

Minutes of the meeting of the County Committee held on 3rd October 2017 at the Edgar Hall, Somerton

Present: Dave Mitton (Chairman), Jean Allgrove, Jenny Lawrence, Godfrey Townrow, Loretta Whetlor, David Aldridge, Ann Reeder, Terry Philpott, Peter Seib

In attendance: Justin Robinson (CEO)

1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Rue Losey and Claire Wright

The Chairman informed members that Antony Carr had sadly passed away. Members of the Management Committee had attended his funeral service.

2) Minutes of the June Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous meeting were unanimously approved as an accurate record.

The only matter arising related to the IFA report on the CCLA Property Fund which, as a small investor, the committee was obliged to consider before investing. Members reviewed the report and noted that the fund was regarded as a solid, low risk investment in the medium to long term.

It was unanimously agreed that £25,000 be invested in the CCLA Property Fund at the earliest opportunity.

3) Recruitment of a new staff member

The chairman updated members on past arrangements and the process to date. Mr Simon Pritchard has now been appointed as Assistant CEO and will begin work on the 9th October (15 hours per week). An induction programme has been prepared and Simon will also be attending the AGM.

4) AGM and Annual Report 2016/17

Members considered the draft annual report and subject to a few minor changes, unanimously approved it.

The annual accounts were also received and unanimously approved. Once again, it had been a positive financial year for the association.

The Chairman outlined arrangements for the AGM. It was hoped that David Fothergill would now be able to attend but a back-up guest speaker has also been arranged. Bruton Town Council has also agreed to run a best practice session. The catering has been arranged and numbers planning to attend already appear positive.

It was agreed that the afternoon area meeting would use break-out sessions again and it was hoped that members would use this opportunity to share more good practice and develop a clear plan of topics for future meetings.

It was unanimously agreed that the committee recommend to the AGM that the following members be appointed to the offices of the association:

President – Jean Allgrove

Chairman – Dave Mitton

Vice Chairman – Jenny Lawrence

NALC Assembly Representative – Loretta Whetlor

NALC AGM Representatives – Dave Mitton, Loretta Whetlor, Justin Robinson

It was agreed that thought would need to be given in the coming year to succession planning as several committee members have indicated that they might stand down from their council roles in the 2019 elections.

It was also agreed that David Aldridge would join the Management Committee.

5) Status of the Association

The chairman reminded members that in principle agreement had been given by members at the AGM to change the status of the association to a not for profit company limited by guarantee. Draft articles of association have now been finalised and circulated to County Committee members for further comment.

Members raised a number of questions regarding certain sections and it was agreed that the document be discussed at the AGM. Legal advice would then be required if the matter is to be progressed further.

6) SALC Office

The CEO reported that the office license would be due for renewal in February 2018. Details of the agreement have now been received from Somerton Town Council and the cost has merely increased in line with inflation.

It was noted that the move to Somerton had been of great benefit to the association and unanimously agreed that the license should be renewed at a cost of £5335pa (ex VAT).

7) Area Meetings

Members considered a report from the Chairman outlining the historic role of area meetings in the structure of the association. Members felt that there was still a strong role for meetings to play but that they need to be better co-ordinated with principal authority issues/consultations and led by committee members, with support from the officer team.

It was agreed that the report would be circulated with the AGM papers and discussed at the breakout sessions at the All Area Meeting.

8) Representatives Reports

Jenny Lawrence had attended the SPFA AGM in September.

9) Services update

The CEO reported that it had been a slow start to the year with training but bookings were stronger over the summer period. New courses were being delivered to cover information governance, safeguarding/equalities and internal/external audit.

The Transparency Fund is still open to applications and further work is ongoing to ensure that councils are now compliant, as DCLG have stressed that all councils must now be compliant.

It was noted that whilst the recent DCLG consultation on Local Government Finance had not included specific provisions on extending referendum principles to town and parish councils, the lack of certainty on this issue was still a major concern for many councils.

The CEO had met with Taunton Deane district councillors to discuss the possibility of establishing a parish council in part of the Taunton unparished area

10) Items from members

Peter Seib informed members that SSDC would shortly be reviewing their local plan.

Loretta Whetlor reported that planning training for parish councils was a high priority in some parts of the county.

Next meeting: TBC January 2018