

Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of Shropshire Association of Local Councils, held at 2pm on 2nd September 2024, via Zoom.

Present:

Cllr R Abbiss (VP and Vice Chair Shropshire)	Cllr G Hickman	Cllr T Tarran
H Ball	C Higgins	Cllr S Stacey
Cllr M Bennett	C Mellings (VP)	Cllr R Wickson (Chair)
Cllr D Cooper		Cllr A Wilson (Vice Chair Telford & Wrekin)
Cllr Claire Crackett MBE DL	Cllr D Mills	R Williams (VP)
Cllr R Evans	Cllr M Roberts	D Dorrell, County Secretary
Cllr P Goulbourne	Cllr S Reynolds	G Power, Deputy CS/RFO

Also present:

- Guest Speaker, Teresa Addinell, Senior Engagement Consultant, Care Leavers Covenant.
- Cllr Gwilym Butler, Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate Services and Communities, Shropshire Council.

Note: Cllr Wickson was present for Agenda items 1 to 4 and 11 c, and from 14 onwards.

1.	<p>CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting announcing that he would need to leave the meeting for a short period and would take first agenda item 11c.</p>
2.	<p>AGENDA ITEM 11C AFFILIATION FEES 2025-26 The Chairman, on behalf of the Finance Sub-Committee reported that the Sub-Committee had met on 22 August and had reviewed the budget requirements in order to provide the current level of support. Increases had for a number of years with the exception of 2021 been minimal and reserves had been used to balance the budget for the last two years which could not be sustained, particular with uncertainties ahead. The Sub-Committee were therefore recommending the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) An increase of 5p per elector from 45p to 50p up to 3500 electors b) Over 3500 electors– an increase of 1p per elector, from 2.5p to 3.5p per additional elector c) Administration Fee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 1000 electors - an increase from £60 - £70 Over 1000 electors - an increase from £70 - £80 <p>The Chairman pointed out that the administration fee had remained constant for the last 5 years.</p> <p>Proposed by Cllr Abbiss, seconded by Cllr Goulbourne.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To approve the recommendations set out above to go forward to the AGM.</p> <p>The Chairman reported that the NALC Fee had been proposed to increase to 8.34 pence per elector, capped at £2,139 (pending confirmation at the NALC AGM).</p> <p>Proposed by Cllr Goulbourne, seconded by Cllr Stacey.</p>

	RESOLVED: To support the proposed NALC fees for 25-26.as set out above.
3.	<p>CARE LEAVERS COVENANT: Guest Speaker, Teresa Addinell, Senior Engagement Consultant The Chairman welcomed Teresa to the meeting and, before leaving the meeting, handed over the Chair to Cllr A Wilson.</p> <p>Teresa introduced herself and her role in promoting the Covenant with Spectra First on behalf of the Department for Education to deliver the initiative on their behalf and she thanked the Chairman for giving her the opportunity to speak to the Executive. The slide presentation she gave explained the background to the Covenant, launched in 2018 a national inclusion programme that supports care leavers aged 16 to 25 across England coming out of care and to assist them to integrate into the community. This included the provision of training and work opportunities as well as leisure and utility discounts from a variety of large organisations. There were many challenges for them coming out of care which included their own safety and wellbeing as well as managing finances. The signatory network continues to make progress with more than 400 organisations supporting the Covenant and more than 4000 young people signed up. Teresa explained how care leavers were able to access offers via their website. By signing up to the Covenant and becoming ambassadors, local councils could, promote connections and raise awareness in their communities. The slides showed the key areas in which they were seeking help and the organisations and businesses who were offering essential support. The presentation was to raise awareness at local council level and the ambassadorial role they may wish to take on.</p> <p>Both the Chairman and Cllr Stacey spoke in support, and it was proposed that SALC would sign up to the Covenant at the AGM on 30 October, which coincided with National Care Leavers Week.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That SALC support the Care Leavers Covenant which the Chairman would sign at the AGM on 30 October.</p>
4.	<p>APOLOGIES K Baker, MBE and Councillors P Davies, C Green, K Middleton, and S Pledger,</p>
5.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST There were none.</p>
6.	<p>MINUTES The County Secretary (CS) reported an amendment to the draft minutes noting that those present should have included Cllr A Wilson.</p> <p>Proposed by Cllr Abbiss, seconded by Cllr Wilson.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That, subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 4th June 2024 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.</p> <p><i>At this stage Cllr Wickson left the meeting and Cllr Wilson took the Chair.</i></p>
7.	<p>AREA COMMITTEES Draft minutes, where received, had been circulated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Wrekin: Next meeting 26 September, 7pm via Zoom. b) Bridgnorth & Shifnal: Next meeting 9 September, 7pm at Bridgnorth Library. c) Oswestry: Next meeting 7 October, 7pm via Zoom.

	<p>Cllr Bennett reported on a meeting which would take place on 20 September, 2pm at the Guildhall, Oswestry. This was to explore how councils, given their disparity in size across the north might work together with regard to the devolvement of services which Shropshire Council were seeking to identify. The Chairman invited Councillor Butler to comment. Cllr Butler referred to the survey sent out in July by Jane Tretheway, Assistant Director for Place, and whilst the meeting with the MP was a positive step forward, he would not want to complicate the current system of engagement via the survey. It was suggested that the Assistant Director be invited to attend the meeting with the MP, and it was hoped that the results of the survey would be shared.</p> <p>With regard to the motion re glyphosates, this had been circulated. The Chairman commented that a sustainable alternative needed to be found. The CS reported that the motion had been discussed at the West Midlands County Association of Local Councils (WMCALCs) on 2 September and supported in principle, to be confirmed at their next meeting in December following which, if fully supported, it would go on to NALC's Policy Committee or to the National Assembly.</p> <p>d) Shrewsbury & Atcham: The meeting planned for 4 July had been postponed due to the General Election and a future date had yet to be set.</p> <p>e) North Shropshire: Next meeting 16 September, 7pm Wem Library.</p> <p>f) South Shropshire: Cllr Mills reported that the last meeting had been well attended and that the next meeting would be on 19 September, 7pm at Craven Arms Community Centre. South Shropshire's newly elected MP Stuart Anderson would be attending.</p>
8.	<p>UNITARY COUNCILS</p> <p>a) Shropshire Council: The Chair welcomed Cllr Gwilym Butler to provide an update on Shropshire Council's budgetary situation. Over 40 responses to the Survey had been received, with much interest in Streetscene. There was uncertainty about how much would be needed for services going forward and what those services would be, but he understood the pressure with budget and precepting time approaching. One option being considered was to ask local councils for a percentage uplift on their precepts. By next April service plans would be in place and effectively, if that money was not spent in their areas, it would be returned.</p> <p>The quarter one report to the end of June on the prediction of making £62m savings this year indicated a possible overspend of £38.5m with work ongoing to ensure savings were shored up. The concern was there only remained just under £39m in reserves. In the short term, service reviews were being undertaken to make further savings with some services being reduced or ceased. The impact of the cold weather support grant and that of welfare support was an unknown as was the Government support grant, previously £4m. There was also uncertainty regarding the current cap on Council Tax. Previous advice earlier in the year from the LGA had been to set a pay award increase of 2.5% this year. However, there was now uncertainty whether the new Government would increase this, noting that a 1% increase would represent £1.5m of revenue budget. Quarter 2 would give more clarity on the budget.</p> <p>Cllr Butler gave an update on the green bin roll out for which information would be circulated via SALC. The new NPPF would also have a huge impact on Shropshire and Cabinet would be responding to the consultation. In effect, it was proposed to increase new housing by 1000 a year to 2100. The response was likely to say that amount was not deliverable, but that 1560 might be achievable. It was unlikely that the Local Plan would be adopted before May and a shortage of inspectors had added to</p>

	<p>the delay which was preventing houses from being built on land that had been identified and land supply was also a concern. On a positive note, the School Library Service was being relaunched.</p> <p>During questions, it was suggested that due to uncertainties at this stage, an option would be to raise the precept for next year and if not spent could be reduced the following year. Other areas likely to impact were raised, including the elections next year. A proposal was being put forward to the other political parties to work on a collaborative budget. A Task and Finish Group was to be set up with each group's leader/deputy on the basis that this budget would not be political.</p> <p>Helen asked if the uplift on the precept was to contribute to existing service provision and what amount as a whole across the sector was SC anticipating as she did not believe this would be enough. Cllr Butler responded that the transition period was a problem and how to build in flexibility for all to avoid at all costs bringing in the Commissioners.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Cllr Butler who then left the meeting.</p> <p>b) Telford & Wrekin Borough Council: Cllr Kelly Middleton had submitted her apologies as she had not been aware of the meeting following a recent change to Members of the Cabinet. The success of Newport TC's library service was reported.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To note the reports.</p> <p>Before moving on, Helen asked if there was a role that SALC might play with regard to both Unitary Councils in that understanding the capacity and capability issue was important and to risk assess this for the sector as a whole. The Chair agreed the need to work together as did C Mellings, stating this had been discussed since last December and there had been a lack of progress and understanding what role SALC was expected to play in the engagement process. He suggested that a Task & Finish Group might be set up to look in more detail as time was running out and the Executive should play a key role in supporting its membership. Cllr Bennett said there was also a role for NALC to see what was happening nationwide. Helen, in her role as Vice Chair of the SLCC assured the meeting that following a recent meeting she had attended with NALC, both bodies were working together and would be attending the upcoming LGA conference in October to take this issue forward. This might result in a Local Government summit to bring together the various bodies to understand the local council sector and its challenges. She agreed with CM that urgent action was necessary to ensure the support of the smaller rural communities. After further discussion it was agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to engage with the Cross-Party Group, bearing in mind the impact on services following next May's elections for both Unitary Councils and for Town and Parish Councils.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To set up a Task & Finish Group to meet on Thursday 19 September at 2pm via Zoom, the Group to include C Mellings and Cllrs Wickson, Wilson, Tarran, Roberts, Bennett and others who might be interested, particularly to represent the South.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT Telford & Wrekin BC</p> <p>The Committee noted that a review of the current Town and Parish Council Partnership agreement (which was ratified in September 2022) was planned for early next year alongside a review of the Customer Strategy. The current agreement had been circulated and it was noted that the agreement stated that meetings between Telford & Wrekin Borough Council</p>

	<p>and SALC would take place quarterly which the Committee supported. The CS suggested we ask to be kept in touch with developments.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To note the Partnership Agreement and welcome the review.</p>
10.	<p>PRESIDENT'S REPORT The President's report had been circulated. There were no questions.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To note the report.</p>
11.	<p>CHAIRMAN'S REPORT The Chairman's report had been circulated. There were no questions.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To note the report.</p>
12	<p>FINANCE Scribe Financial Reports and latest Bank Statement. There were no questions.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To note the Scribe reports and Bank Statement as at 5 August 2024.</p>
13.	<p>FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE</p> <p>The Sub-Committee met on 22 August and received the Audited Accounts for 2023-4 which had been circulated. The Sub-Committee noted that for a second year, there were no recommendations from the Auditor whose letter indicated a surplus for the year of £2404.67. The Sub-Committee's draft budget for 2025-6 had been circulated and went on to recommend Affiliation Fees for 2025-6 which had been taken and approved at Minute 2 above.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To receive and note the Audit of Accounts for 23-24 b) To approve the recommended Budget for 2025-6 c) To approve the Affiliation Fees for 2025-6 (see minute 2)
14.	<p>JOINT WORKING GROUP</p> <p>RESOLVED: To receive the notes of the Joint Working Group of 24 June, as circulated.</p>
15.	<p>COUNTY SECRETARY'S REPORT The report had been circulated with copies of the draft Constitution and Service Level Agreement.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To note the report and with regard to recommendations set out at paragraph 7:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To approve the Constitution Working Group's amendments to the Constitution as highlighted for submission to the AGM. b) To approve the adoption of the Service Level Agreement as circulated c) To grant delegated powers to the Review Group to evaluate SALC's website and undertake a Business Continuity Plan. <p><i>Cllr Wickson rejoined the meeting and took back the Chair.</i></p>
16.	<p>REPORTS FROM OTHERS</p>

	<p>a) NALC: The Chairman reported on the NALC Assembly of 29 July which he had attended in London. The report had been circulated. The Chair spoke of the need to encourage the under-represented onto councils and onto the Executive. Of note was the setting up by NALC of a working group to look at the affiliation fees' structure, the new website would be launched on 7 October and the next meeting would be held on 8th October.</p> <p>b) West Midlands CALC's: The Chair reported on the meeting held in Birmingham on 1 September when he had raised the use of phosphates which would be banned from next year. This would be discussed at their next meeting. He had also raised the motion from Bitterley regarding the lack of enforcing pre-conditions on solar farms which had been supported for submission to NALC. Cllr Wilson commented that this should be built into the Local Nature Recovery Strategy which would have legal requirements under the Environmental Act of 2021. As the LNRS Co-ordinator was also part of the LA Planning Authority, this would be easier to implement. The continuation of Neighbourhood Plans was also discussed, noting that funding was due to run out next year. The motions would be taken to the Assembly on 8 October and the Chair highlighted this was encouraging for councils submitting motions to SALC, but he stressed that they would need to be viable.</p> <p>b) SLCC: Caroline Higgins' report had been circulated. She highlighted the Energy Learning Network who were looking to recruit between 5 – 10 local councils to work towards delivering community energy activities. They will be expected to join six online workshops between November 24 and March 26 and to commit to taking forward actions within their communities. Support would be provided by the Centre for Sustainable Energy. Expressions of interest should be submitted by 17th September. She also highlighted the meeting with the Governments new Housing and Local Communities Department who were looking at the possibility of allowing hybrid meetings for local councils.</p> <p>c) Community Resource: There was no report for this meeting.</p> <p>d) Reports from others: There were none.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To receive and note the reports.</p>
17.	<p>CONSULTATIONS</p> <p>The following consultations were noted and discussed.</p> <p>a) Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy Survey Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy Shropshire Council</p> <p>b) Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework – NALC survey</p> <p>The Chairman agreed to respond to the NPPF consultation, taking note of comments relating to the need to support planning authorities with the development of their local plans, the need for proper infrastructure to support housing including sewerage, competing uses for land and the need to consider local needs.</p>
18.	<p>AGM AND CONFERENCE 2024 UPDATE</p> <p>The Chairman reported that it had been decided to split the two events for various reasons. The AGM would be at Shirehall on 30 October, starting at 4pm. The Conference on Local Nature Recovery Strategy would take place on Friday 6 December, an all-day event at the Sylvester Horne Institute in Church Stretton. Invitations for the AGM were about to go out. Booking arrangements for the Conference would go out shortly with the programme, noting</p>

	there were just 140 places. Cllr Wilson was calling for local councils to push this out to their communities with a view to engaging and registering local groups.
19.	THEMES WORKING GROUP PROGRESS REPORT. The CS reported on the Communications theme. A group of Clerks had been set up to take this forward and to combine it with addressing the motion from last year's AGM on the need for improved communications with Shropshire Council. The outcome was that Fix My Street training had been undertaken and further sessions planned, following which the results of the trial to incorporate certain improvements to the system would be known. A meeting of the Group to address Streetscene aspects and issues with the new Manager would take place on 5 September.
20.	COMMUNICATIONS FROM PARISHES None were reported.
21.	STAFFING UPDATE The Chairman reported that the recruitment process to fill the County Secretary's position was ongoing and it was hoped that this time it would be successful. The job title had been revisited and the role would now be known as the Chief Officer.
22.	DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS a) November – Annual Meeting 29 November (MPs were to be invited) b) AGM 30 th October 2024. c) Conference 6 th December The Chair spoke of the nomination process for Chair etc and Cllr Wilson explained the new Award for Climate Action, which involved funding for those successful. He also acknowledged the efforts that were ongoing across the County and hoped there would be more applications going forward.
	The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and for contributing to the meeting. The meeting ended at 4:08 pm.

Signed: (Chairman) Dated: