

# 21st November 2017

## MINUTES OF MEETING

Title: **Basingstoke District Association of Parish  
and Town Councils**

Held On: Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2017

Present:

Sadie Owen	Ashmansworth
Martin Slatford	Baughurst (Chair)
Chris Curtis	Baughurst
Bruce Ansell	Bramley
Les Fryer	Chineham
Julian Jones	Dummer
Chris Pottinger	Hannington
Sue Edwards	Highclere
Richard Startin	Oakley & Deane
Mark Oszczyk	Old Basing and Lychpit
Peter Bloyce	Old Basing and Lychpit
Anne Phillips	Overton
Martin Whittaker	Rooksdown
Rosina Forde	Steventon
Ian Pearson	Stratfield Saye
Sheila Campbell	Stratfield Turgis
Jo Page	Tadley
Paul Gray	Upton Grey
John Buckley	Whitchurch
Sarah Curtis	Wootton St Lawrence
Charlotte Greaves	Wootton St Lawrence
Martin Biermann	HALC

Guests:

Alison Edwards	Secretary
Cllr Simon Bound	BDBC Cabinet Member for Communities (and parish councillor for Rooksdown)

Apologies:

Alan Cox	Ashmansworth
Tony Durrant	Bramley
Geoff Chapman	North Waltham
Brian Langer	HALC

## **1. Minutes of last meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2017**

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

## **2. Presentation of the Hampshire Association of Local Councils' (HALC) 'Council of the Year Shield' to Bramley Parish Council**

2.1 Julian Jones presented Bramley Parish Council with the 'Council of the Year' shield on behalf of HALC. Bramley won this award as a result of work to improve their IT and data management systems, which was considered 'outstanding' and 'exceptional' by HALC. Their project is recognised for good governance, effective management and administration, and a good example of cost benefit analysis.

## **3. Presentation by Bramley Parish Council on their IT project**

3.1 Bruce Ansell from Bramley Parish Council told the meeting about their IT project which won them HALCs "Council of the Year" award. The council recognised that their old IT policy was disjointed and time consuming for the clerk. They established a committee to revamp their IT policy and are now transitioning to a new set of IT policies and procedures:

- The Council have moved their postal address to a PO Box address so that if the clerk changes there is no need to notify everyone of a change of address.
- The Council have moved to a dedicated central email address which acts as an archive. This is good for data protection purposes as all archived emails are saved in the same secure place and once an email has been archived it cannot be deleted. Personal email addresses are no longer being used by any Council member.
- The Council have employed a HALC recommended management company to manage the website for approximately £500 a year. This has led to significant time savings for the clerk. The company has set up a new site for the Council at a migration cost of £699. All old website links still work and connect to the new site. They are now able to link all their social media sites together, so if a document is uploaded on one site it can be viewed across all platforms.
- The Council have switched to a .gov.uk email and web address which means they are able to access the g cloud – a procurement site which enables them to secure a wide range of resources at heavily discounted prices that have been secured by central government.
- Through the g cloud the Council have leased Microsoft tablets for each councillor and a laptop for the clerk (each tablet costs approximately £6 a month, with the whole lease package costing around £120 a month). Having a common operating system for the whole council makes it easier to secure IT support from the management company. Tablets/laptops can be handed on to new councillors and clerks, with less risk of security breaches compared to using personal machines which would then need to be wiped of data when a councillor/clerk leaves the Council.
- To cut down on paperwork the Council have installed an audio-visual system in the village hall. This means that papers can be shared and viewed on a large screen

during meetings, thus negating the need for copious amounts of printing. Furthermore, the village has weekly movie nights at the village hall for a small charge, which generates revenue.

3.2 Bramley Parish Council's precept is £66,000. The IT project cost just under £14,000 in total. £9000 of this was the audio-visual system in the village hall which is now generating revenue. Furthermore, the Council were able to secure a grant towards this cost (this grant is available to councils with a precept of less than £25,000). Ongoing costs should be no more than £1000 a year. The cost of procuring a .gov.uk address was £295.

3.3 Bruce Ansell said that Bramley Parish Council would like to host an IT training session (looking at, for example, how to manage social media and the impact of the new data protection requirements). They would like to offer places on this training to other councils in return for sharing the cost, which has been quoted at £495 a day for 14 attendees (though Bramley PC are still negotiating to bring the cost down).

**Action: Bruce Ansell to forward details of the training to other councils through BDAPTC.**

#### **4. Impact of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) on parish and town councils**

4.1 Martin Slatford has requested training from BDBC and HALC on the likely impact of the GDPR on parish and town councils. The problem is that, because the Bill is not yet passed (it is due to be through Parliament and take effect in May 2018) there is uncertainty around what the final Bill, and thus final requirements, will look like.

4.2 HALC are holding four workshops on the GDPR at different locations around the county. The first is on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2017 in Eastleigh. The rest are in January and February 2018.

4.3 Under the current draft of the Bill, each council will need to appoint a Data Protection Officer. There is still uncertainty around whether a clerk can be trained to undertake this role for their council. NALC have also been highlighting the financial burden to small councils of appointing a DPO to the Government. This was further emphasised by a BDAPTC member who pointed out that, with a parish of 318 residents and a precept of £5,000, the requirements of the GDPR on his council could be disproportionately onerous.

4.4 What is clear is that all councils will need to cease using private, gmail and Hotmail email accounts for their council business and will need to have separate email and website traffic.

#### **5. Precepts and further reductions in grants from BDBC**

Report on discussions between Martin Slatford (BDAPTC), Chas Bradfield (BDBC) and Cllr Simon Bound (BDBC Cabinet member for Communities) regarding cost of by-elections.

5.1 Until now, all parish and town council elections have been paid for by BDBC. This is quite unusual. BDBC are now consulting on a proposal that parish and town councils contribute towards the cost of by-elections. They are proposing that small councils (less than 4000 electors) contribute £1571 to the cost of a by-election, and councils larger

than this contribute £4120. They are not proposing that councils contribute to the cost of normal, four-yearly elections, borough elections, general elections, or referendums on neighbourhood plans. Referendums held by parish and town councils on other matters may be subject to a charge. There is no cost involved in co-opting councillors and, where a councillor is uncontested in an election, BDBC would cover the minimal cost.

5.2 Members of BDAPTC discussed the importance of by-elections. A proportion of elected councillors was a requirement for General Power of Competence. Furthermore, if the electorate demand a by-election, the council are legally obliged to provide one.

5.3 Martin Whittaker (Rooksdown) shared his experience from Hook Council. Hook had never had a co-opted councillor until Hart District Council started to charge for by-elections (£11,000). In 2010 two by-elections were needed, costing Hook Council £22,000. Since the imposition of these costs, Hook has seen a greater turnover of co-opted councillors which has, in Martin's view, led to a less stable and balanced council.

5.4 Martin Slatford provided some figures to put the proposal into context. There have been seven by-elections among BDAPTC councils in the last four years. If each council sets aside the cost of a by-election 'just in case', there will be a significant sum of public money tied up inefficiently. If councils don't set aside money and need to do one or more by-elections in a short space of time, they might be unable to cover the cost and therefore will not be able to meet their legal requirements. The total cost of the seven by-elections was £16,000 – or £4,000 per year. If this cost is shared between all BDAPTC councils, it would equate to less than 0.3% of the total precept. He proposed a shared fund of 0.5% of all members' precepts, managed by a trusted third party (BDBC would be the most obvious candidate) as a cost effective way for parish and town councils to manage this.

#### Dual taxation and delivery of core services

5.5 BDBC have historically provided grants to parish councils to carry out services that, in non-parish areas, are carried out by BDBC. This is to off-set the fact that the electorate pay for this service through their council tax and would be paying twice if the parish council then had to provide the service and recoup the cost through the precept. Despite saying that they would consider discontinuing these grants, BDBC have realised that it is cheaper to delegate some services in parish areas. BDBC anticipates keeping the grass cutting grants for the next four years. It is still considering how to manage other services which may be more efficiently delivered by our members. In discussions with BDBC Martin Slatford has stressed the need to ensure that finance follows function.

#### Review of Community Resilience Plans

5.6 Tom Payne (BDBC) is currently trying to reschedule the Community Resilience Workshop which was due to be held last month. The workshop will look at the integration of community resilience plans between parishes, BDBC and HCC, making use of parish local knowledge and identification of those that are vulnerable within the community.

## **6. Report from HALC representatives**

6.1 De Montfort University's Local Governance Research unit and The Municipal Journal have published a report entitled 'The Voice of the Councillor'. A presentation was given on this at HALC's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary meeting.

6.2 At the HALC AGM a senior member of NALC gave a presentation on grants for small road schemes. **Action: Julian Jones to circulate slides.** There was a discussion on fees.

## **7. AGM of BDAPTC**

7.1 The minutes of the last AGM held on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016 were approved.

7.2 Martin Slatford said that he was willing to stand as Chair of BDAPTC for one more year, after which he would be standing down. He was voted in as Chair for a further year. No-one came forward to take the position of Vice Chair. Julian Jones thanked Martin for his work on behalf of the BDAPTC.

7.3 Les Fryer agreed to continue as Treasurer and was voted in. Martin Slatford thanked Les for his work during the previous year.

7.4 The existing HALC Directors – Martin Slatford, Julian Jones, Les Fryer and David Leeks, were voted in for a further year.

7.5 Les Fryer presented the accounts (see attached). BDAPTC has £480, with an annual expenditure of £250 for secretarial fees. HALC refused to give the organisation a grant this year as there was no demonstrable need. If more meetings are held next year a grant should be awarded.

## **8. Dates of future meetings**

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Parish conference in early June 2018

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2018

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018

**Meeting closed at 8.05pm**



