

Chichester District Association of Local Councils (CDALC) Meeting 4th October 2021

Notes by Cllr. N. Taylor

1. The meeting was attended by c.15 parishes out of a potential of c.60. CDALC has apparently historically been dominated by southern parishes and there was some discussion about whether CDALC was too big and whether smaller geographical groupings might be more relevant.
2. Anna Beams has replaced Carol Smith as clerk.
3. A new constitution was approved. A copy will be circulated with the minutes of the meeting.
4. Trevor Leggo briefed the group on proceedings at West Sussex Association of Local Councils (WSALC):
 - a. WSALC has negotiated a 65% discount for Parish Online subscriptions (although the software is free for councils that insure with BHIB). He strongly recommended using the software to plot and keep up to date records for all parish assets, particularly trees. (A few years ago, Witley Parish Council faced £950,000 damages claim because it was unable to show that it had appropriately inspected and maintained one of its trees that fell, causing a lot of damage.) There is to be a Parish Online training/briefing day on 26th October.
 - b. There is a nationwide shortage of applicants for parish clerk vacancies. WSALC is planning various initiatives to address the issue in our area. Some parish councils have changed their name to 'community council', since part of the problem seems to stem from the words 'parish' – associated with the Church – and 'clerk' – viewed by some as old-fashioned.
 - c. WSALC is looking at ways to support local veterans.
 - d. WSALC organises twice yearly meetings between parishes (in 5 geographical groupings), the police and the Police & Crime Commissioner. If we'd like to be involved, we should contact TL.
 - e. The next Chair's Forum is on 13th October.
 - f. TL confirmed that all PC meetings must now take place in person. Clerks may attend remotely (one parish has a Clerk who lives in France) but if councillors are not present, they cannot vote and they cannot be recorded as being present. However, some parishes are making extensive use of a scheme of delegation to the Clerk: only some meetings take place in person; for the rest, the Clerk technically makes decisions, but does so on the basis of the views expressed in the online meeting. This may be something we want to consider.
5. CDALC's representatives on the WSALC board gave a very upbeat assessment of WSALC's post-crisis performance.

6. Reports were circulated in advance from the Chichester Harbour Conservancy (CHC) and the South Downs National Park Authority. CHC has found evidence that some 'no comment' responses to planning application consultations are being interpreted as 'no objection' and, by extension, as supportive. As a result CHC is now not commenting at all rather than replying with a 'no comment'. This may be of interest to our Planning Committee.
7. The current officers of CDALC are trying to get access to the 'old' CDALC bank account which has been dormant since 2016.
8. Neighbourhood Plan difficulties are on the agenda for the 5th October WSALC board meeting.

Nicholas Taylor
5th October 2021