

# Update

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## **THE CHIEF'S BRIEF**

**By Danny Moody, Chief Executive, Northants CALC**

My son finished primary school in July and is now looking forward to “big school”. At his leavers’ assembly awards were presented for all sorts of things including “biggest contribution to school life” and “most improved child”. It made me think of two things related to parish councils. Firstly, the sector doesn’t celebrate achievement enough. There are not enough council awards and not enough community awards. How about using your next Annual Meeting of the Council to present, for example, the “Councillors’ Councillor of the Year Award”, or at the next Annual Parish Meeting the “Contribution to the Community Award”, or maybe even the “Biggest Complainer in the Village Award”! Awards may sometimes seem trite but the recipients at my son’s school were noticeably moved by the recognition received from their peers and mentors. The second thing I thought of was that our passage through life’s stages is so transitory. My son has been at the school for seven years and has certainly left his mark on it but there were hundreds of children before him and there will be hundreds of children after him. Similarly councillors and clerks are merely the current custodians of their positions; there have been predecessors and there will be successors. The objective must be to do one’s best whilst in office and aim to leave the organisation in a better place (or at least no worse a place) than when one joined. A council belongs to its community, not to the current councillors, so they must treat it with respect and care and hand it on to those who will be winning the awards in the future.

We are a week into August at the time of writing and there has been no detectable reduction in the number of enquiries coming in. The “summer slowdown” doesn’t seem to exist these days!

On 9 June I attended the inaugural meeting of the Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership (NEP) European Programme Strategy Board on which Northants CALC has been given a seat. The board will act as the operational arm of the NEP Board for all European related business. Its focus is to ensure that all aspects of the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) strategy is effectively delivered. It will provide strategic direction to, and performance management of, all ESIF related activity within Northamptonshire. Northants CALC’s seat on the board ensures that any spending plans can be “parished-proofed” at an early stage. It is unlikely that individual parish councils will be bidding in to any funding at this level, but the higher up the funding chain

parish councils are thought about the more likely it is that they will be included in projects and programmes on the ground.

On 13 June I attended the second South Northamptonshire Clerks' Forum. It is a meeting convened and hosted by South Northamptonshire Council (SNC) and is for officers only. It is an opportunity for clerks to engage directly with heads of department at SNC and has so far proved very effective. The meetings have a very operational focus and are different from those forums where elected members (from either tier of council) are present. There are plans afoot to create similar forums in other boroughs and districts.

The most recent meeting of the Superfast Northamptonshire Project Board on which Northants CALC represents parish and town councils took place in mid-June and it was very interesting to receive an update on BT's progress in the county. The roll-out plans are ahead of schedule with activity now in full swing. There's more about superfast broadband in the county below.

Towards the end of June I had a meeting with our President and Chief Executive of Northamptonshire County Council (NCC), Dr Paul Blantern. It was a very interesting meeting at which it became clear that the time is right to re-examine the contribution that parish and town councils can make to improving the wellbeing of people in Northamptonshire. Parish councils have perhaps been seen by other tiers of local government as part of the problem but now a new role is emerging where parish councils can be part of the solution. Principle councils should not view parish councils as "the opposition" but rather as partners working towards a common goal. As the county council becomes a "smaller more enabling" council it will be essential that it works with parish and town councils who are the conduit to their communities. It is early days but watch this space!

## **Parish Councils are:**

**Part of the problem**

**Part of the solution**

On 23 June I was delighted to attend the Kettering Rural Forum, a meeting of all the parish councils not including the A6 towns (who have their own, separate forum). The relationship between Kettering Borough Council (KBC) and the parish and town councils in the borough is unlike anything that exists elsewhere in

the county because up until recently most parishes in the borough have not precepted but have instead received a small grant from KBC. The system has now been abolished but it has created a dependency that may take many years to recover from. The Forum elected a new chairman, Cllr Jim Hakewill, who seems to be a supporter of positive change and so it will be interesting to see what progress can be made over the next twelve months. I look forward to attending future meetings.

On 14 July I attended a meeting of the “7<sup>th</sup> May Group” in London. It is an informal grouping of, now, six progressive CALCs that first met, yes you guessed it, on 7<sup>th</sup> May (2008). The group considers recent and future developments in the sector and what CALCs can do to support parish and town councils. The hot topics at this meeting were the forthcoming regulations that will allow members of the public to record council meetings (more on that below) and, of course, the looming Local Elections 2015 where there is predicted to be a real need to attract lots of new people to stand for election as parish/town councillor. Membership of the 7<sup>th</sup> May Group allows Northants CALC to stay at the leading edge of sector thinking so that councils in Northamptonshire are always kept up to date without any nasty surprises coming up!

Towards the end of July I met with Jane Carr, Chief Executive at Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire (VIN). It was interesting to note that we move in parallel universes (the local government sector and the voluntary and community sector) and that parish councils are perhaps the tier of local government most comfortable reaching out to volunteers. Most parish councils understand that “voluntary” doesn’t necessarily mean “cheap”, but that lesson needs to be learnt, and learnt quickly, by some areas of the public sector that are hoping to deliver services using more volunteer input.

During June and July I have had the pleasure of attending several parish council meetings and Annual Parish Meetings and I have also conducted some whole-council development sessions, particularly on the Code of Conduct. It is always fun to get out and about and meet councillors who give their time freely – not volunteers (a councillor is an elected public official), but nevertheless unpaid servants of their communities.

Please do continue to get in touch with your queries and questions. That’s what we’re here for!

## NEW RULES ON RECORDING MEETINGS

The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 came into force on 6 August 2014. Referred to commonly as “the Right to Record” the new regulations give members of the public a new right to report from local government meetings, including parish and town council meetings.

The regulations provide that “*reporting*” means — (a) *filming, photographing or making an audio recording of proceedings at a meeting; (b) using any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as it takes place or later; or (c) reporting or providing commentary on proceedings at a meeting, orally or in writing, so that the report or commentary is available as the meeting takes place or later to persons not present.*”

So what will these new rules mean in practice? Well, the position prior to 6 August was that members of the public were allowed to record parish and town council meetings but only

with the council’s prior consent. Paragraph 3l of the model Standing Orders from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) states that “*Photographing, recording, broadcasting or transmitting the proceedings of a meeting by any means is not permitted without the Council’s prior written consent.*” so the first thing councils should do is check their Standing Orders and amend that paragraph since it is now unlawful. To make it lawful could be simply achieved by deleting the word “*not*”.

Members of the public attending council meetings is quite a rare thing, let alone recording them when they are there, but there have been some high profile cases where members of the public have tried to film and have been refused permission. Almost inevitably the motivation to film (and then publish) will be driven by dispute; it is hard to imagine a member of the public being motivated to film council meetings out of pride or community service!



**Lights, Camera, ACTION!**

In practice the new regulations may simply mean that a member of the public is sitting in the council chamber silently tweeting the council's key decisions to the outside world, but in the extreme it could also mean that an amateur film crew turns up with a camera trained on each councillor.

The more contentious the meeting the more likely it is that someone will wish to record the proceedings and then publish it with their own comments or observations.

Remember though that the Right to Record is not a Right to Disrupt, so any recording must be done in a way that is unobtrusive to other members of the public and to the meeting itself. For example, it would be disruptive if a member of the public shouted out "Sorry chairman, could you hold that debate again I was changing the battery on my camcorder!" What constitutes "disruption" is of course subjective and it would be for the chairman of the meeting to control members of the public initially and then, ultimately, for the council to resolve that a disruptive member of the public be ordered to leave the meeting.

Councils may wish to give consideration to the following measures:

- 1) Be prepared. The new rules are in force now. That means a member of the public may be recording your next council meeting. How would the council react to that? How would the council look if it was filmed? It would certainly be worth having an agenda item at the council's next meeting to consider the new rules and to decide what, if anything, the council wishes to do about them.
- 2) Review Standing Orders and any other policies and procedures related to meetings to make it clear to members of the public that they are permitted to record the meeting.
- 3) Create facilities for those wishing to record, such as providing special areas where there is the best vantage point, or providing guest access to a wireless network.
- 4) Consider the lighting and sound in the council's meeting place. Are they conducive to making good recordings? Might councillors need to use microphones? Are the chairs arranged so that all the councillors and the

clerk can be seen and heard from the public gallery? These things may be real challenges for those councils that meet in village halls and other community buildings that they don't own and control themselves.

- 5) Make official council recordings of the meeting. The possibility of members of the public editing recordings and misrepresenting the council is obvious, so it might be worth the council making its own recording of proceedings (audio as a minimum) so that there is an official copy to check against.

The important thing is to be positive and to not panic. The new rules have the potential to be a real game-changer in many ways (both positively and negatively), but the reality is that they are not going to cause an overnight revolution. There will be many practical issues that the sector will need to tip toe through over the next year, and rest assured that Northants CALC will be disseminating good practice as it develops.

The Northants CALC Councillor Panel was surveyed about the draft regulations in February and the main positive impacts were thought to be that "*Members of the public will be more informed about the parish council*" and that "*Councils will feel, and therefore become, more accountable*". The main negative impacts were thought to be that "Councillors will feel intimidated knowing their words are being recorded" and that "Council meetings will become sterile events simply ratifying decisions that are made elsewhere". The full survey report was previously reported in *Update*, but as a reminder you will find it at:

<http://www.northantscalc.gov.uk/news/2014/03/openness-in-local-government>

The government says that "*Transparency and openness should be the fundamental principle behind everything councils and other local government bodies do*" and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has produced a plain English guide for the press and public on attending and reporting meetings of local government:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-and-accountable-local-government-plain-english-guide>

Please contact Northants CALC if you have any questions about how your council will implement these new rules.

## **20 MILLION STEPS**

Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) is challenging the people of Northamptonshire to work together on 5, 6 and 7 September 2014 to reach a target of 20 million steps. The county council says *“Let’s improve our health, lose some weight and most importantly...have some fun! It’s a challenging target, but one we can absolutely achieve together – so grab your family, friends, and colleagues on the first weekend of September, enjoy a walk and log your steps.”*

There is also the opportunity to win a GoPro camera worth around £200. The easiest way to enter is via Twitter or Instagram. Simply use the #20millionsteps hashtag when posting your photograph of a walk in Northamptonshire and you will automatically be entered for the competition.

To find out more about the 20 Million Steps Challenge go to the dedicated blog at:

<http://20millionsteps.wordpress.com/>

## **NORTHAMPTONSHIRE’S BEST VILLAGE**

Around 60 villagers and guests gathered to hear the results of the 2014 Northamptonshire Best Village Competition. They were announced at the Presentation Evening Ceremony held on Tuesday 15 July at the Hunsbury Hill Centre, Northampton. This Competition celebrates community spirit and the quality of life in the county’s villages.

The village of Helmdon in South Northamptonshire was the overall winner of the competition gaining the prestigious title of the 2014 Northamptonshire Best Village. The village of Stanwick in East Northamptonshire was the runner up. Annette and Paul Hollowell, representing the competition’s sponsor Hollowells Funeral Plans presented delegates from the winning villages with cups and certificates.

The Best Village Competition is run entirely by local volunteers and is based at Northamptonshire ACRE. The Competition looks at all aspects of village life: community and social activities, local businesses, sustainability, the provision for the younger and more senior residents as well as tidiness and the welcome visitors receive. The competition, now in the fifth year of its current format, was saved in 2010 by the generous sponsorship of Hollowells Funeral Plans.

*The winners at the Hunsbury Hill Centre showing villagers from Helmdon (Overall BVC 2014 Winner & Medium Village winner), Stanwick (Large Village Winner & Overall Runner Up), Lois Weedon & Weston (Small Villages Winner), Mawsley (Newcomers Cup Winner) plus BVC Competition Sponsors Annette and Paul Hollowell.*



The judges commended Helmdon for being a very welcoming village whose residents were knowledgeable and enthusiastic about all aspects of village life and their environment. The website was complimented on being comprehensive and up-to-date with significant evidence of community participation.

David Scudamore, Chair of the 2014 Best Village Competition, commented: *“Our congratulations go to every village that entered the 2014 Competition. We are pleased that successful villages bring the community together to decide on what to show the judges and how to manage the important judges’ visit to the village. Yet again the judges had great difficulty in deciding on the winning villages reflecting the quality of Northamptonshire’s rural communities. We would like to thank every village for making the judge’s visits so informative and enjoyable.”*

The County Co-ordinator, Barron Walton was delighted with the 2014 Competition and added: *“The village of Helmdon is a worthy winner of the Northamptonshire Best Village Competition. Helmdon has been a regular entrant to the Competition and is an excellent example of the county’s rural communities. It is pleasing to see winning villages from across Northamptonshire and we hope to see more communities entering this high profile competition next year. We are still looking for new judges and I would be pleased to provide details to any prospective judge of what is involved. We would like to thank Hollowells Funeral Plans whose generous sponsorship ensures the continuation of this Northamptonshire Competition.”*

For further information regarding the competition in Northamptonshire, please contact Barron Walton on 01604 831803 or via email at [Barron.Walton@northantsacres.co.uk](mailto:Barron.Walton@northantsacres.co.uk) or David Scudamore on 01604 762230.

## **SUPERFAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

Since the launch of the first fibre cabinet in February 2014, 69 cabinets have gone 'Live'. This means that about 18,500 residential and business premises are able to access superfast broadband services as a result of the County Council's investment with BT. Parts of Weedon, Braunston, Long Buckby, Towcester, Silverstone, Pattishall, Paulsbury and Blisworth have seen new green fibre cabinets installed as part of the first phase. The second phase has seen new fibre cabinets installed in Northampton, Thrapston, Brixworth, Clopton, Oundle and Broughton.

Further upgrades are now at the planning and survey stage, representing an additional 155 new fibre cabinets in 46 different exchange areas across the county and more to come.

To find out what the deployment plans for your area are please see the map at:

<http://superfastnorthamptonshire.net/deployment-map-when-where/>

For those communities not in the commercial roll-out plans (the so-called "white areas") there is good news. NCC is in contact with lots of suppliers to promote the demand for superfast broadband in Northamptonshire and outline the commercial opportunities that this provides and is therefore delighted that Gigaclear Ltd has recently confirmed its plans to invest in Fibre To The Premises (FTTP - the optimum technology) networks to a number of communities including West Haddon, Ravensthorpe, Guilsborough, Hollowell, Creaton, Cottesbrooke, Scaldwell, Ashley, Kingscliffe, Apethorpe, Aynho and Croughton amongst others.

Gigaclear has already installed, and is successfully operating, networks elsewhere. These include in the market town of Uppingham to the north of the county and around 20 villages in Oxfordshire.

A 30% take up commitment from a community will give the green light for the roll out to be confirmed by Gigaclear and for build to start.

If you would like to find out more about Gigaclear, including information on services provided and price comparisons, please visit [www.gigaclear.com](http://www.gigaclear.com) or email [info@gigaclear.com](mailto:info@gigaclear.com).

## SHOW ME THE MONEY

The power to levy a charge, the “precept”, on local rate payers is one of the things that differentiates parish councils from other community-based organisations. In Northamptonshire the 2013-14 precepts ranged from £90 to £756,203 with an average of £35,206. The Band D rates ranged from £2.51 to £155.79 with an average of £51.25.

The average Band D rate for all local precepting authorities in England in 2013-14 was £50.19, which is an increase of £2.45, or 5.1% on the 2012-13 figures.

The Northamptonshire figures for 2014-15 show only a modest increase, the average Band D rate increasing from £51.25 to £51.72.

## DECISIONS, DECISIONS

*“Council meetings are formal events, not social occasions. They have a clear purpose - to make decisions – and are not just talking shops. Furthermore, they are public events; the meetings must be advertised and the press and public have a right to observe how the council operates.” – The Good Councillor Guide, Fourth Edition.*

The Local Government Act 1972 Sch 12, para10(2)(b) provides that “*a summons to attend the meeting, **specifying the business proposed to be transacted at the meeting and signed by the proper officer of the council, shall be left at or sent by post to the usual place of residence of every member of the council.***” This must specify the business in such a way that the member who receives it can identify the matters which they will be expected to discuss.

***Our Council values its membership of Northants CALC because...***

*“We have access to answers to all those questions that bring us out in a cold sweat and would take us hours of research to find answers to, and confidence that we have the support of a professional organisation. As a small parish council with limited resources that is very important”*  
*(Yardley Hastings Parish Council)*

The agenda is the list of items to be covered during a meeting. In law it identifies the business to be transacted. A vague item such as “*Highways matters*” gives members of the council (and members of the public and press) no idea of what to expect, whereas, for example, “*To receive a report from the Parish*

*Highways Representative on the state of the pavements in Church Street and to agree action in response to proposals (report attached)*” does. The latter agenda item is unequivocal and gives members of the council every chance to be properly informed in order to make a proper decision. Importantly it also gives members of the public an opportunity to attend the meeting and make representations, if Standing Orders provide for public participation. Perhaps the public generally support the council’s proposed actions and would like to say so? Perhaps they feel there are other priorities that they would like to draw to the attention of council? Sadly, the agenda item “*Highways matters*” actively encourages the public to be disengaged and apathetic.

Any decision made where the matter has not been **specified** on the agenda may be unlawful. For example, if the agenda item was simply “*Litter*” and the council, under that agenda item, made a decision to spend £250 on a new litter bin for the playing field after a discussion about what a mess the field was, then that decision may be unlawful and open to challenge. Ultimately it could be challenged via a costly judicial review.

The authority to make decisions rests with the parish council as a body corporate. The council may delegate decision-making authority to a committee, another local authority and, in some cases, to an officer. Section 101(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that it is unlawful for an individual councillor (even the chairman) or a working party/advisory committee to make decisions on behalf of the authority; rather they should simply bring a report to the attention of the council, which then makes the decision.

Powers that have been delegated to a committee should be very clearly defined in the terms of reference for the committee and the terms of reference should be reviewed on an annual basis to make sure they remain appropriate. The most common example of delegated powers is for planning. A council may resolve to establish a planning committee and then delegate powers to that committee to make observations on planning applications on the council’s behalf. The decision to delegate authority should be carefully minuted and then be included in terms of reference which may, for example, detail limits to the delegated authority, such as if a planning application affects the whole parish then it should be referred to full council, for example. It is important that the committee structure and any associated delegated powers are regularly reviewed (the annual meeting of the council is a good opportunity to do this).

Councils should be aware of the impact and resource implications of their decisions and make sure that the public is protected from costly and time-consuming complaints of maladministration. If in doubt seek advice from Northants CALC before proceeding.

The legal framework should allow councils the freedom to carry on their business in the same way that a child's play pen allows a baby to play freely and safely within its confines. It's only when the baby gets out that the trouble starts!

## **BE PROPERLY ADDRESSED**

By now every council should have a dedicated web address, such as [www.parishcouncilname.gov.uk](http://www.parishcouncilname.gov.uk) or [www.parishname.org.uk](http://www.parishname.org.uk). In Northamptonshire there are still a few councils that have not registered an address and they should do so immediately.

Similarly, the Clerk's e-mail address should use the same domain name, such as [clerk@parishcouncilname.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@parishcouncilname.gov.uk) or [clerk@parishname.org.uk](mailto:clerk@parishname.org.uk).

It does not look professional for councils to use generic e-mail addresses, such as [clerk@yahoo.com](mailto:clerk@yahoo.com) or [council@btinternet.com](mailto:council@btinternet.com).

It presents a real and unacceptable risk to the council if the clerk is using a personal address for their council business. The domain name and associated e-mail addresses should be registered directly in the name of the council. This is because if the clerk is using their personal e-mail address then the council risks losing all of its correspondence and contacts if the clerk leaves.

Clerks are also ill-advised to use personal e-mail addresses for their council business. If there is an FOI or Audit investigation then their personal e-mail could be searched along with the council's e-mail.

There is plenty of help available for those councils that are not tech savvy and don't know how to set up proper e-mail systems and domain names. Just contact Northants CALC and you'll be pointed in the right direction.



## **A POINT OF REFERENCE**

Parish and town councils that have appointed a new Clerk and/or Responsible Finance Officer in the past year are advised to check that suitable references were obtained and are kept on file.

There is a lot going on when appointing a new member of staff and it is easy to overlook the details. When the person appointed is a member of the community or is well known locally it is particularly tempting to forgo the formality of obtaining references, but doing so risks invalidating the council's insurance.

In a high profile case a council that was defrauded by its clerk was not covered under its insurance policy because it had failed to take up references on appointment.

Parish council insurance specialists Came & Co. ([www.parishinsurance.co.uk](http://www.parishinsurance.co.uk)) say *"A reference will be held for any member of staff responsible for the council's finances. If you are insured via Aviva, and the clerk was in place when the policy was incepted, a reference is not required. If a new clerk is employed after the policy is incepted, then a reference should be obtained."*

All councils are advised to obtain references when appointing staff. It may be a routine, box-ticking exercise, but you may be glad you did it!

## **GETTING NOTICED – IN THE RIGHT WAY**

**Article by Mike Barnes, Greenbarnes Ltd**

In an era which offers councils a rich variety of communication tools, one could be forgiven for assuming that the day of the humble notice board is over. As anyone who has ever attempted to broadcast a message to their local community will attest however, the reality is very different. As we all have our own preferred ways of staying in touch, the only sure way to get the message across is to use a variety of channels and for many, the simplicity and immediacy of the local notice board cannot be beaten.

Given that notice boards remain an essential tool in a council's armoury, what form should they take? As this question most frequently arises when an existing board reaches the end of its useful life, it is perhaps not surprising that the natural tendency is simply to replace boards on a like for like basis. To do so however

risks missing an opportunity. Whilst existing boards might have been ideal when installed, it doesn't necessarily follow that requirements have remained constant. Circumstances change, so, when investing in new equipment, it pays to start with no preconceptions. So where do you begin?

This is a task which, to the uninitiated, (and let's face it, not many of us are serial purchasers of notice boards), can appear daunting. However, as with the acquisition of most consumer items such as washing machines and cars, the key lies in preparation and research. A little time invested now in putting together a list of requirements will greatly assist potential suppliers, enabling them to provide you with the prompt and accurate quotations needed for consideration by council. Begin with the location as this may well impact on the specification of the board in terms of size, format and appropriate materials. Will it be post or wall-mounted or on railings? Are there any physical constraints on size or the ways doors open? There are other less obvious site-related considerations too. Sticky secretions from trees for example greatly increase the maintenance required for some materials. In such circumstances it may therefore be worth considering a low maintenance material like recycled plastic.

Location will also have a bearing on aesthetics. The practical and robust powder-coated aluminium board that is deemed perfect in urban situations may, for example, look out of place on the village green. Getting this right is important – remember that a notice board is the council's permanent on-street ambassador and in many instances the first point of contact for visitors.

Having settled the broader issues it is time to consider the detail. What size should the board be? Should it be lockable, accessible to members of the public, or a mix of both? Does it need a header with the council's name?

In gauging the required size, for council purposes the most practical measure is probably the number of A4 sheets to be accommodated as the vast bulk of information tends to be in A3, A4 or A5 format. Most boards tend to have 1, 2 or 3 bays, each designed to take 4, 6, 8 or 9 A4 sheets. However larger boards taking up to 27 A4s in a single opening



are also available, with door opening assisted by gas stays. Access is a perennially vexed question with many clerks jealously guarding their notice board “real estate”. However, a lack of suitable provision for members of the public will inevitably lead to unsightly fly-posting so it is worth making provision for non-council information, either in separate glazed bays which are latched rather than locked, or alternatively in unglazed bays.

As with all things, the quality of what is on offer varies tremendously and you tend to get what you pay for. It is therefore essential in obtaining quotes for new boards to ensure that what you are getting is on a like for like basis or, if this isn't possible, that at the very least you have a clear understanding of the differences between the quotes obtained.

In making your final decision, it is always useful to see actual examples in the flesh if possible. A reputable manufacturer should be able to point you in the direction of local examples of their work and don't forget to seek recommendations from neighbouring councils. Some 35% of our own work comes from existing customers and recommendation.

It would be optimistic for me to expect that reading this article will have whipped you into a notice board-buying frenzy, but if the task is looming on your horizon and you are wondering where to start, you may find the following link a useful source of ideas: [http://www.greenbarnes.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/nbq\\_web.pdf](http://www.greenbarnes.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/nbq_web.pdf).

Alternatively, if you would find it helpful to talk through your requirements, Greenbarnes Ltd can be contacted on 01280 701093 for advice and no-obligation quotations.

## **ILCA FOR ANNE**

Northants CALC's training manager, Anne Kirkland, has been awarded the Introduction to Local Council Administration (ILCA) Certificate. Anne took the online learning programme partly to find out more about how parish councils work and partly to be able to assess the programme, which was launched in 2013.

ILCA is an entry-level online course that provides those with no knowledge of the sector with somewhere to start. Delivered online it allows candidates to study whenever and wherever they want. It's no replacement for face to face training but it will suit some people.

Anne has provided feedback to the course designers about its usability and accuracy and has proudly displayed the certificate in the office!

To find out more about ILCA please see:

<http://www.slcc.co.uk/content/introduction-to-local-council-administration/457/>

So, congratulations to Anne... now to convince her to take a clerkship (part time of course!).

## **COUNCIL OF THE YEAR**

The Northants CALC 2014 Council of the Year Award will be presented at the AGM on 18 October 2014. The closing date for entries is midnight on 31 August 2014 and the winner will be decided by the board of directors.

Entries must be submitted by e-mail to [dmoody@northantscalc.gov.uk](mailto:dmoody@northantscalc.gov.uk) by midnight on 31 August 2014. Simply send a written description of a project, service or activity that has been largely the responsibility of the council. The written description must be no longer than 500 words.

The winner won't necessarily be the biggest council with the deepest pockets. All councils do good things, often in difficult and challenging circumstances. A very small project that has made a very important difference is just as valuable as a big project. Good luck!

## **A CAUTIONARY TALE**

According to Section 84 of the Local Government Act 1972 a parish or town councillor "*...may at any time resign his office by written notice delivered... to the chairman of the parish council*". So what happens if a councillor storms out of a council meeting in a fit of pique shouting "I resign!" and fails to attend further meetings? Has he resigned or hasn't he? Councils are advised to either obtain the resignation in writing or continue to treat the person as a councillor, even if it means waiting for the "six month" rule to disqualify them. If the resignation was never put in writing then there is always a chance that the councillor could attempt to reclaim his seat, which would be an embarrassment if someone else has already been co-opted to fill the casual vacancy. "Get it in writing" should be a mantra to all clerks in any case. If it's not in writing you can't prove it happened!

## **TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR LOCAL COUNCILS**

Look below for a course or event that may be of interest and make a booking through the Clerk to the Council. All councils must have a training budget from which councillors can book courses under the authority of the Clerk.

### **Training Opportunities September to October 2014**

Mon, 08 Sep 2014 10:00am

#### **Major Planning Applications and Parish & Town Councils**

Increasing the effectiveness of your response

Sat, 13 Sep 2014 10:00am

#### **New Clerks Course (Day 1)**

This course provides a broad understanding of the role and responsibilities of a town or parish clerk. This course is a must for newly-appointed clerks, or clerks who feel they could benefit from some formal training.

Tue, 16 Sep 2014 10:00am

#### **Dealing with Disruptive Behaviour**

This session looks at disruptive behaviour in the context of parish councils, where sometimes it is not possible to simply ignore the behaviour hoping that it will go away. Delegates will learn the concepts of dealing with disruptive behaviour but also will pick up practical hints and tips to make life easier.

Wed, 17 Sep 2014 6:30pm

#### **Off to a Flying Start**

This course is designed to help all Clerks and Councillors make an early, effective and confident start to their careers, by providing quality, constructive and participative training on the roles and responsibilities of Clerks and Councillors.

Sat, 27 Sep 2014 10:00am

#### **New Clerks Course (Day 2)**

This course provides a broad understanding of the role and responsibilities of a town or parish clerk. This course is a must for newly-appointed clerks, or clerks who feel they could benefit from some formal training.

Tue, 07 Oct 2014 10:00am

### **A Guide to Bidding for Grant Funding for Parish & Town Councils**

Is your Council thinking of applying for grant funding? Don't know where to start with writing a bid/submitting an application? Then this is the perfect course for you.

Wed, 15 Oct 2014 10:30am

### **Ordnance Survey and The Public Sector Mapping Agreement**

A session for all parish and town councils who currently hold or are considering obtaining a licence under the Public Sector Mapping Agreement.

For information on any of these courses please see

[www.northantscalc.gov.uk/events.html](http://www.northantscalc.gov.uk/events.html) or for further information contact Anne Kirkland, Training Manager, on 01327 831482 or [akirkland@northantscalc.gov.uk](mailto:akirkland@northantscalc.gov.uk).

All courses must be accompanied by a course booking form, which can be downloaded from [www.northantscalc.gov.uk](http://www.northantscalc.gov.uk).

You can also book online at <http://www.northantscalc.gov.uk/training-reservations.html>.

If you would be interested in a training session specifically designed and delivered for your Council, please contact Anne Kirkland to discuss your requirements.

## **SITUATIONS VACANT**

There are no vacancies currently.

If you are seeking a clerkship please contact Danny Moody at [dmoody@northantscalc.gov.uk](mailto:dmoody@northantscalc.gov.uk) with details of your geographical area of interest, how many hours per week you are looking for, and details of your qualifications and experience.

Please see <http://www.northantscalc.gov.uk/job-vacancies.html> for details of all parish and town councils vacancies as and when they occur.

## NORTHANTS CALC CONTACTS

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[www.northantscalc.gov.uk](http://www.northantscalc.gov.uk)

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