

Clerks Report

AUGUST 2017

1. CITIZENSHIP AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The House of Lords has recently created a Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement to investigate the legal rights and responsibilities for citizens of the UK, the barriers to citizenship and what can be done to support and encourage civic engagement.

The Select Committee have launched an inquiry to hear the public's views on these issues; NALC will be responding to the select committee on behalf of the local councils that it represents and have asked for thoughts on key areas the Select Committee are considering.

These include:

- The meaning of citizenship and civic engagement in the 21st Century
- The role of ceremonies in encouraging citizenship
- The rights and responsibilities attached to citizenship
- The impact of current electoral law on political engagement
- The state of citizenship education and the role that it plays in creating active citizens
- The role of voluntary citizenship schemes such as the National Citizen Service
- The ways society can support civic engagement and the role of Government and Parliament in supporting that
- The values that all of us who live in Britain should share and support
- The relationship between civic engagement and social cohesion.

Local councils are at the very heart of their local community and that is why NALC thinks it is vital we respond to this inquiry. The deadline for responses (to Ben.Murray@nalc.gov.uk) is 5pm Friday 1st September.

2. SURVEY TO HELP UNLOCK DIGITAL POTENTIAL OF RURAL AREAS

Digital connectivity, mobile working, Skype meetings, e-commerce and so on are becoming ever more important for business efficiency, productivity and growth. Rural England are undertaking a research project on 'Unlocking the Digital Potential of the UK's Rural Areas' which includes an [online survey](#) aimed at business owners, directors and managers to explore how rural-based businesses currently use digital connectivity and technology, how important it is to their business model, what constraints slow their digital uptake and what benefits might accrue if such constraints were overcome.

The survey is open until Friday 1 September.

3. BLACKHORSE LANE HEDGE CUTTING

A complaint was received from a resident of the overgrowth of the hedge along Blackhorse Lane at the western end. The landowner was contacted and has raised the request for cutting.

4. YOUTH CLUB

The annual review of the SLA with the YMCA for Broadclyst Youth Club took place in August. A separate report will be presented to Council.

5. BOWLS MOWER

Issues with the clutch of the bowls mower were reported. On stripping down, it was simply in need of some grease and adjustment, which was carried out by the Council's preferred supplier at the net cost of £55.

6. INTERIM STORAGE

As the role of the handyman has expanded to include pothole repairs, flood management, and more equipment has been purchased for fun day, Council's existing storage at the Pavilions has been exceeded. Storage of the Council's new heavy-duty gazebos in the loft over the handyman's shed added a considerable weight to the load in the loft, which was not designed for long-term storage of heavy items. The Clerk, as the Handyman's Line Manager, identified unacceptable risk to the Handyman, both through working in the area immediately underneath the loft and in getting heavy/bulky items in/out of the loft.

A secure storage facility was advertised locally at a cost of £60pcm. After conversation with the Chairman and Chair of Finance, the Clerk arranged to rent the facility under delegation in order to urgently address the Health and Safety risk identified to the Council's staff. The creation of a works compound at the Cyst Room is being progressed however is not prioritized given the current workload in the office. There is capacity within the handyman budget to cover the cost.

Recommendation: to note the interim arrangement and its cost.

7. SCARECROWS

The Broadclyst VIP's ran a scarecrow hunt over the summer. Planned in conjunction with the primary school and local businesses, the hunt attracted positive local media coverage and Council received various messages of congratulations to pass on to the VIP's. Council supported the event by printing the sheets.

8. WILDFLOWERS

Exeter City Council have been using Wild flowers as a money saving scheme in order to reduce the amount of money spent on cutting large areas of grass. i.e. Prince Charles Road and Sowton Roundabout. This would work well as you enter and exit the village. (the green area as you turn off for dog village and the triangle area near the dog bin opposite the Bus stop near the post office)

There are two types of seed. The annual, which flowers once and then dyes off. Or Perennial flowers which bloom and regrows. The cost of the seeds are approx £50.00 for 1kg (32kg will cover 1 acre) Wild Flower Presentation Mix www.goren.co.uk. The flower seeds are from a local farm near Honiton.

9. LIGHTING

After a few complaints from the more venerable members of our parish, regarding the lack of light through the footpath leading from New Buildings to the park and the top end of New Buildings to come out by Holly Close. (the lane that goes past the field with the animals). Both of these footpaths are pitch-dark in the evenings and with winter coming upon us fast we need to look at some form of lighting. We got in contact with Solar PV Systems for a quote and it has come back with approximate cost of £5000 for all the parts for 3x solar lights. Installation by the same company is another £2000. We could source this from a local contractor. Permission from the relevant parties are being requested and as to whether we need planning permission.

10. DOG BINS

Autumn budget setting work has started with updating the spread sheet with all the correct information to help East Devon Council with their costings for the coming year. We are currently awaiting a response.

11. STAFF HANDBOOKS

Staff handbooks will be printed in the near future. A quote from Brightsea printing was received for £46.00. We could not have printed the 15 handbooks in house for this price.

12 GRASS CUTTING

Council received an email from EDDC liaison officer commenting that there seems to be “loads of people doing the same thing on different patches of grass”.

The National Trust cut their grass, which is quite a considerable area across the village; EDDC cuts its grassed areas; we cut in and around the pavilions, bus stops, footpaths, recreation ground, play area, BMX track, sports pitches, etc., and we cut visibility splays as a devolved service from DCC Highways.

Having previously costed different alternatives, the current arrangement was the most cost-effective at the time. The cutting in and around the pavilions makes up part of Rogers regular workload, but what is important is to make sure that there is no overlap.

Council has had requests from various people and companies to quote for grass cutting, so once time permits next month a plan of areas in the parish that need cutting will be prepared so interested parties can put in their quotes. It is possible that the part of the contract Council delivers for DCC in and around the village (not the highway cutting) could be “split off”. There are a few verges and visibility splays within the village KJ Thulborns currently cut for us, but if the residential element of the contract was taken out it would leave them free to go through at night so removing the need for traffic management.

13 CPD TRAINING

The SLCC's Conference manager has approached local Council Clerks in Devon as he reviews the Society's programme of CPD courses with the aim of reviewing the range of subject matter to make it more relevant to the emerging challenges which Clerks are facing around the country.

One particular topic which seems to trigger lots of calls is about taking on devolved services, and I remain concerned that Council's without GPC may run into problems when raising a precept for something which hasn't necessarily been formally devolved under S101 of the LGA 1972 but the Principal Authority has given consent for the Local Council to undertake work. I'm thinking specifically of

potholes; DCC has not “devolved” but has” permitted”. There will be other examples too, no doubt. Of course they could use S137, but this may curtail delivery of other projects in a parish which has a small number of electors.

Turning to CIL, East Devon District Council has recently published its funding decision protocol and application for funding form. For the majority of the form it is much the same as any other funding bid application, however there are three areas which could potentially be outside the scope of many Local Council’s to complete: a full risk assessment, including delivery risks, financial risks, and reputational risks; a project delivery plan; a detailed breakdown of costs and evidence to justify the costs. Of course, if one is applying for funding for a small project it’s not so much of an issue, but it is no mean task (not to mention a huge amount of time) to write a risk assessment, project delivery plan, and cost (including ongoing maintenance costs) for a new road, which is one of our infrastructure projects for which we intend to seek CIL funding. Some detailed CIL training would be very welcome.

14 ELM TREE

Council received a comment from a member of public regarding an Elm tree at the northern end of the recreation ground that the tree seemed to have Dutch Elm disease.

The National Trust have looked at it and indeed confirms the tree is in the early stages of the disease but isn’t hazardous at this stage. However the NT did add that bottom bank is outside of their ownership boundary, which also means it’s outside the Council’s lease boundary, and so has been passed to DCC P3 department for their thoughts.

The NT has offered to fell the tree, however we need to ascertain the position with regard TPO’s/Planning, and the procedure the hedge forms the boundary of the Conservation Area. As work to this tree is likely to be complex in terms of consent it may be best to let the County Council monitor its condition and manage its eventual felling.

This concludes my report to Council.

Angie Hurren, MILCM.

31 August 2017