

Newsletter – January 2024

Derbyshire ALC



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1 - * Online AGM reminder! Tuesday 9th January 10am *****

Don't forget, our rescheduled online AGM is on Tuesday 9th January at 10am. Please sign up via our website to receive the agenda, papers and joining instructions automatically. However, if you don't get around to registering, joining instructions for the session are below:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4663925358?pwd=SUNVcFcyG5JalFsZVZGSkhXVGpyZz09>

Meeting ID: 466 392 5358

Passcode: DALC22

2 - No council tax referendum principles for local councils in 2024/25

The government has announced that council tax referendum principles won't apply to parish and town councils in 2024/25, allowing them to set their precept levels without holding a referendum. Details of the Government's finance plans for the local government sector are [outlined here](#).

3 - Biodiversity – a reminder!

January 1st was the deadline for councils to complete their “first consideration” of what biodiversity action to take under the Environment Act 2021. Next step is to agree policies and objectives, and a [policy template is now available here](#). Gov.uk has published a guide which covers the areas of consideration and potential action, [which can be found here](#). In addition, North East Derbyshire District Council has produced an extremely useful Parish Council Climate Change Pack, [which can be found here](#). Here at DALC, we've added a 'Climate Change' page to our website, giving access to resources and funding opportunities.

4 - Making connections across the UK

NALC are promoting connections across councils and councillors nationwide around common interests and groups, offering an opportunity to share learning and good practice, and provide mutual support. These National Network meetings are held quarterly via Zoom, and members are updated via email and Whatsapp. Groups include:

- Climate emergency
- LGBT+ councillors
- Women councillors
- Young councillors

Further information on the National Networks, including joining links, [can be found here](#).

5 - Guidance on allowances for chairs and councillors

Following several inquiries, we've [added a document here](#) outlining taxation on allowance payments for chairs and councillors. Essentially, HMRC says: “For tax purposes, council members and civic dignitaries are treated in the same way as any other individual who holds and office or is an employee. Earnings received from an office or employment are chargeable to income tax as employment income. ‘Earnings’ includes allowances paid to cover expenses incurred in carrying out the duties of an office or employment, unless these allowances do no more than reimburse expenses actually incurred and which are deductible for tax purposes.”

6 - Civility and Respect pledge – 10% of Derbyshire councils signed up

Uptake of the Civility and Respect Pledge has reached double figures in Derbyshire, with 10% of councils now signed up to the initiative, which aims to counter bullying, harassment and intimidation within our sector. Keen to play our part, we've now extended the offer of bespoke DALC training on how to implement the pledge in day-to-day operations and management. Recent attendees were members of Wirksworth Town Council, whose clerk Paul Jennings said: "This training was really thought-provoking for our council and has set us on the right course for future action. We're committed to incorporating the Civility and Respect Pledge into our work both within the council and the wider community, and we now have the ideas and framework to make this happen."

More details of the [Civility and Respect Pledge can be found here](#), and the latest Pledge [newsletter can be found here](#). Bespoke DALC training can be discussed with Yvonne Colverson at training@derbyshirealc.gov.uk.

7 - Free workshops; Personal Safety & Stalking Awareness

In conjunction with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, NALC's Civility and Respect Project has organised a series of free workshops – entitled 'Toxic Behaviour in Councils', 'Personal Safety Awareness' and 'Stalking Awareness.' Details of all three online events, including registration links, [can be found here](#).

8 - Councils give green light to Derbys-Notts Devolution Deal

Voters across Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire are on course to elect a new mayor in May, following the approval of plans for the new East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA). On December 7th, Derbyshire County Council, Derby City Council, Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council voted to approve devolution for the region. Once finalised by Parliament, the necessary legislation could see the EMCCA come into existence by March 2024, triggering up to £4 billion of funding and investment, plus devolved powers for transport, skills, adult education, housing, environment and economic development.

9 - Council spending on church property – NALC update awaited

Details of an amendment to the rights of a council to spend money on church property are awaited following the Government's insertion of a new section into the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. The new guidance from NALC legal should clarify what councils are able to fund in relation to churches and ecclesiastical charities. Updates will be forwarded to members as soon as they become available.

10 – New Model Contract of Employment for Clerks

NALC and SLCC have agreed an updated Model Contract of Employment. As many of you know this is long overdue for the sector to ensure that the contract is in line with modern employment law. Copies of the contract for council use are available on request.

11 - Forum invite January 2024

The first forums of the New Year will take place on Wednesday 24th January.

1pm – Clerks; budgeting, internal audit, any other questions you have

2pm – Chairs & Clerks (and any climate agenda leads in councils); climate change and the Environment Act, including a contribution from Tom Veitch, DCC Climate Change Officer.

Link for both meetings:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4663925358?pwd=SUNVcFcyG5JlFsZVZGSkhXVGpyZz09>

Meeting ID: 466 392 5358

Passcode: DALC22

12 - Upcoming training

We have a number of training courses over the next month or two so why not take the opportunity to book a place. Courses are online unless a venue is listed – and **please note** all courses marked **(EM)** are courses to which Enhanced Membership councils can send up to three delegates free of charge. [Full details of all courses, with booking link, can be found here.](#)

Allotments, Site Facilities and Health & Safety – 18th January 2.30pm

(EM) Safeguarding – 23rd January 10am

Chair Skills – 23rd January 6pm

Clerk's Essentials Part 1 – 6th February 10am

Clerk's Essentials Part 2 – 7th February 10am

Law & Good Practice; agendas and minutes – 13th March 10am

(EM) Councillor Essentials – 13th March 6pm

Memorial Management & Inspection Workshop – 3rd April 10am

Best regards

Wendy Amis