes

2. Transport corridors/linking hubs

Busy town centres, busy urban high streets, business/retail/science parks – focus on services that link residents to key destinations

3. Suburban/rural hubs

Smaller sized hub connecting residential areas to larger retail/employment centres, tailored to suit local issues – suburban high streets, housing developments, large village centres

4. Mini hubs

Smallest typology, designed with Oxfordshire's rurality in mind – bus stops along suburban/rural routes, small village centres, villages with limited bus services.

Find out more by appointing a Parish Transport Representative to attend quarterly meetings with the County Council. More information here <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/public-transport/parish-transport>

2. Emergency Planning for this coming winter – flooding

Dear OALC members,

I felt I should finally introduce myself as I've been in post for a few months now – I'm Emily, new to the Oxfordshire County Council's Emergency Planning (OCC EP) team & also the new community resilience lead for the EP team – nice to get introduced virtually!

In theme with the Environment Agency's Flood Action Week campaign that takes place throughout November each year, it seems a good time to consider what risks we may encounter over the coming months & how we can prepare for these *before* we become impacted.

A key risk in Oxfordshire is of course flooding. Throughout the Winter months in particular, OCC is encouraging people to visit Oxfordshire's 'Flood Toolkit' – a really simple, yet comprehensive resource with key information about flooding that could help you keep yourselves, your loved ones & your properties safe during flooding this Winter.



Are you at risk from flooding?

Oxfordshire Flood Toolkit
your source of flood information

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

HOMEOWNER BUSINESS LANDOWNER COMMUNITY

Homeowner, business, landowner or community?
Find out if you are at risk from flooding and how to protect your family and property

www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com

Flood risk map | Local weather warnings | Flood prevention | What to do in an emergency

South Oxfordshire District Council
Vale of White Horse District Council
Thames Water

The Flood Toolkit includes, but is not limited to:

- Information about who is responsible for what type of flooding
- Flood prevention methods for homeowners, businesses, landowners & communities
- Flood Risk Maps (you can see if you're at risk of flooding)
- Local Weather Warnings

To find out more, head to www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com or [Oxfordshire County Council – Flood Toolkit \(oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com\)](#) & please encourage your communities, colleagues, family & friends to take a look.

We hope you find this information useful & I look forward to meeting some of you at various talks & events throughout the next year!

Emily Rice, Emergency Planning Officer, Oxfordshire County Council | Public Health and Community Safety Directorate, OFRS HQ, Sterling Road, Kidlington, OX5 2DU.

W: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

T: 07747 472 670

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3. Cost of Living

We know this winter will be a challenging time for residents across Oxfordshire.

As a county council, we've introduced a number of initiatives to help local people – particularly the vulnerable – as they face the combination of inflation and the rising cost of energy. More information about these can be found on our website. <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cost-of-living-help/>



But on a practical level, we recognise that for many, it's hard to know where to turn – and they need support in knowing whether they need local, county or even national advice. We're working with city and district councils to help signpost residents – so they can access the services and organisations that can help.

On [our dedicated cost of living page](#), residents can find out the latest national and county advice and the organisations that can help, as well as information on key district and city support.

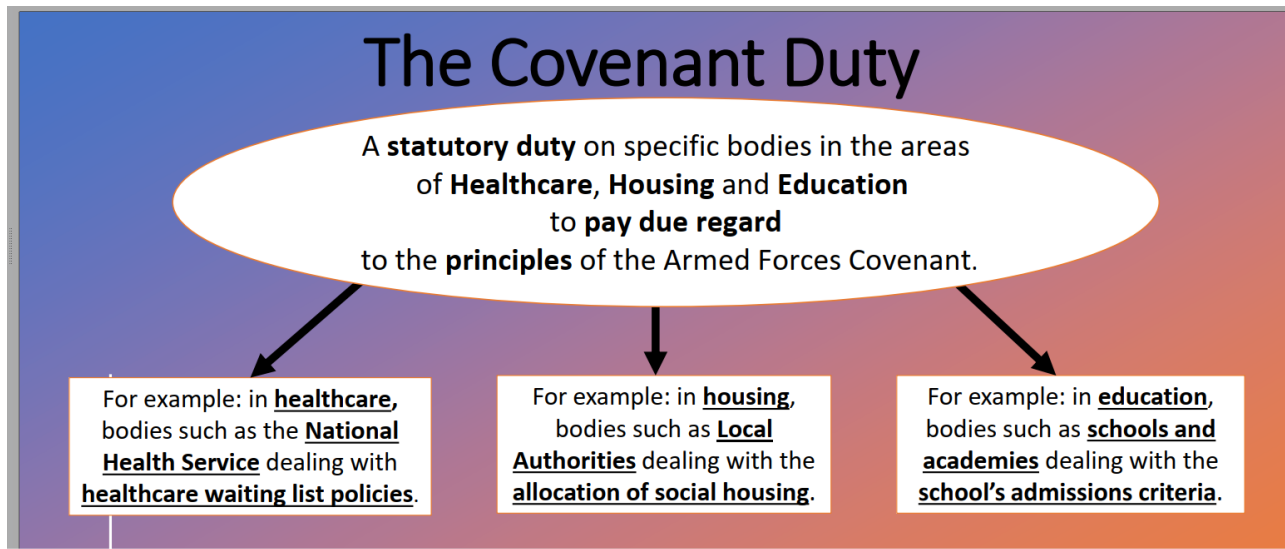
But we're also writing to ask for your help. **Your council will have received a set of black and white posters (including this one, left) which we'd appreciate you printing and displaying locally in any public facing spaces you may have, if you're able to.**



In addition, a series of posts covering a number of themes including saving money, keeping warm and supporting your family, will be shared on our social media channels over the coming months. Where possible, if you're able to share some of these messages onto your own social channels, that would be great. If you would like some content for any newsletters, websites or residents' magazines, this can also be supplied, just drop me a line.

4. Civilian Military Covenant

We're very pleased to be able to announce that **the new Armed Forces Covenant Duty will come into force on 22 November 2022.**



From this date, the public bodies affected will be legally obliged to have due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant when exercising specific functions.

More information about this Duty is provided in the [Statutory Guidance](#). (A Welsh translation of this Guidance will be published soon.) A summary of the new Duty can be found in this [news article](#), and we've also attached 'Duty on 1 page', which provides a single page summary of what the new Duty is about.

If you have any questions about this, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

The MOD Armed Forces Covenant team Steven Fairhurst-Jones - Oxfordshire County Council
Steven.fairhurstjones@oxfordshire.gov.uk



5. **20 mph A safer pace, for a safer place!**

The County Council has sent out campaign literature to you all for your council to use to promote their 20mph campaign. See below –

We all want safer roads, cleaner air, and less pollution – so we've made a commitment to help our communities who want to change the pace to 20mph.

We are starting a three-year programme to support the roll out of 20mph roads across the county.

Upcoming changes you will notice:

- 20mph areas and zones

- New road signs
- Measures to encourage more walking and cycling to help create safer and more pleasant places for communities.
- Pilot schemes

If you'd like to find out more about the difference this could make for your community, there is lots of information on: www.Oxfordshire.gov.uk/20mph

Look at [our animation](#) which explains it all!

6. OCC Budget consultation



On 14 February 2023, Oxfordshire County Council will meet to agree its budget. In this consultation we are asking residents, businesses and others for their views on our budget proposals for 2023/24, with a specific focus on savings. We also welcome any ideas from you on how we can make savings.

We know that households across our county are facing huge financial challenges. Rising prices make this a cost of living emergency. The county council is also facing its most difficult budget pressures for many years.

All local authorities are having to deal with large increases in inflation that are driving up costs and prices for energy, fuel and materials. For 2023/24, we have a significant funding shortfall of at least £44 million.

Our budget proposals for 2023/24 include £35 million of savings. This still leaves us with a £9m gap.

The county council is on the frontline of supporting the most vulnerable people in our communities. We are committed to helping them and their families but, as the cost of providing services rises and government funding fails to keep pace with inflation, we face tough choices.

[Budget consultation 2023-24 | Let's Talk Oxfordshire](#)

Consultation closes 19th December

7. Smoke free Oxfordshire

What's a smoke free county?

For a county to be classed as smokefree, the smoking prevalence for the population must be below 5%. Currently it is 11.9% in Oxfordshire so there is still a lot of work to be done. Do parks and play areas in your parish actively discourage smoking? Smoke Free Oxfordshire can provide free signage and implementation support for any Parish or Town council owned park/playground to create a smokefree environment for local children.



The Public Health team at Oxfordshire County Council have launched a Smokefree Community Fund in which voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations (e.g., district and parish councils, charities, schools, leisure centres, community groups, etc.) can apply for funding between £150-£1000 to create smoke-free spaces or hold smokefree events.

- [More information \(pdf format, 698Kb\).](#)

If you would like to apply for this funding, please email smokefreeoxon@oxfordshire.gov.uk to begin the application process.

FUNDING AVAILABLE FROM THE TRUST FOR OXFORDSHIRE'S ENVIRONMENT



If you don't already know us, TOE is Oxfordshire's independent environmental 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. Grants of up to £15,000 can be awarded and, typically, TOE's Local Environment Fund awards grants for the cost of practical work.

However, not all projects are large – **Nettlebed Parish Council have just been awarded a grant of £620** for their Wildflower Project. This project aims to enhance the floral diversity of the road verge in the heart of the village. During 2022 the verge was left uncut so the volunteers involved could see what already grows there. They have been pleasantly surprised at the variety of wild flowers, including Cow Parsley, Red Clover, Oxeye Daisy and Plantain. Following advice from a local expert, some additional wild flower plugs will be planted in the spring. With a bit of care, these should be enough to create a sustainable wild flower verge that will be a home to bees and butterflies (amongst other insects of course). As well as benefiting wildlife the project has already benefited volunteers one of whom has been so impressed he has created a herb garden out the front of the parish hall for everyone to help themselves to. Before fully established, this project is already inspiring others.



There are other case studies about recently funded projects on our website www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk/main-fund from where our detailed guidance and application form can be downloaded.

If your Council, or a community group in your parish, is planning a project, email 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 midday on 9 January.**

OXFORD STATION CLOSURE OF BOTLEY ROAD FOR A YEAR FROM JANUARY 2023



Major upgrading of Oxford Station is about to get underway. The plans include more platforms and a re-orientation of the main entrance to the opposite side of the tracks. This is a huge engineering project and is likely to involve the closure of the Botley Road from January 2023 for a year.

This will have a major knock on effect on all traffic routes into and around Oxford City, please plan accordingly. More information here -

<https://www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/our-routes/western/oxfordshire/oxford-corridor-phase-2/>

**COMMUNITY FIRST OXFORDSHIRE
FUNDS FOR SUPPORTING UKRAINIANS WITH TRANSPORT/ACCESS
TO SERVICES**

Funds are now available for supporting Ukrainians in villages and towns near your car and minibus schemes. Community First Oxfordshire is administering the funds on behalf of the County Council.

There are three pots of funds available for:

- 1. Capacity Building Grants:** Small grants are available to car schemes to offer support to Ukrainians in their communities by subsidising the cost of fuel, promoting and recruiting new volunteers, funding insurance and DBS checks. Maximum grant per applicant: £500
- 2. New Transport Schemes for Ukrainians Grants:** Larger grants are available to community groups in the process of setting up new community transport initiatives. Funding will support setting up costs including maintenance of vehicles, training, insurance, fuel subsidy and DBS checks. Maximum grant per applicant: £3,000
- 3. Community Minibus Grants:** Small grants are available to minibus schemes to offer support to Ukrainians in their communities by subsidising the cost of fares (for schemes not running concessionary fares), cost of fuel, promoting and recruiting new volunteers, funding insurance and DBS checks. Maximum grant per applicant: £1,500

For more information and application form, please go to the CFO website:

[Transport Support for Ukrainians - Grants for Car and Minibus Schemes | Community First Oxfordshire \(communityfirstoxon.org\)](https://communityfirstoxon.org)

COMMUNITY BUILDING ENERGY SUPPORT SCHEME

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) is promoting a new community building energy support scheme, funded by OCC and being administered by Oxfordshire Community Foundation.

Local voluntary and community groups are able to apply for grants between £250 and £3,000.

Local funding available this winter: together with Oxfordshire Community Foundation, Oxfordshire County Council are now accepting applications from local voluntary and community groups for funding to help them with their energy bills so they can keep their buildings open this winter. Grants of between £250 and £3,000 are available from the new £100,000 energy fund and applications were open until 21 November. Hopefully you have already got your application in.

<https://oxfordshire.org/new-energy-support-scheme-to-help-community-buildings-stay-open/>

COMMUNITY SHARE OFFER IS NOW OPEN!

**Oxfordshire
Community
Land Trust**

Oxfordshire Community Land Trust is excited and proud to announce that its Community Share Offer is now open for social investment. OCLT's first development at Crofts Court in Dean Court, Cumnor, will provide 8 much-needed community-led affordable homes for local residents on the Vale of White Horse housing register.

It was a monumental achievement by OCLT to get this site out of the ground in June and it's already making excellent progress to welcome tenants by June next year. However, interest rates continue to climb and despite generous funding from the Vale and Future Oxfordshire Partnership, the trust still relies on - and is vulnerable to - its construction loan interest rates increasing further. It therefore needs help to insulate itself by replacing some of this loan with social investment.

That's where social investors and organisations can step in and take a stake in fairer, more sustainable housing for Oxfordshire! The trust is offering Community Shares at a value of £1, offered in multiples of 250, with a minimum investment of £250 and a maximum of £50,000. The Community Shares will carry a target maximum interest rate of 3% and it needs to raise £500,000 by 28 February 2023.

For more information including our Community Share Offer brochure and Business Plan, please visit www.ethex.org.uk/invest/OCLT

CHERWELL DC

Cherwell District Council is forming a warm space network. This network of community venues will be known as **'Warm welcome'** and is a key local response to tackle the impact of the rising cost of utility bills but also encourage community resilience and involvement. Many community venues (such as village and church halls) and spaces already offer a warm space and a warm welcome at low or no cost. Some spaces offer activity, some provide a warm meal others advice support and a good chat and so much more.

We would be grateful if you can encourage your parish community venues to get in touch and remind us of what they offer (and when), so we can signpost local residents to them. Please email wellbeing@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

NATIONAL NEWS

AMENDMENTS TO THE LEVELLING UP AND REGENERATION BILL

c The Planner magazine reports on the Bill currently at the report stage (23rd - 28th November 2022 <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3155>) article here [Government tables amendments to levelling up bill | The Planner](#)

Under the amendments, developers will have to report annually to local authorities about their progress on sites, with councils given new powers to block planning proposals by builders which have failed to deliver on the same land.

The government said the move is intended to tackle the slow build-out by developers “to make sure much-needed homes are delivered”.

A further amendment obliges water companies to clean up rivers by upgrading wastewater treatment works. Ministers believe that this will lead to a 75 per cent reduction in phosphorus loads and 55 per cent reduction in nitrogen loads from wastewater treatment works across all catchments.

The aim of the amendment is to unlock more homes by reducing the amount of mitigation developers must provide to offset nutrient pollution, with the Home Builders Federation estimating around 120,000 homes had been blocked following Natural England's intervention this year demanding nutrient neutrality. The amendment will be accompanied by a Nutrient Mitigation Scheme that will make it easier for developers to discharge their mitigation obligations.

"These measures will help us to deliver the homes that this country needs, whilst protecting our precious environment," said water minister Rebecca Pow. "It is vital that some of our most important wildlife sites are protected against nutrient pollution and water companies will need to step up and play their part to clean up our rivers."

Another amendment will introduce "street votes" to allow residents to propose more development on their streets including extensions to homes. Planning permission will only be granted when an independent examiner is satisfied that key requirements, such as on design, have been met and the proposal is endorsed at a referendum by the immediate community. The government has also tabled an amendment to pilot community land auctions to test the capturing the value of land when it is allocated for development in a local plan to provide vital infrastructure, including schools, roads, GP surgeries and affordable housing.

PERSONAL SAFETY FOR COUNCILLORS – WEBINAR

As part of the Local Government Association's (LGA's) Civility in Public Life Programme, they are hosting a series of webinars on councillor personal safety and handling online abuse and intimidation.

The programme has been devised for councillors who want to improve their awareness of personal safety.

The LGA is hosting the second webinar from **1:30 – 3:00pm on 7th December**. Built around the role of the elected member, the session will offer practical advice and guidance. Included within the webinar are references to surgeries, canvassing, home visits and managing unexpected doorstep visitors.

Webinar: <https://lgaevents.local.gov.uk/lga/frontend/reg/thome.csp?pageID=550295&eventID=1586>

ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE FOR SMALL COUNCILS

This has been brought to our attention - Easy PC accounts – a web-based accounting package for small to medium parish and town councils

<https://mijan-consulting.co.uk/easy-pc-accounts/>

We have no idea how good or not the package is but provide the information for you to investigate if you wish.

ARTICLE FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENT LAWYER ONLINE, 11TH NOVEMBER SENT TO ALL COUNCILS IN SOUTH AND VALE BY THEIR MONITORING OFFICER, PATRICK ARRAN

Please see below a precis of an interesting article relating to interests and planning applications. Whilst the case turned on its particular facts, it is an illustration of issues which can arise where councillors are twin hatters or closely involved in bodies who make a planning application and then take part in the determination of the application at Planning Committee.

The case focused on the close interrelation with bias and interests. Just for you to bear in mind when reading this, if it were considered against the Oxfordshire Model Code, the interests would have been as follows:

- Councillor Hamilton as a member of the town council would have an 'other' registrable interest.
- Councillor Baker would have had a non-registrable interest which taken to its natural conclusion was prejudicial and meant that he should not have taken part.

The Monitoring Officer had advised the councillors that the interest was not prejudicial based on her honest interpretation of the Code adopted by South Somerset District Council, but the Judge found that her advice was wrong in law. This is a reminder that the obligation to identify and take action on interests is a matter for the individual councillor.

"A High Court judge has quashed a district council's grant of planning permission for the erection of five self-contained buildings to store and facilitate construction of carnival floats, after finding that the permission was vitiated by apparent bias on the part of two councillors."

CPRE (Somerset), R (On the Application Of) v South Somerset District Council [2022] EWHC 2817 (Admin) [[Click case name to read the whole judgement](#)]

The background to the case was that in April 2022 the district council granted an application for planning permission by Ilminster Town Council for the buildings on agricultural land at a site owned by the Dillington Estate in Ilminster

This followed a 6-5 vote by South Somerset's Area West Planning Committee at a meeting on 19 January 2022.

The claimant, the Somerset branch of campaign group CPRE, contended that the decision of the Planning Committee was tainted by apparent bias on the part of its Chair and Vice-Chair and therefore unlawful.

The basis for CPRE Somerset's claim was as follows:

(a) Cllr Brian Hamilton, the Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee, was Deputy Major of Ilminster and a member of the Town Council which had made the planning application. As such, he was automatically disqualified from participating in the process to determine it or was otherwise tainted by apparent bias.

(b) Cllr Jason Baker, the Chair of the Planning Committee, was a member of the Chard Carnival Committee (the CC Committee), in which capacity he public supported the planning application. He was also a close affiliate of the South Somerset Carnival Park Committee (the SSCP Committee), which acted as agent for the applicant Town Council. As such he was tainted by apparent bias.

(c) Because of these interests, Cllr Hamilton and/or Cllr Baker approached the planning application with closed minds so that the decision to grant planning permission was predetermined.

Mr Justice Chamberlain noted that carnivals had played an important part in the cultural life of Somerset since the 17th century. "They involve, among other things, processions of floats, which are constructed and elaborately decorated by local carnival clubs."

On 14 January 2022, CPRE Somerset wrote to the District Council's Monitoring Officer saying that six members of the Planning Committee had personal interests in the application arising from their membership of the Town Council or the CC Committee asking for consideration of the application to be deferred until these concerns were addressed.

The Planning Committee met on 19 January 2022. Cllrs Hamilton and Baker both declared a "personal interest" under South Somerset's Member Code of Conduct but, on the advice of the Monitoring Officer, took the view that they did not have a "prejudicial interest" on a proper interpretation of the Code. They participated in the meeting and decision and both voted in favour of the grant of planning permission.

Three other councillors declared personal interests under the Code and did not participate in the meeting or decision-making process. A sixth declared a "personal interest" but, again on the advice of the Monitoring Officer, did not consider that he was precluded from participating and did participate, voting against the grant of planning permission.

The Committee voted 6-5 to grant planning permission.

Mr Justice Chamberlain considered the positions of Cllrs Hamilton and Baker separately and said as follows [paragraph numbers correspond to judgement – the argument focussed on bias with both barristers saying that the Code of Conduct was not the central issue – the Judge disagreed]

"43. Against this background, it would be surprising if compliance with the code of conduct were categorically irrelevant to the question whether the apparent bias test was met. I accept that it cannot be determinative, but it is surely a matter which the fair-minded observer would take into account in deciding whether there was a real possibility of bias. Providing that the definition of "prejudicial interest" is a reasonable one, and other things being equal, a fair-minded observer would consider that a member who had no prejudicial interest was less likely to be biased; and that, other things being equal, a member who had a prejudicial interest was more likely to be biased.

47. ... a councillor will always have a prejudicial interest if a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard it as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the councillor's judgement of the public interest. He will also have a prejudicial interest where the business affects his financial position or that of a significant person, or relates to determining any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to him or a significant person. These latter cases are specific instances where a prejudicial interest will automatically arise. [My emphasis]

49. It follows from this discussion that, in my judgment, the Monitoring Officer's advice was wrong. Because the business being discussed on 17 August 2021 involved determining a permission relating to the Town Council (a "significant person"), Cllr Hamilton automatically had a prejudicial interest. None of the exceptions in para. 2.9(4) applied, so he was disqualified from voting.

50. In my judgment, this affects what the fair-minded observer would think about Cllr Hamilton's participation in the Planning Committee meeting. **Although he had not himself promoted the application, or voted to make it, he was nonetheless a member of a relatively small public body whose application he was being asked to consider.** The passage quoted above from [24] of Lord Hope's judgment in *Meerabux* shows that mere membership of an organisation party to a proceeding does not automatically disqualify and that active involvement in the institution of the particular proceedings does automatically disqualify. This does not mean that, without such active involvement, there will never be apparent bias. As Lord Hope made clear at [25], that will depend on an application of the *Porter v Magill* test, which is fact-specific.

51. In this case, the relevant facts are these. Cllr Hamilton was one of 15 members of the Town Council and was Deputy Mayor. He was present at meetings where support for the application was expressed. Although he did not participate, the Town Council voted to become the applicant and to indicate its support by letter. On a proper construction of the Code, he had a prejudicial interest, which disqualified him from participating in the decision-making process. When taking all these facts into account, a fair-minded member of the public would conclude that there was a real possibility that he would be biased in favour of the Town Council's application."

In terms of Councillor Baker:

52.The applicability of the Code in his case depended solely on whether a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard his interest as so significant that it was likely to prejudice his judgement of the public interest. But this is a paraphrase of the Porter v Magill test.

53. In my judgment, however, the Porter v Magill test was clearly satisfied. **Cllr Baker had a longstanding association with both the CC Committee and the Eclipse carnival club.** The application was presented as needed to secure the continued viability in the medium term of both the Federation [the South Somerset Federation of Carnivals] (of which the CC Committee was a constituent part) and the remaining carnival clubs (of which Eclipse was one). Both the Federation's constituent committees (including the CC Committee) and the clubs (including Eclipse) were said to be supportive of the application. **Eclipse appears to have had a financial interest in the outcome, because, as the application made clear, the rent it and the other clubs would pay under the agreement with Dillington was lower than for its existing premises. Cllr Baker was personally pictured in the application documents among a group of individuals appearing to support the SSCP Committee (which was agent for the application).** Nice distinctions of the kind relied upon by Mrs Graham Paul ("among the South Somerset carnival supporters" rather than "a supporter") have no place in an analysis of this kind: the fair-minded observer would place more weight on the impression created by the article and picture than by a minute linguistic analysis of the caption. Such an observer would clearly conclude that there was a real possibility of bias.

54. This conclusion is not undermined by the fact that Cllr Wale, who is also involved with the CC Committee voted against the application. I have not heard enough about Cllr Wale's circumstances to know whether his interest in the outcome of the application was similar to that of Cllr Baker. But even if it was, the fact that one member with a particular interest voted against an application does not show that another with the same interest was not tainted by apparent bias.

Mr Justice Chamberlain said that having found that both Cllrs Hamilton and Baker were tainted by apparent bias, it followed that the decision to grant planning permission was unlawful.




"Although there are some cases where bias or predetermination on the part of a single member of a large committee has been held not to vitiate the committee's decision, the vote in this case was 6-5 in favour of grant and Cllrs Hamilton and Baker were Vice-Chair and Chair of the Committee. It is simply not possible to say what the outcome would have been if they had recused themselves, as the law required," he said.

Quashing the planning permission, Mr Justice Chamberlain said the district council would now have to make arrangements to determine the application according to law."

THIS MONTH'S INTERESTING NUMBERS...

The Dept. for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities Statistical release belies the perception of invasive development despite what you might see out your window...

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1113142/Land_Use_2022_-_Factsheet.pdf

Developed	Non-developed	
<p>8.7% of England can be considered 'developed use'.</p>  <p>Use is broken down by 28 categories and by region. Developed uses include – transport & utilities (4.4%), residential (1.3%), community services (0.7%)</p>	<p>63% is used for agriculture, considered non-developed use, as is outdoor recreation, undeveloped land</p> 	<p>Vacant land use 0.2%</p>
	<p>20% is forestry, open land or water which are considered to be non-developed land as well as agriculture</p> 	

Have you heard of the Geospatial Commission?

The Geospatial Commission was established in 2018 as an independent, expert committee, within the Cabinet Office, with responsibility for setting the UK's geospatial strategy and coordinating public sector geospatial activity. The Commission

- **Provides strategic oversight** of the geospatial ecosystem in the UK, setting geospatial strategy, policy and standards
- **Holds the budget** for the public sector's largest investment in geospatial data
- **Makes targeted investments** in data projects that accelerate innovation and adoption of geospatial data applications

[The UK's Geospatial Strategy](#), published in June 2020, sets a vision that by 2025 the UK will have a coherent national location data framework. The strategy sets out an ambitious programme of activity to achieve the vision, across four key missions:

- **Promoting and safeguarding the use of location data** to provide an evidenced view of the market value of location data, set clear guidelines on data access, privacy, ethics and security, and promote better use of location data

- **Improving access to better location data** to streamline, test and scale the development of new and existing location data ensuring it is findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable and of high quality
- **Enhancing skills, capabilities and awareness** to develop more people with the right skills and tools to work with location data - across organisations and sectors - to meet the UK's future needs and support global development
- **Enabling innovation** to maximise the commercial opportunities for innovation and promote market-wide adoption of high value emerging location technologies

The Geospatial Commission is launching a Call for Evidence to understand how location data is and can be used across the economy, including the evolving technological landscape. The Call for Evidence questions are split across three main sections:

- Changing context and trends
- Unlocking innovation across the geospatial value chain
- Adoption of geospatial data and services across the economy

Each section is accompanied by specific consultation questions. Responses will inform the strategy refresh and renewed delivery priorities. **The Call for evidence closes on 12th December.** The online response form is here <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/1AL18E/>

EMAIL ADDRESSES FOR COUNCILLORS



Following on from an item in the September Update about having generic email addresses for councillors please read this guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office

[Fact sheet for councils: the use of personal email addresses and devices \(ico.org.uk\)](https://ico.org.uk)

EXTERNAL AUDITOR FOR NEXT 5 YEARS ANNOUNCED

SAAA Ltd announced on 1st November the companies which have been awarded contracts to supply external audit services to English town and parish councils, unless your council has opted out.

Oxfordshire councils will continue with Moore <https://www.moore.co.uk/sectors/public-sector/smaller-authorities> the same company which has carried out the external audit service for the last 5 financial years.

More information here [SAAA - Audit appointments](#)

Don't forget if your council changes clerk, contact details or email address during the financial year to inform Moore of the new contact details.

HOW MUCH DOES YOUR COUNCIL SPEND ON LEGAL FEES? - SURVEY

We are working with other County Association colleagues to build a picture of how much the 10,000 parish and town councils in England spend each year on solicitors for things like land transfers, lease agreements, contracts and procurement, legal disputes, and general legal advice.

Please would you look up the approximate total value of your legal services spend during the financial year ending 31 March 2022 and report the data via <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/PC5QJ6P>.

Please respond by 31 December 2022 if possible. The data will be used purely for illustration; no personal information is being collected and no contact will be made with individual councils. We will feedback the overall results in the New Year.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY NEGOTIATIONS

On November 3rd your Clerk was sent NALC briefing E02-22 which sets out the pay award for the financial year 2022-23. The briefing is in the Members Area of the OALC website. Briefly, it represents a £1 per hour pay increase which is backdated to April 2022 and there was one extra day of annual leave as well (not mentioned in E02-22). If you have a member of staff who left between April and November they are entitled to receive their back pay.

CYBER SECURITY

On 30th November Gallagher (used to be Came & Co), one of the large insurers which many councils use, ran a webinar on cyber security. Much of it was over the top for small councils but it was a useful reminder about the types of threats even your council could be subject to.

I am very aware that most clerks are employed for their knowledge of local government not for cyber threats but nevertheless a little thought and awareness can prevent a potential disaster.

The main types of threat are:

- Nation state – most unlikely
- Organized crime seeking data, money via blackmail by use of malware
- Hacktivists & individuals wanting to cause disruption for political or a particular cause
- Insiders – stealing data, innocent incompetence, grudge, blackmail. On the dark web, if you have a grudge you can hire a hacker for 250 Euros!

These threats come in many forms –

Invoice fraud – we have changed our bank account details please now use these instead –check with the company, don't use the contact details on the invoice, contact them another way to see if the details have changed. Right company wrong details?

Phishing/vishing – ask to change password/click on a link; online or by phone

Impersonation/spear phishing – targeting a specific person with information gleaned from the internet/LinkedIn etc.

Shoulder surfing – people watching over your shoulder on the train for example.

Malware – malicious software/Trojans/botnets/ransomware/viruses/keyloggers

What are the solutions? People, processes and technology

- People – training, awareness, think before you click, if it looks suspicious it probably is.
- Processes – know your system, storage/access by whom/passwords
- Technology – install Updates and security, be professional, budget for tech improvements
- And check the council insurance, are you covered if you are hit by malware? 82% of claims come from human error and it can take 7-21 days to rebuild after a malware attack.

CIVILITY AND RESPECT PROJECT – HAS YOUR COUNCIL SIGNED YET?



Civility and Respect Pledge hits 500

IN COLLABORATION WITH SLCC, NALC, OVW, COUNTY ASSOCIATIONS

an essential way for local councils to make a public statement about standing up to poor behaviour across our sector and stating upfront how they will handle poor behaviour if it happens.

Over 500 local councils have signed up for the Civility and Respect Pledge since it was launched a few months ago. While the Pledge is voluntary, it provides

If your local council hasn't yet signed the Pledge there's a video featuring representatives from SLCC and NALC explaining the Pledge and its importance in demonstrating the positive actions which support civil and respectful conduct. The video can be shared with councillors before the meeting where the pledge is to be discussed to help explain why the pledge is so important.

You can find out more details, watch the video and sign up for the Pledge on the [Civility and Respect Project](#) webpage.

* **New model councillor-officer protocol**

In partnership with [Hoey Ainscough Associates](#), the [Civility and Respect Project](#) has [published a new model councillor-officer protocol](#). The protocol's purpose is to guide councillors and officers in their relations with one another and help build and maintain good working relationships. It covers respective roles, relationships, handling concerns and decision-making.

The November Civility & Respect newsletter is out now here on the NALC website- [November \(nalc.gov.uk\)](#)

***New roles & responsibilities guidance**

Local (parish and town) councillors and local council officers have different but complementary roles. Councillors, as the democratically-elected representatives of their areas, are there to set the budget and strategic direction of the council and ensure that the community's priorities are identified and delivered.

The role of officers is to advise councillors, ensure that the council's strategy is delivered on a day-to-day basis and manage the operational and organisational side of the council.

This document briefly summarises those different roles and responsibilities, it should be read alongside '*The Good Councillors Guide*' and the Good Councillors series of publications published by NALC (<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/publications#the-goodcouncillor-s-guide>) and Model Councillor Officer Protocol. (All in the Members Area of our website)

***New social media guidance**

The Social Media Civility & Respect Guide and Policy Supplement has been designed and developed by Breakthrough Communications. This document is hereby licensed by Breakthrough Communications & Strategies Limited for use by parish and town councils to help them proactively tackle social media civility and respect issues. The document may be used and deployed by local councils as required to suit their individual needs.

The advice and guidance provided in the document are focused on civility and respect issues as they relate to the use of social media by local councils and councillors.

The document is intended to provide a framework that empowers local councils to take a proactive approach to social media. It is designed to act as a supplement to a council's overarching social media policies and procedures. It also seeks to offer guidance to individual parish and town councillors. The guidance can be used by any size of parish or town council.

It is primarily designed to be an internal council document. However, it does contain elements that could be used in the public domain.

It is in the Members Area of our website.

Training is available to support councillors, clerks, and other employees experiencing difficulties with bullying and harassment, 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

Course	Booking for Clerks & Staff	Booking for Councillors
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Resilience and emotional intelligence; what it means in practice for clerks and council officers	https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect/ <i>multiple dates available</i>	https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect/ <i>multiple dates available</i>
Leadership in challenging situations dealing with challenging situations and working with others effectively	https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect/ <i>multiple dates available</i>	https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect/ <i>multiple dates available</i>
Respectful social media; how to deal with attacks and negative engagement	https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect/ <i>multiple dates available</i>	https://breakthroughcomms.co.uk/civility-respect/ <i>multiple dates available</i>

CLIMATE ACTION

COSY HOMES OXFORDSHIRE



climate

Home energy consumption accounts for around 20% of total carbon emissions in the UK. According to Ofgem an average UK home with a medium energy consumption uses 12,000 kWh of gas and 2,900 kWh of electricity per year (2020 figures). That represents total carbon emissions of over 3,000kg per year.

These figures could be drastically reduced through making energy efficiency improvements to our homes – reducing energy use to cut carbon emissions. Plus, making these improvements also make our homes healthier and more comfortable to spend time in by addressing issues such as damp and draughts.

But doing retrofit in the right way is complex, and will likely involve significant amounts of time spent researching and project managing. So that's where Cosy Homes Oxfordshire comes in – offering a simple solution to retrofit for Oxfordshire's homeowners.

More information here [Homepage - Cosy Homes Oxfordshire](#)

ENVIRONMENTAL TARGETS MISSED, GOVERNMENT ADMITS

Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Dr. Thérèse Coffey announced in a statement on 28th October that the government did not meet its 31st October deadline to publish updated environmental targets.

The Statement reads -

In March 2022, the Government launched its consultation on targets relating to the Environment Act 2021, determined to leave our environment in a better state than we found it.

It included around 800 pages of evidence that were published following three years of developing the scientific and economic evidence. The consultation closed on 27th June. We received over 180,000 responses, which all needed to be analysed and carefully considered. In light of the volume of material and the significant public response we will not be able to publish targets by 31st October, as required by the Act. However, I would like to reassure this House and all interested parties that we will continue to work at pace in order to lay draft statutory instruments as soon as practicable.

We remain committed to our future target to halt the decline in species by 2030 as included on the face of the Environment Act, and to bring forward the wider suite of targets specified under the Act.

FUNDING FOR COUNTRY'S TREES AND FORESTS

On 28th November the government announced £20 million of funding for projects to tackle some of the threats to trees and forests in England. This is alongside additional investment announced for council tree planting initiatives which will see trees planted in communities across England.

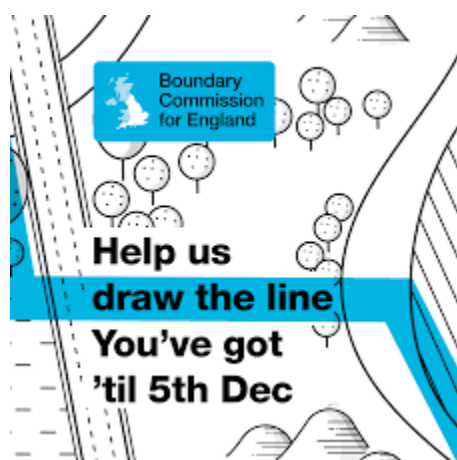
In addition, 57 councils in England have received nearly £10 million in funding through the Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund for tree planting activity and woodland creation activity at a local level. Planting will take place across the country in areas with lower tree cover, as well as through schemes expanding existing woodlands in rural settings.

The government also confirmed that the [Local Authority Treescapes Fund](#) (LATF) and the Urban Tree Challenge Fund will reopen for new applications early in 2023. Now in their third and fifth rounds respectively, both funds will see trees planted in rural areas (for LATF), as well as in towns and cities.

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/woodland-creation-accelerator-fund-wcaf>

CONSULTATION

CONSULTATION ON CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES



The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is redrawing constituency boundaries in order to rebalance the number of electors represented by each MP, and a final consultation on proposed new constituencies is now open.

A new revised map of constituency proposals, which takes into account feedback sent in by the public on the initial proposals, has been published on the consultation website bcereviews.org.uk.

BUILDING SAFETY LEVY CONSULTATION

DLUHC launched a consultation on 22 November on the Building Safety Levy which sets out proposals for how developers would pay to fix unsafe buildings. Under the proposals drawn up by DLUHC, developers of residential buildings, regardless of their height, will have to pay the levy contribution as part of the building control process.

The consultation seeks views on the delivery of the levy, including how it will work, what the rates will be, who must pay, what sanctions and enforcement will apply and who is responsible for collecting the levy.

The consultation seeks the views of all interested parties, especially councils, developers of all sizes and building control professionals. If you have any questions, please contact: buildingsafetylevy@levellingup.gov.uk

The consultation closes at 11.45pm on 7 February 2023 Consultation here -

:<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-building-safety-levy-consultation>

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 writes this month about **Appraisals** -



As we approach the end of the year, this is a time when many Councils conduct their Appraisals. It is also a time when Councils who do not do them, start wondering how they could start an Appraisal process.

The following is not a step-by-step guide on conducting an Appraisal interview, but a set of points that a council may want to consider when carrying out the process.

1. Why are you doing appraisals?

We hear many different reasons why a council feels it needs to carry out this process, these include

- Pay awards.
- Starting the disciplinary process.
- Because the NALC template contract states we have to do them.

An appraisal has a much more constructive purpose. It is a once-a-year opportunity for an employee to discuss:

- How they feel about their job.
- Let you know what they are doing well and how the council can help them do it better.
- Inform you of areas of concern and what support they may need.
- To plan how they can achieve their ambitions and aspirations.

However, there is no right or wrong reason to hold appraisals. It is up to the council to decide why it wants to invest time in the process. However, the council needs to be united on this reason. It can be damaging and counterproductive if some Members think that it is about putting employees back in line, while staff are worried about the effects on their pay. The council needs to agree to do appraisals, and set out the purpose of doing them.

2. Who does them?

If you have more than one employee, it would be normal for the Clerk to carry out the appraisal of their subordinates on a one-to-one basis. Some councils prefer to have Elected Members carry out the appraisals instead of the Clerk, and there is no reason why this cannot happen.

The big question is - who appraises the Clerk? The full council is the default management body, and therefore responsible for the Clerk. However, many formally resolve to delegate employment issues such as appraisals to a separate Employment/Staffing/HR Committee.

If that is done by clear resolution, and the Committee has clear terms of reference to enable it to carry out the process, it can take responsibility for appraisals. At the same time Members of the Full

Council who are not on the Committee would not have a legitimate reason for being involved in the appraisal process, and would not be able to justify seeing any of the appraisal details. A lot of what goes into an appraisal form is sensitive personal data, such as performance data and personal information. Consequently, the Council GDPR obligations require it to ensure that only those Councillors who have a legitimate aim in managing employment affairs can be justified in seeing this information.

The Employment Committee may have responsibility for appraising the Clerk, but it may be impractical for all of its Members to squeeze into a meeting room to do it. Instead, they may prefer to delegate conducting the meeting to a subcommittee.

No single individual Councillor can do it. Conducting an appraisal involves exercising management responsibility, such as giving feedback on performance, producing improvement plans and agreeing an Action Plan. According to case law (Hillingdon) no individual Councillor can exercise management responsibility. It has to be a Committee of at least two Members.

Therefore, the Clerk's appraisal would be conducted by two or three Members with appropriate authorisation and terms of reference.

3. What appraisal forms are you using?

There are no hard and fast rules on the type of appraisal form used. Some are based on the Employee putting a tick against a number to state how strongly or otherwise they agree with a statement or question. Others require the Employee to provide a written response to a range of open questions about their employment.

There is no saying which format is best for your Council. However, it is fair to say that senior staff prefer to give a balanced explanation for their answers, rather than just tick a box. Our advice is for Councils to get some examples of appraisal forms and ask both Employees, and Councillors who are involved in the process, to review a number of template appraisal forms and pick out the bits they like. The Council can then produce its own customized appraisal form which has input from all concerned. This can help to develop ownership of the process by Employees who have been directly involved in producing the form.

4. What are you measuring?

The appraisal process is aimed at measuring the employee's performance against the job description, which should be work oriented, objective and clear. By using this as a benchmark of performance, the Council will hopefully help the employee to develop their contribution to the Council, as well as avoid discriminatory assessment criteria.

However, a lot of job descriptions are out of date. In which case the first meeting with an Employee could simply entail a joint discussion on the list of activities on the document. Out of date tasks that are no longer relevant can be removed, or more recent activities such as updating the Website and managing the Councils Social Media presence can be added. This conversation can also include discussion about what the employee does well, what they need help with and what the Council can do

to support them. This can be a good way of easing the employee into an appraisal process, as this conversation is basically what an appraisal is.

The resultant job description also needs to be approved by the HR Committee to ensure it delivers what the Council needs, and not simply cherry picked the best bits.

5. How do you do the Appraisal?

Once an appraisal form is agreed, it can be issued to employees a week before the appraisal meeting, and they can be asked to complete it and bring it with them on the day.

This should help to break the ice and get the ball rolling.

The meeting needs to start by focusing on what the employee has done well during the year. Most people like to talk about their successes, and this is an ideal opportunity.

The appraiser should also ask what could the council have done to make the process better? Extra training, support or resources can be discussed, and the suggestions can become part of the resultant Action Plan.

If criticism is to be given, I would suggest no more than the top three concerns are addressed. If a long list of problems are issued, the employee may become defensive, and reluctant to attend future meetings. A long list of poor performance issues and/or misconduct can be addressed through the disciplinary process, but that is a different event. The top three concerns would be addressed as a Counselling issue. The employee would be asked to explain what they would do to improve the issue, how they would approach it with the benefit of hindsight, and what the council can do to support them and help to improve on the matter.

6. What is the Outcome?

At the end of the appraisal form there is the Action Plan. This sets out what has been agreed and what both parties aim to do to help develop the Employee.

However, to be effective it needs to be specific, objective, targeted and costed. What does this mean?

The plan needs to:

- Set out what changes are required by the Employee, how they need to perform, and what the Council is doing to help them.
- How will it happen? Whether through training courses, coaching and mentoring at work, distance learning, the plan needs to identify and set out how the Employee will be supported in achieving the set goals. This can include dates of when these events will happen, and where, such as specific training events and dates.
- Affording it. The Council or HR Committee can allocate a training budget for each member of staff, which is used to pay for these events.

This will ensure that the Employee can expect training and development events to happen on set dates, and know that the money is there to pay for them. As a result, they can expect the Action Plan to be implemented, and they will receive the support they need to develop as an Employee.

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

NALC EVENTS

Local councils and community outreach

14 December 2022 — 12.00 – 13:15

In the last two decades, there have been numerous attempts to reconcile public service delivery locally with the needs of citizens. However, this has not always been achieved. The landscape of public service delivery remains complex, coordinated through a mixture of public, private, and voluntary organizations. In the same time frame, the local (parish and town) council sector has grown, with around 300 new local councils. Local councils are integral to vibrant and thriving communities with a wide range of powers but limited duties. Increasingly principal authorities are devolving services to local councils, but harnessing this potential is difficult due to financial, logistical, and power barriers.

Join us to learn more about how local councils can overcome these obstacles, engage in meaningful community outreach, and improve local service delivery.

Tickets here [LOCAL COUNCILS AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH Tickets, Wed 14 Dec 2022 at 12:00 | Eventbrite](#)

Local councils and community engagement

25 January 2023 — 12.00 – 13:15

Engagement with residents for local (parish and town) councils is more crucial than ever. But not all local councils or principal authorities do this, or at least not well enough – so local councils must develop a community engagement strategy.

Most local council areas have permanent residents who use all or most facilities and services and visitors who stay for a short time using far fewer. Local councils must be able to gather views from all people who live and visit their communities to provide value-for-money services and assets and to listen and act on feedback to improve a place.

Join us to learn how to engage with residents, which consultation methods to use, and how to involve people in local council decisions.

Speaker: Sarah Greatorex (Halstead Town Council)

[Buy tickets here - LOCAL COUNCILS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT Tickets, Wed 25 Jan 2023 at 12:00 | Eventbrite](#)

OALC TRAINING PROGRAMME



Congratulations!

to Nigel Warner, retiring Town Clerk, Abingdon Town Council on gaining your Cilca qualification. It takes dedication, determination and professionalism. Well done Nigel!

Our training schedule for next year is being firmed up; in January we have two sessions planned:

1. Clerk's More Knowledge 17th January an in person event

Further specialist knowledge of the financial requirements of a council. Firstly, possible systems for 'keeping the books', developing meaningful Financial Regulations and policies, tracking and reporting, council's financial controls, independent audit, transparency, annual return, budget and precept.

Clerks More Knowledge also uses CiLCA as a base so that the clerk is well aware of the requirements and works from the start using best practice.

This is a full day 9.30 am to 4.00pm. Location and booking details tbc

2. 'So you want to be a councillor?' First in a series of monthly sessions before the elections: 24th January online Zoom 1 hour 7-8pm

An online hour for anyone interested in becoming a councillor, letting them know what they are letting themselves in for! A short introduction and open question time.

Covering eligibility, skills, expectations and some basics about life as a councillor

Booking details tbc shortly

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)

Ambrosden Parish Council – Clerk and RFO

Working from home, and attending at least monthly Parish Council meetings

30 hours per month, with overtime available

Salary starts at LC2 salary point 24, £16.16-£18.05 per hour depending on experience, Home Working Allowance and Local Government Pension Scheme available.

The Clerk is responsible for ensuring that the Council runs efficiently and in line with statutory requirements, standing orders, policies and procedures. As the Responsible Financial Officer, the postholder will also be responsible for managing the Council's finances.

Duties will include

- Managing meetings for the Parish Council, including preparing the agenda, taking minutes and monitoring actions and decisions
- Advising the Council on protocols and relevant local government legislation.
- Managing the Council accounts, receipts and payments
- Receiving and drafting correspondence as necessary
- Managing the Council and Trust's maintenance, utilities and insurance contracts in conjunction with councillors.
- Managing the Council's website and social media account
- Acting as first contact between the Council and other local government bodies, agencies and the general public

The Council is seeking to recruit an enthusiastic and motivated person to support the Council and its work with the local community.

The role requires excellent organisational and communication skills. Strong knowledge of Microsoft Office is also required.

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 Government Administration (CiLCA). Training will be available.

To apply, email your CV to tom.duff@ambrosdenpc.org.uk by 5pm on **Friday 2 December 2022**.

If you would like more information or have any questions, please contact clerk@ambrosdenpc.org.uk

Interviews will be held week commencing the 12th December 2022.

Bourton-on-the-Water Parish Council

Vacancy for a Committee Clerk/Administration Assistant

8 hours per week, NALC pay scale SCP21 £28,900 pa pro rata/£15.02 per hour

We have a new role to support our committees with their regular meetings and to provide general administration assistance in the Parish Office, based at the George Moore Community Centre.

The role would suit an individual with knowledge or experience of local government or who can demonstrate excellent administrative and IT skills.

There are currently 11 parish councillors, increasing to 13 after next May's elections. We hold regular committee meetings on weekday evenings (average 3-4 evenings per month) so the post-holder would be required to have the time flexibility to attend these meetings as part of the 8 hours per week. The remaining hours to be worked during normal office hours.

The role will primarily support the Village Environment, Youth & Wellbeing and Highways Committees in creating agendas, taking minutes and progressing actions following the meetings. Other committees may require your support as time allows. You will work closely with the Committee Chairmen, Parish Clerk and Assistant Clerk and support and training will be available to ensure that all legal requirements for the meetings are met.

The post-holder would need to be confident in liaising with people from all sectors of the community as well as a range of contractors and suppliers.

An application pack can be obtained from the Parish Clerk by emailing clerk@bourtononthewater-pc.gov.uk, by phoning 01451 820712 or by post to Mrs Sharon Henley, Parish Clerk, The George Moore Community Centre, Moore Road, Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire GL54 2AZ

Applications should be sent by email or post with your CV and covering letter by the deadline of **Wednesday 7th December 2022.**

We have received a request from the [Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution](http://www.rabi.org.uk) (RABI)

Name: Gail Yates, Operations Manager

Tel: 01865 502681

Email: gail.yates@rabi.org.uk

We are looking for a minute taker for our Council and Committee meetings for the Board of Trustees of our charity, and are wondering whether you are able to assist with this.

We have a particular need for a minute taker for an all-day meeting in Bicester on **Tuesday 6th December 2022** (next Tuesday). Please contact Gail (details above) if you can help.