

Update

ISSUE 6/13

November – December 2013

CONTENTS

- **THE CHIEF'S BRIEF**
- **SUPERFAST MAP LAUNCHED**
- **MINISTER WANTS TO HEAR YOUR PROPOSALS**
- **SECTION 137 RATE FOR 2014/15**
- **CHEQUE THIS OUT!**
- **DEVELOPING A COUNCIL BUSINESS PLAN – 6 KEY BENEFITS**
- **THE SIXTY SIXTH NORTHANTS CALC AGM**
- **CLLR DAVID HUGHES – 1941 - 2013**
- **FOCUS ON HIGHWAYS**
- **COUNCIL OF THE YEAR 2013**
- **JOINED UP LOCAL GOVERNMENT**
- **PRECEPT DATA RELEASED**
- **KEEPING UP TO SPEED**
- **FREE TREES**
- **NN ONE**
- **A CAUTIONARY TALE**
- **TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR LOCAL COUNCILS**
- **SITUATIONS VACANT**
- **CHRISTMAS CLOSING**
- **CONTACT DETAILS**



THE CHIEF'S BRIEF

By Danny Moody, Chief Executive, Northants CALC

With only a few weeks to go as I write this until the end of the year I am left wondering where on earth 2013 went. Such has been the frenzy of the local government sector we have scarcely had time to take it all in. Undoubtedly the demands on us all increase week by week with the government expecting ever more from ever less.

There are signs that in fact it's all becoming a bit too much. The stresses and strains are not yet manifest in anything easily measurable, such as the attrition rate of clerks, or numbers of councillor vacancies declared in the year, but anecdotally I am aware that the pips are squeaking. It might be a stressed clerk telling me that they can't cope with any more work, or a councillor wondering whether it's all worth it, but certainly the sector is feeling it. Most parish councils have the capacity to do more to achieve more (e.g. raise the precept to pay for a new community project) but I think the cracks start to show when councils feel that they are having to run faster just to stand still (e.g. raise the precept to offset the government's Council Tax Reduction Scheme debacle). If councillors and clerks cannot see the fruit of their labours then it's harder to stay motivated.



Where are the weak links in the chain?

I think the next round of ordinary elections (7 May 2015 for the majority of parish councils) might be the watershed. Existing councillors face a decision: to accept the challenge and embrace the opportunity of the new local government world with energy and gusto, or to take the opportunity to hang up the boots and leave it to those with fresh vigour and enthusiasm to carry the council forward. It's a very personal choice.

Northants CALC is going to work hard to make sure that those councillors and clerks that do want to seize the opportunities before them have every chance to do so. That means making sure we provide timely and accurate advice and guidance and that we provide strong representation, both locally in dealings with

principle councils and nationally in dealings with government. In particular it is very important that parish councils are not fettered in any way when setting the precept, and Northants CALC is joining forces with some other CALCs to ensure that government gets the message loud and clear that “capping” is simply not acceptable.

It has been my pleasure to meet many councillors and clerks at the various events over the past two months. In early October I attended the Wellingborough Parish Forum, which runs on a model whereby the meeting is hosted and facilitated by the Borough Council of Wellingborough but the parish councils set the agenda, ask questions and report on their own activities. This seems better to me than where a “forum” meeting is simply the principle council “talking at” the parish councils about its own agenda!

In October I ran our popular New Clerks Course. It’s a great opportunity for me to meet the new people coming in to the sector and I was very impressed with this year’s intake, all of whom have useful skills and a desire to learn and do a good job. I wish them all well in their new careers! October is also AGM month, with the Northants CALC AGM having been held on 19 October and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) AGM on 30 October. The Northants CALC AGM, which was held in Raunds, was very well attended and I would like to say thank you to all those delegates that came on the day and supported the Association. There’s more about the AGM below.

On 8 November I attended the inaugural South Northants Parish Clerks’ Forum held at SNC’s headquarters in Towcester. 19 of the district’s 49 clerks attended, which is a very good start and I hope the Forum develops over the years.

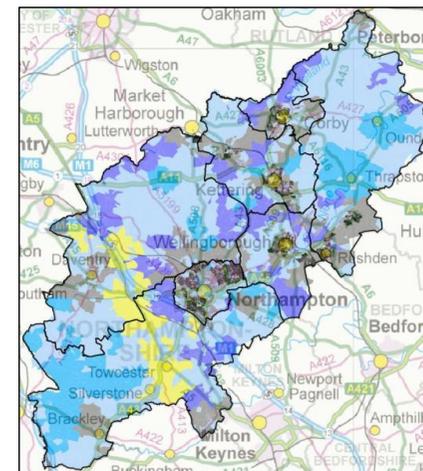
I have also undertaken some Continuous Professional Development myself, including attending the always-worthwhile Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) National Conference in Leicester and going to a short seminar on “Managing Difficult Behaviours” held in London. I learnt a lot at both and the idea is that I can now deploy that knowledge for the benefit of councils in the county. So look out for our course in 2014 on handling difficult situations... I imagine it will be heavily over-subscribed!

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

SUPERFAST MAP LAUNCHED

The County Council has released a “When and Where” interactive map which shows the anticipated roll out of fibre based broadband to support the County Council’s ambition to secure superfast broadband for all residents and businesses by 2017.

The interactive map allows local residents and businesses to search their post code and see an estimate of when superfast broadband may be coming to their area. Whilst being mindful that these expected plans may be subject to change, the ‘When and Where’ map is yet another initiative by the County Council to improve the availability of information on broadband plans in Northamptonshire. It may be the first local authority broadband interactive map in the UK to be released at this level of detail. The map is at <http://bnpc.atkinsgeospatial.com/Default.htm>.



The information contained within the map is a combination of data supplied by the market during a consultation in June 2012 (including commercial plans from BT, Virgin Media and IFNL up to 2015 amongst others), as well as community projects (including the Tove Valley project) and the co-investment partnership between Northamptonshire County Council and BT.

The FAQs on the Project’s website (<http://superfastnorthamptonshire.net/1157-2/>) help to explain why expected deployment plans may be subject to change and why plans can’t be confirmed at this stage.

The Deployment Map will continue to be updated as the extension programme for superfast broadband in the county comes forward through the Next Generation Strategy between now and 2017.

For more information please visit www.superfastnorthamptonshire.net

MINISTER WANTS TO HEAR YOUR PROPOSALS

Stephen Williams MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is inviting town and parish councils to submit proposals under the Sustainable Communities Act 2007.

He writes "*The Sustainable Communities Act embodies government's commitment towards localism and empowering communities to take decisions about improvements they want to see introduced in their local areas. It provides an opportunity for local people to ask central government via local government to remove legislative or other barriers that prevent them from improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area.*"

He notes that parish councils "*understand the local communities they represent and are well placed to identify opportunities to support the localism agenda and work with local people on key issues of concern. This is your opportunity to engage with the local community and ask for their ideas about how the community can be improved. If there are barriers to the implementation of these ideas you can use the Act to ask the government to remove them. The barriers can be in legislation or guidance or they may be the result of established practice. The schedule to the Act contains more information but the idea could be concerned with a range of subjects including the provision of local services, increasing involvement in local democracy and improvements in community health.*"

Instructions on submitting proposals are on the Barrier Busting website (<http://barrierbusting.communities.gov.uk>).

The full text of Mr Williams's letter is at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/251449/131017_SCA_invitation.pdf

To give an example of how the Act can be used a group of Cornwall councillors want to give citizens the right to recall councillors who have "*seriously breached the Code of Conduct*". This would mean that a councillor who had broken the rules would be forced to stand for re-election before their term of office ended, giving local people far greater power to hold their politicians to account. You can find out more about the Sustainable Communities Act and how your community could benefit at <http://www.localworks.org/pages/the-sustainable-communities-act>.

SECTION 137 RATE FOR 2014/15

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has confirmed that the appropriate sum for parish councils for the purposes of section 137(4)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 ("1972 Act") for 2014-2015 is £7.20. This is the amount that results from increasing the amount for 2013-2014 (£6.98) by the percentage increase in the Retail Prices Index between September 2012 and September 2013 (of 3.2%), in accordance with Schedule 12B to the 1972 Act.

Parish councils can incur expenditure under s137 where there is no other specific power. Restrictions apply, including the upper spending limit calculated at £7.20 per elector for 2014/15.

You can read the text of section 137 at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/137>

CHEQUE THIS OUT!

At long last the legislation that requires all cheques or other orders for payment to be signed by two members of the council is being repealed. The Legislative Reform (Payments by Parish Councils, Community Councils and Charter Trustees) Order 2013 was laid before parliament on 11 November 2013.

Legislative Reform Orders (LROs) can take anywhere from 7 weeks to 30 weeks to go through the parliamentary process, so don't make any changes just yet! When the LRO is finally "made" all councils will be required to have robust systems of internal control if they wish to move away from cheques. The Joint Practitioners' Action Group (JPAG) will be producing model guidance, which will be circulated when available. It should be noted that this is not the removal of cheque payments – parish councils are quite at liberty to go on using cheques signed by two members of the council if they wish, but the LRO will free up councils to use whatever payment method they choose.

The government's press release, which includes a link to the Order itself, is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/red-tape-cut-to-ease-parish-councils-progress>



DEVELOPING A COUNCIL BUSINESS PLAN - SIX KEY BENEFITS

Article by, and reproduced with the kind permission of, Debbie McGrath, Programme Manager at AMT Towns Alive.

It's quite possible that your town/parish already has some sort of Community Plan laying out its development needs. You may even have a Masterplan for your town, a Design Statement or be working on a Neighbourhood Plan.

- But to what extent do these plans help you to clarify your own purpose as a town or parish council, your key objectives and priorities?
- Do they really help your residents understand what it is the council actually does (and what it is you can't do)?

Developing a corporate or business plan for your council can bring a wealth of benefits. It need not be a lengthy process and you may even be able to secure funding to cover the costs.

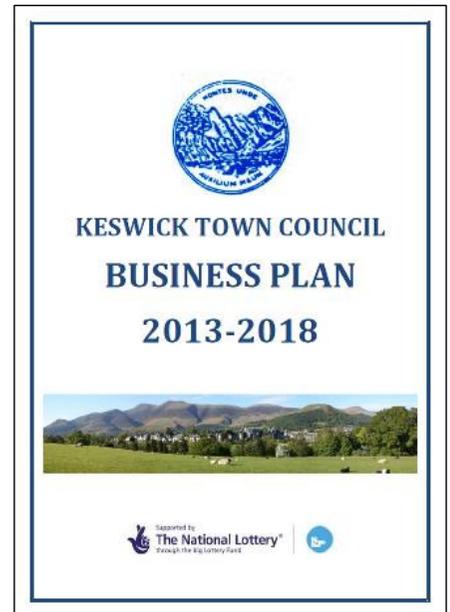
So what is a town (or parish) council business plan?

It is not intended to be a traditional Town Plan which sets out aims and ambitions that are delivered by the community and partners as a whole. Rather it is a statement of your council's purpose, values, objectives and key priorities. It describes what your council hopes to achieve over the next few years, either directly by the delivery or funding of certain initiatives or by trying to increase your influence on the relevant delivery body, such as the district or county council.

Some of the benefits of developing a business plan:

1. In the process of developing the business plan you will review your council's purpose, its values and its priorities – this review can help define the council's role, not only for your residents but also for your councillors, and act as a useful briefing document for new councillors.
2. The business plan will provide an agreed framework for decision-making, supporting the council to work in a coordinated and consistent way.
3. Since the process engages the community in clarifying and agreeing the council's objectives, the council can subsequently be more confident in its decision-making, enabling it to be proactive, rather than just reactive.

4. Both the process of developing the business plan and the finished document will help your residents understand what it is you do and how their council tax is put to good use. It also sets out what you can't deliver directly and explains how you will lobby or support others to deliver these elements in an effective way.
5. The business plan is a 'live' document. Activity listings will be monitored and updated, making the council more effective and also more accountable as your residents will be able to track progress via the updates.
6. Having prioritised activities, budget setting and forecasting will become easier, with the evidence from the community engagement justifying the allocation of resources.



How would you go about developing a business plan?

You could dive in and have a go yourselves. However, from experience we have found that this process can benefit from the input of an independent facilitator, not just to cut down your own workload but to bring council and community together and to feed in the lessons learned from working with other towns.

AMT Towns Alive has already supported town councils in producing business plans – see for example [The Keswick Town Council Business Plan](#) for more information on the process and an example of a finished plan. What's more, councils have been able to secure funding to cover the costs of development.

What next?

For more information about the business plan process and whether it would work for your town, please email debbie.mcgrath@towns.org.uk or call Debbie on 07540 723305.

THE SIXTY SIXTH NORTHANTS CALC AGM

The Northants CALC AGM was held on Saturday 19 October 2013 at the Saxon Hall, Raunds. The main attraction was the business of the AGM and the glittering array of speakers... or was it actually the bacon rolls and delicious biscuits?!

Over a hundred delegates packed into the room to transact the business of the meeting and to hear the presentations, including the President's Address, the launch of the Highways Warden Scheme and a talk on the Council of the Future.

The first business was to launch the new booklet "*The History of the Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils and its predecessors between 1947 and 2012*". The book was commissioned by Northants CALC and researched and written by Eric Franklin (ex-councillor and local history expert). Eric would take no payment for his many, many hours of work and midnight-oil so his contribution is noteworthy and gratefully received. A copy of the booklet has been sent to every council in membership.

In his President's Address Dr Paul Blantern said that "*prosperity in Northamptonshire is increasing, but there is no getting away from the pain of the cuts we are all facing*", and he added that "*whatever we are redesigning in the [local government] sector we have to do so for substantially less money. We've got to work together, and more and more of that is going on*". Paul fielded a number of questions, particularly relating to the new Healthier Northamptonshire programme.

Debbie Taylor-Bond and Richard Woodhouse then launched the new Highway Warden Scheme and a consultation on Northamptonshire Highway's draft Asset Management Strategy. There is more about highways in a separate article below.



Danny Moody gave a talk about the future of parish councils, drawing out various trends and how they might develop over the next ten years. For example, almost

all of the clerks coming into the sector now are either already CiLCA qualified or are recruited on the basis that they will study for the qualification. By 2023 there will be an expectation that every council has a clerk who is qualified or working towards it. Danny was ably assisted by Cllr Neil Fraser, Vice chairman of Oundle Town Council (4,109 electors) and Cllr Nick Richards, Chairman of Wilbarston Parish Council (606 electors) who both gave their perspective on how their councils might develop over the next ten years.

It wouldn't be an AGM though without conducting routine business and the meeting appointed eight directors to the board of the Association and voted on a small inflationary increase in membership subscription fees for 2014/15. Interestingly there were no motions for debate put forward by member councils this year, which is something that we would like to reverse next year because the AGM is a meeting of member councils, for member councils.

The AGM is also a chance for celebration and it was a delight to give the Came & Co Northants CALC Council of the Year Award to Duston Parish Council. The full commendation appears in a separate article below. The AGM also recognised Viv Hartley, Emma Baker, Theresa Goss, Philippa Page, Fiona Keable, Sally Willis and Lynn Lavender, all of whom have achieved the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) qualification since the 2012 AGM. Congratulations one and all.

The date for the next AGM is Saturday 18 October 2014, so why not put the date in your new diary now?! The bacon rolls alone make it a worthwhile morning!

CLLR DAVID HUGHES – 1941 - 2013

David Hughes, councillor at Billing Parish Council and erstwhile member of the Northants CALC County Committee for over thirty years died suddenly on 30 October 2013 having suffered a heart attack at home. David's funeral took place at Milton Crematorium on the 11 November with most of Billing Parish Council in attendance. David leaves behind wife Debbie and the Association sends its best wishes to her.

David had only recently retired from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and he and Debbie had just purchased a caravan in Market Deeping where they planned to enjoy retirement together. Rest in peace David.

FOCUS ON HIGHWAYS

Highway Warden Scheme

Some councillors and clerks have been around long enough to remember the old Parish Highways Representative Scheme that was run actively under John Robinson when Atkins was the highways contractor for the county. The scheme had all but fizzled out but is now reborn as the Highway Wardens Scheme (HWS).

A Highway Warden is a volunteer that is supported by their Parish/Town Council or Local Community Group and Northamptonshire Highways. A Highway Warden is the eyes and ears on the road network within their local area and a key point of contact between their local community and Northamptonshire Highways. A Highway Warden is a vital link to build collaborative relationships.

The role of a Highway Warden includes:

- Acting as a liaison between the local community and Northants Highways
- Providing communication and filter for local concerns over highway issues
- Raising awareness of planned work across the road and pavement network
- Provide feedback to parish/town council meetings

It is hoped that every single parish council, town council and parish meeting in Northamptonshire will appoint a Highway Warden. It could be a councillor, a clerk or other member of staff, or even a member of the public. To download an appointment form and for more details please visit:

<http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/Transport/roads/Pages/Highway-Wardens.aspx>

Asset Management Consultation

All parish and town councils should have received in October a letter from Northamptonshire Highways about a consultation on the draft Asset Management Strategy. The consultation was about changes to future policy in relation to highway maintenance and standards and consisted of seven questions, ranging from changes in road classifications to reducing street furniture. The [consultation](#) ran until 1 December and the results are expected to be published by the end of the financial year.

Network Management Plan

Northamptonshire is a growing county. There are new developments being constructed which create more dwellings, increase demand on utility services and put ever increasing numbers of vehicles on the road.

These changes to the county require a proactive approach to the way the highway network is managed.

With the current pressures being placed on local authority budgets the need to be effectively and efficiently managing the highway network has never been greater.

The objectives, policies and standards required to effectively deliver services and manage the county's highway network are detailed in Northamptonshire County Council's Network Management Plan. A copy can be downloaded from:

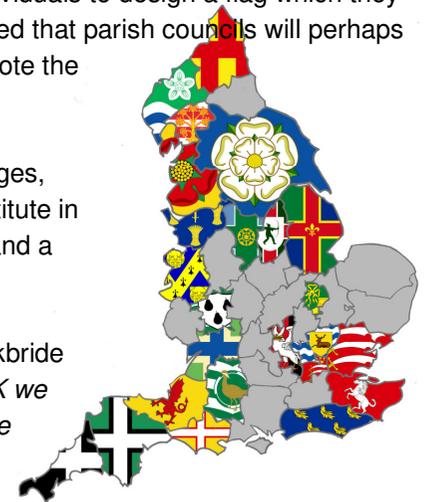
<http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/Transport/roads/Pages/Howthenetworkismanaged.aspx>

FLY THE FLAG FOR NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

A competition has been launched to find a flag for Northamptonshire. The contest is open to schools, community groups or individuals to design a flag which they believe best represents the county. It is hoped that parish councils will perhaps enter themselves but will certainly help promote the competition in their communities.

All entries will be assessed by a panel of judges, including a representative from The Flag Institute in London and a Professor in cultural studies, and a final five designs will be put to a public vote.

Chairman of the county council Cllr Joan Kirkbride said: "Over the past two years here in the UK we have had ample opportunities to get out there and wave flags. Whether it has been to celebrate the Royal Wedding, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee or supporting our Olympic heroes.



“The Parliamentary Flags and Heraldry Committee is now encouraging communities across the country to get involved and register their own flags. We think this is a golden opportunity for Northamptonshire to find a flag we can be proud of.

“We are looking for a flag which can help raise recognition of Northamptonshire across the country, express pride in our local community and celebrate the heritage and culture of our corner of the country.”

For further information and details of how to enter please visit:

<http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/news/Latestnews/Pages/competition-design-a-flag-for-the-county.aspx>

The closing date for entries is Friday 17 January 2014. The short list will be drawn up and the five best designs will be put to the public vote from 24 February to 21 April with the winner being announced at the beginning of May 2014.

COUNCIL OF THE YEAR 2013

The winner of the Came & Co. Northants CALC Council of the Year for 2013 is Duston Parish Council.

This council has clearly had a very busy year. A year during which several projects came to fruition that the council has been working on for a long time.

Duston is a large council (12,849 electors) that has spent a lot of money delivering significant projects, but actually it isn't the cash value of the projects or the depth of the council's pockets that earned the award.

The whole council team deserves a mention but I would pick out three people in particular. For nothing is ever achieved without dedication, determination and leadership.

Leadership was provided by Cllr Alan Earle, Chairman of the Council, who encouraged (or just told!) everyone to keep going even in the face of adversity. Not always playing things strictly by the local government procedural law book – but always making sure that things moved forward.

Determination was provided by Cllr Mrs Margaret Edwards, a leading councillor who had a dream and was insistent on seeing that dream realised, even when other people fell by the wayside or said that it couldn't be done.

And dedication was provided by Lynn Lavender, the Council's Clerk and Executive Officer whose job, as we all know, is simply stated as “implementing the decisions of the Council”, which sounds so straightforward but is anything but in reality!

So even though the council has brought forward projects that may be beyond the reach of most parish councils this award is for the dedication, determination and leadership shown in bringing those projects forward, and those qualities are present in abundance in parish councils across Northamptonshire. No matter what the scale of your projects, if your council has the same ingredients then you can go far.



Alan Earle (centre) receives the award from Paul Blantern (left) and Dave Palmer.

The award was presented at the AGM by the President of Northants CALC, Dr Paul Blantern and Came & Co Regional Account Executive, Dave Palmer.

JOINED UP LOCAL GOVERNMENT

To paraphrase a famous Neil Kinnock speech, “It's not my place, it's not your place... it's **our** place!”

Don Foster MP, in one of his last actions before being reshuffled in October, launched the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG's) “**Our Place!** Programme” and invited parish councils to take part.

Over the past year, twelve neighbourhoods have been using a community-led approach, working closely with public services and others at a very local level to tackle local issues. DCLG is able to offer support – both advisory and financial – to help.

The results so far show that working in this way can lead to:

- More powerful communities - One Ilfracombe will manage a £1m devolved budget, alongside a £400k aligned budget, to provide place-based services – reducing duplication and bureaucracy.
- Better services - Police officers and the community in Balsall Heath are developing fortnightly street patrols with residents, and priority policing actions to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. Balsall Heath's analysis shows that at a cost of £35,000 per year, it is shown to produce £547,000 worth of benefits over 5 years.
- Stretching neighbourhood spend. Heath volunteers in Poplar aim to save the NHS a potential £4m over 5 years by promoting healthy lifestyles and improving treatment of those at risk of diabetes. Around 50 Health Champions will recruit local people to become Health Trainers, who will spend 3½ hours a week supporting people with long-term conditions like diabetes.

The twelve pilots span the country – from Ilfracombe to Newcastle, from inner cities and suburbs, to housing estates and small towns. They took very different approaches in developing their proposals, to reflect the characteristics, priorities and needs of the individual neighbourhoods, and were led by a variety of bodies – from Local Authorities to Neighbourhood Forums - but all of them saw local partners working together to tackle the issues which mattered most to local people. Ilfracombe and Haverhill Town Councils in particular have already demonstrated the huge benefits the Our Place! approach can bring.

The Our Place! Report (<http://mycommunityrights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Our-Place-and-what-the-pilot-areas-achieved.pdf>) shows some of the ways that the pilots are bringing about a change to the services delivered in their neighbourhoods. Parish and town councils will already be working closely with their communities – but the pilots found this approach provided an opportunity to be bolder. In ensuring the community, public and voluntary sectors and business pulled together to tackle local issues – more could be done for less. It is therefore DCLG's intention to encourage take up of this approach as far and as wide as possible. Through the Our Place! Programme DCLG will be making support available to help the first 100 neighbourhoods get started and will be setting up a Network of Champions drawn from all sectors, to provide support and advice.

To explore how the Our Place! approach could help your council better engage and empower your communities and deliver improved services for less please email OurPlace@communities.gsi.gov.uk.

DCLG has also published “*You've got the power*” a quick and simple step by step summary to the full range of community rights which includes Neighbourhood Planning, Community Right to Build, Community Right to Bid, Community Shares, Our Place!, Community Right to Challenge, Right to Manage & Community Cashback and Right to Reclaim land. The guide can be downloaded at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youve-got-the-power-a-quick-and-simple-guide-to-community-rights>

Don Foster MP encourages you to seize these opportunities and take advantage of the support, including funding, that is available until March 2015.

(Article adapted from an open letter sent by Don Foster MP “to all parish councils” at the end of September 2013).

PRECEPT DATA RELEASED

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has collected Council Tax data on individual parishes for the first time. In previous releases this data was reported at local authority level only.

The key points from the release are:

- 8,805 local precepting authorities instructed their billing authority to collect Council Tax on their behalf in 2013 to 2014
- The total Council Tax collected on their behalf in 2013 to 2014 was £367 million
- The average band D Council Tax bill for local precepting authorities in 2013 to 2014 was £50.19, which is an increase of £2.45, or 5.1% on the 2012 to 2013 figures

The full analysis, including the data for every parish council, is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parishes-and-other-local-precepting-authorities-in-england-2013-to-2014>.

KEEPING UP TO SPEED

Workers in all walks of life should be given opportunities to grow and develop and nowhere is this more important than in parish councils. Being a Clerk to a Council can be an isolating experience, especially in councils where the clerk is the only employee, and there is a need for all clerks to keep themselves up to date both technically (e.g. legislative changes, new financial procedures etc) and politically (e.g. relationships with principle councils and awareness of new government programmes).

Luckily, it's quite easy for clerks to keep themselves up to date. The support and information is out there and readily available and all it needs is the time, inclination and dedication to access it.

All councils should be members (corporately) of their County Association, through which the clerk has access to a wealth of advice and guidance, and every clerk should be a member (personally) of the local branch of the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC). Just reading the publications available through each organisation will give clerks a real head start and both organisations offer frequent Continuous Professional Development opportunities, from local training events to national conferences and seminars.

All councils need, and should expect to have, a clerk who is knowledgeable, up to date, and aware of prevailing risks and opportunities. Councils should pay for their clerk's [subscription to the SLCC](#), which is based on Gross Annual Salary. If the clerk works for more than one council it is based on Gross Annual Salary from all councils and the cost can be shared between the councils.

Councils must see that to have an efficient and effective council they need to invest in their clerk. Giving clerks the time and space to develop themselves and covering the cost of their professional memberships and training will pay dividends in the long run.

And clerks must see that where a council is willing to support them they have a professional responsibility to engage. Every opportunity for development must be grasped. In fact, if you are a clerk reading this article you are keeping yourself up to speed right now!

FREE TREES

By Phil Jones, Climate Change Project Officer, Northamptonshire County Council

***** Apply before 10th January 2014 to receive a free tree pack for your parish*****

Building on the success of the scheme run over the last two years Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) is continuing to work with the Woodland Trust to provide free tree packs to communities in Northamptonshire. During the past two years nearly 200 free packs have gone out to communities across Northamptonshire. In conjunction with a parallel project being run with schools and farmers our partnership with the Woodland Trust has resulted in 88,000 trees planted in the County over the past two years.



Forming part of our efforts to reduce carbon emissions across the county and ensure that Northamptonshire is resilient to the effects of climate change; this project offers a brilliant opportunity to get involved with free tree planting in your area!

Who can apply?

Applications are open to Parish Councils, community and youth groups (groups do not have to be officially recognised but must be not-for-profit) and schools. Trees must be planted on publicly accessible sites and you must have permission from the landowner. You must have a suitable and safe site.

Choose from three different pack sizes and six different themed mixes:

- Small 30 saplings - Perfect as a starter pack for creating a small copse or hedgerow.
- Medium 105 saplings - Ideal for planting in small groups or a hedge (30m long).
- Large 420 saplings - Ideal for creating a longer hedge (120m) or block of trees of approx. 1 acre.

1. Harvest - Hazel, blackthorn, crab apple, elder and dog rose.
2. Wildlife - Blackthorn, hawthorn, hazel, silver birch, rowan and common oak.
3. Colour - Hawthorn, hazel, silver birch, rowan, wild cherry and dogwood.
4. Working - Silver birch, wild cherry, common oak, grey willow, rowan and field maple.
5. Wetland - Downy birch, goat willow, osier, rowan, hawthorn and hazel.
6. Wild Wood - Downy birch, rowan, hazel, hawthorn, holly and crab apple.

NB - Please note, some species may change subject to availability

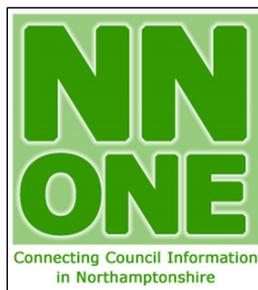
For more information and to apply, please see the Woodland Trust website:

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/communitytrees

For questions relating to the community packs, please email the Woodland Trust at: communitytrees@woodlandtrust.org.uk

NN ONE

NN One is a project aimed at increasing the capacity of Local Councils in Northamptonshire. New technology will enable local councils to become more efficient and effective. All tiers of authorities will benefit from improved communications.



NN One will replicate the proven 'Leicestershire Model' which joins up websites and back end systems across the three tiers of local government to provide a **county-wide**:

- View of undecided planning applications
- Database of local council contacts
- A – Z of Services directory (combines parish, district and county services)

NCALC is very proud to be the lead partner on this innovative partnership project in Northamptonshire. Local councils in Northants will be able to enjoy the many benefits that have been enjoyed in Leicestershire and Rutland for several years.

As parish and town councils become more important as service providers, having this electronic service delivery infrastructure in place will contribute to joining-up the three tiers of local government in Northamptonshire.

Northants CALC has partnered with 2commune Limited to deliver this project and recently launched our new website using their technology known as "UK Local Councils (UKLC)".

For local councils, UKLC is more than just a set of web technologies. It provides a dynamic community where sites are reviewed annually, to keep them efficient and effective. Users are fully trained and supported to make the most of their sites.

Parish and town councils looking for a new website should contact admin@2commune.com for more information on how to become an NN One partner.

For more information on 'NN One' visit www.northantscalc.gov.uk/nnone.

A CAUTIONARY TALE

A parish council in West Sussex has been left red-faced after missing the chance to comment formally on a proposed fracking development. A West Sussex County Council planning officer wrote to the parish council in January 2010 drawing attention to the application for the fracking site, saying that if no comments were received by 18 February "it will be assumed that the parish council has no objection".

The council claimed to have discussed the matter at its February meeting but there is no record of any such discussion in the minutes. The only reference in the minutes comes after a debate on an unrelated application for a carport, in a brief sentence noting that a councillor "mentioned" the fracking application. There was certainly no resolution to submit a view on the application. The County Council approved the application because of the lack of any evidence of public objection.

Parish councils must make sure that any business to be transacted is specified on the agenda and that resolutions are clear, concise and unambiguous. I think this parish council will make sure that everything is fracking minuted in the future!

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. If your council has not yet done this then why not ask for it to be on the next agenda?!

Training Opportunities January to May 2014

Financial Risk Management – The essential course for all RFOs

Wednesday 12 February 2014, 10.00am to 12.30pm

Off to a Flying Start – Starter training for newer councillors

Saturday 22 February 2014, 10.00am to 12.30pm

CiLCA 2014 (Module 1 of 7) – The Clerk’s qualification

Tuesday 25 February 2014, 10.00am to 2.00pm

A Morning with Ian “Legal Ease NOT Legalese” – Bring your queries!

Tuesday 18 March 2014, 10.00am to 12noon

New Clerks – All newly appointed Clerks should attend

Saturday 12 & 26 April 2014, 10.00am to 4.00pm

Off to a Flying Start – Starter training for newer councillors

Wednesday 7 May 2014, 6.30pm to 9.00pm

For information on any of these courses please see

www.northantscalc.gov.uk/events.html or for further information contact Anne Kirkland, Training Manager, on 01327 831482 or akirkland@northantscalc.gov.uk.

All courses must be accompanied by a course booking form, which can be downloaded from www.northantscalc.gov.uk. Alternatively you can 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

Name of Council	Weldon Parish Council
Job Title	Parish Clerk
Vacancy Statement	Weldon Parish Council has a vacancy for a parish clerk and responsible finance officer.
Requirements	Applications are invited from suitably qualified and experienced persons, although training will be offered and enthusiasm to learn will be seen as an alternative to formal qualifications. The parish clerk will be responsible for the administration of the business and finances of the council. The post includes some evening work, attendance at one meeting per month held on a Monday evening and occasional attendance at civic functions. The successful applicant would be expected to have, or be prepared to obtain, CiLCA (Certificate in Local Council Administration). He or she must be computer literate, with good communication skills. Friendly and positive outlooks are essential.
Salary	Salary £17,333 (SCP18) pro rata.
Hours	66 hours per month
Place of work	Work from home.
Please apply in writing with CV and short covering letter to:-	
Contact	Councillor Wendy Groome
Position	Chair of Personnel Committee, Weldon Parish Council
Address	walnutwend@hotmail.co.uk
Closing date:	6 th December 2013
Interview times	Interviews will take place during the week commencing 9th December and will be in the evenings.

Crick Parish Council

Crick Parish Council has a vacancy for the post of Clerk (part time). Job Title – Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer.

Applications are invited from suitably qualified and experienced persons, although training will be offered and enthusiasm to learn will be seen as an alternative to formal qualifications. The Parish Clerk will be responsible for the administration of the business and finances of the council.

The post will include some evening work, attendance at one meeting per month held on a Monday evening and occasional extra ordinary meetings. The successful applicant would be expected to have, or be prepared to obtain a Certificate in Local Council Administration. He or she must be computer literate, with good communication skills. Friendly and positive outlooks are essential.

Salary – in the region of £8,000 p.a. SCP 30-34 subject to review after 6 months. Hours 50 hours per month – working mainly from home.

Please apply in writing with CV and short covering letter to the Chairman, Philip Dunkley at 9 The Paddock, Crick, NN6 7XG or philip.dunkley1@btinternet.com.

The closing date for applications is 20 December 2013. Interviews will take place w/c 6 January 2014.

Interested in Clerking?

Northants CALC is aware of forthcoming vacancies in South Northamptonshire and Northampton. If you are a clerk looking to increase your portfolio, or someone looking at becoming a clerk then register your interest with Danny Moody (dmoody@northantscalc.gov.uk) and be kept up to date with all future vacancies.

CHRISTMAS CLOSING

Although there would be no better way to spend Christmas than being in the office answering parish council queries, we are told that we have to take a break sometime! Regrettably therefore the office will close on Friday 20 December 2013 and reopen on Monday 6 January 2014. Happy holidays! Wassail!!!

NORTHANTS CALC CONTACTS

Danny Moody	Chief Executive dmoody@northantscalc.gov.uk
Anne Kirkland	Training Manager akirkland@northantscalc.gov.uk
Linda Bain	Administration Manager lbain@northantscalc.gov.uk
General	info@northantscalc.gov.uk
Member Enquiry Service	mes@northantscalc.gov.uk

Address:

Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils
6 Litchborough Business Park
Northampton Road
Litchborough
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NN12 8JB

Telephone: 01327 831482

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