

Special AGM Edition



Christopher Notley, Chairman of LALC, welcoming David Prince, Chief Executive of the Standards Board, as Keynote Speaker to the AGM and Conference, held at Horncastle College on 5 November 2005

David Prince gave an extremely informative and interesting keynote speech to members, gathered for the AGM and Conference in the Main Hall at Horncastle College.

He talked of the increasingly strategic role of the Standards Board for England, with a move towards more determination locally involving Standards Committees, and explained what recommendations the Standards Board had put before Government regarding changes to the current Code of Conduct.

Members were pleased to note that these recommendations were very much what had been hoped for.

Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils

County Circular

It was expected that the Minister would make a decision in late November/early December, although there was some difficulty arising from the differing views of special reports received, as to where an initial complaint should be made – either locally, or, as is currently the practice, directly to the Standards Board for England.

David also gave some guidance on the position of dual-hatted members; something we know is of constant concern to many of our members.

Following his presentation, David very kindly took questions from the floor and was able to provide positive and illuminating responses to items raised regarding the Standard's Board procedures for investigating and resolving complaints and its stance in respect of the issue of bullying.

The Standards Board has raised the issue of staff bullying with the Government, and feels that this should be specifically included as an item with the amended Code of Conduct. It was always important to remember that evidence should be accumulated, as in cases such as these, any determination would always have to be as a result of the "burden of proof".

David also advised the meeting that the Standards Board is re-locating to Manchester in the not too distant future.

AGM Round up

It was a lovely sunny "5th November" as members arrived at Horncastle College for the 32nd AGM and Annual Seminar, to be welcomed by the President Denis Glenn, but the day passed without any unpleasant fireworks and the hospitality from the College staff was again first class. Regrettably flu and other last minute personal problems meant that 18 delegates were unable to make it on the day, but there was still a very good turnout.

The AGM noted the financial position of the Association was again much improved and unanimously agreed to a modest inflationary increase of 3.5% to subscriptions for 2006/7, which the Honorary Treasurer, Stan Dewick, was able to propose on behalf of the County Committee. This also covers the affiliation fee to the National Association. It is still disappointing to note that the key work our movement undertakes in rural areas does not receive any financial recognition by government. All we ask for is parity with the other tiers of local government.

There was also good news regarding training fees for 2006/7. The County Secretary was able to report to the meeting that the new Annual Training Scheme had proved very successful, had been well supported, and he was able to recommend the fees be held for a further year at the same rate. The meeting did agree that a nominal charge to cover the cost of lunches would be levied for "All day" courses. Members felt the scheme offered excellent value for money and noted that many councils were now sending more than 1 delegate, with attendances overall up by as much as 100%.

The County Secretary also advised members that a new training course for chairmen and prospective chairmen had been devised by the National Steering Group and these would be rolled out in Lincolnshire early in 2006, at no extra cost to councils signed up to the Annual Training Scheme. A further national course geared towards councillors is currently being prepared for 2006.

The AGM unanimously supported the re-election of office holders for a further year and also agreed unanimously to the addition of Councillor Bert Barrack MBE as a Vice President – *reported elsewhere*.

Chairman Christopher Notley referred to the Annual Report which had been circulated to all member councils and presented a report on the activities and key events during the year. He thanked the President for his support during his first year in office – and the County Secretary and Assistant County Secretary for their work during the year. He reminded the Association that they were fortunate in having such professional and qualified staff dealing with their affairs – albeit overworked and underpaid!!

The Chairman congratulated Clerks who had obtained their Certificates in Local Council Administration and reminded members of the importance of this qualification, leading to better qualified staff and councils and to councils seeking Quality Status. Congratulations were also given to the six Lincolnshire councils who had to date achieved Quality Status.

He made members smile when he pointed out that, as with many of our members, he had relied on the assistance of his wife, who had typed out his report, and the County Secretary had included her "Sigh of relief" having got to the end. The words were appropriate to sum up what had been an extremely hectic year.

Guest keynote speaker, David Prince, Chief Executive of the Standards Board for England, presented "Quality Council" certificates to representatives of Skegness Town Council and Westborough and Dry Doddington, Belchford and Fulletby and Tattershall with Thorpe Parish Councils, before the announcement of a short break brought the formal proceedings to an end.

The County Secretary, having met David Prince in his role as a member of The Adjudication Panel for England, was confident he would deliver an excellent presentation for members, and David did not disappoint. Richard had seen David as an innovator and a much needed breath of fresh air at the Board, and his experience in Local Government and Audit roles meant that he could readily identify with the issues concerning town and parish councillors.

An excellent lunch followed, and as delegates, suitably refreshed, walked out to their various workshops keen observers noted notches on belts and buttons being discreetly adjusted.

Three workshops covering, Health, Recreation and Lincolnshire County Development were well received, *reported elsewhere*, and the day came to an end with all delegates gathering in the main hall for a round up of the key issues emanating from the workshops. Our Annual events would not be the same without the efforts of our keynote and workshop speakers. Not everyone realises they give up their free time, on a Saturday, with no fee, often travelling long distances and rarely even claim travelling expenses.

Our very grateful thanks for a successful day are therefore given to David Prince, Ivan Annibal from Lincolnshire County Council, Tony Taylor and Martin Ely from Groundwork Lincolnshire, and Sue Hitchenor from the Lincolnshire SW Primary Care Trust and Roger Paffard from the United Lincolnshire Hospital sTrust.

Workshop A – Lincolnshire Development

The Workshop opened with a presentation outlining where the County Council had reached in its change management and how it was moving forward under its new political leadership and recently appointed new chief executive. The county had placed great store on listening, and then taking notice of what people in the county were saying. There had also been a number of key stakeholders meetings which the Association had been involved in.

The new Lincolnshire Assembly designed to allow "One voice for Lincolnshire" to be heard would be an important mechanism, particularly as the county was not getting its fair share of government funding, and the state of the economy in the county, together with such things as employment potential and wage levels was well below other areas.

County Corporate Director, Ivan Annibal, painted an upmarket future for the county council, working closely with its partners, and learning from past mistakes. He specifically related to their desire to develop new partnerships and work more closely with town and parish councils. He stated that this was a role he would be directly involved with, and felt that he could empathise with members having had a great deal of personal experience in rural communities and with parish councils in the past. He recognised them as being a very local voice.

Ivan then went on to explain the specific role of his department, Lincolnshire Development, and how important it was to secure more funding and economic development for the county. It was also recognised that the future of the coastal strip, the regions only access to the sea, and the market towns was pivotal to future success.

It was also noted that some of the grant work, previously undertaken by other departments was being moved to Lincolnshire Development.

It was noted Ivan's staff were involved with such things as the new Rural and Social Communities programme, and were supporting the concept of "One stop shop" community centres.

Members welcomed the presentation, and following a lively question time Ivan was also asked to address members' concern with the way the new county council communication system was working. Members felt they were actually having a much reduced service, and the links clerks had established with local county officers were being threatened.

During the question time, such things as the lack of decent roads, poor public transport links in many areas, and future plans for by passes were covered, with Ivan agreeing to take back members concerns and suggestions to his colleagues.

Workshop B – Health Workshop

A brief outline of the current situation with the National Health Service in Lincolnshire was given by the presenters, Sue Hitchenor from the Lincolnshire SW Primary Care Trust, and Roger Paffard from the United Lincs Hospital Trust, including issues relating to dental and mental health treatment and ambulance services.

An overall view of the national picture was also given, details of how the National Health Service is responding to new challenges, and what this means for primary and secondary care in Lincolnshire. Funding was a major factor in provision of adequate services and there was currently a forecast of a £7,000,000 deficit in Lincolnshire. Healthcare was changing, with provision of a greater range of information and choice, introduction of stronger safeguards and standards, and a greater understanding in the Health Service of patients' needs and wants.

Change was driven by sickness levels, funding rates, public expectations – “consumerism” and the need for flexibility in the services offered. The NHS was responding by various methods such as focus on care of long term conditions, health improvement programmes, closer work with Social Services, out of hospital care, GPs/nurses controlling budgets, reducing management costs and payment by results, choice in service provision, improving targets from diagnosis to treatment, monitoring of Quality Standards and patient/public involvement in planning services.

Hospital care was discussed, and the aim of a reduction in the number of people using hospitals and instead, being able to access other forms of care in the community. Lincolnshire's strengths were in the treatment of “bones, lungs and hearts” and it was planned to build on these, meaning patients would not need to travel out of the area for treatment.

There was comment on ward closures around the county – with 30% less patients occupying beds than 2 years ago. There had been a reduction in the length of hospital stays, now at an average of 5.5 days, an increase in day surgery, and less people attending outpatient departments and more being treated in the community. Discussion then took place on out of hour services, what provision was being made for the growing population, elderly patients occupying hospital beds when this was not the most suitable place for their needs and the current state of mental health care in the county.

To conclude – the aim is for continuous long term improvement in what is a changing service.

Workshop C – Lincolnshire Development

Tony Taylor, Chief Executive of Groundwork Lincolnshire, outlined the role of the organization in the community – one of 50 Groundwork trusts throughout the UK, a not for profit body, with an aim of building sustainable communities through joint environmental action. Nationally, Groundwork had a turnover of £95,000,000 and 2000 staff – currently Groundwork Lincolnshire had 20 members of staff, but could also call on resources from other Trusts at any time. The organization is government sponsored and also works in partnership with local authorities, identifying other funding sources to support the work it carries out in the community.

Groundwork Lincolnshire's project priorities were communities, youth, land, employment and education. Issues to be considered at the start of any venture included the need to address funding sources, sustainability and how future maintenance would be arranged and funded. The aim was to deliver objectives through the most appropriate and effective partnership and the organization would be involved in projects from start to finish with the relevant body. Parish/town councils would need to provide funding in the first instance to “kick-start” any project; further funding could then be identified through other sources.

Groundwork Lincolnshire was a member of the Local Strategic Partnership, contributing to consultations such as the Local Community Plan and involved in strategic development.

Martin Ely then gave an extremely interesting presentation of specific projects undertaken by Groundwork Lincolnshire in the last few years, and of some currently in progress – the organization was being asked more and more to become involved in ventures that were sport and health related, which were proven to improve overall health, reduce anti-social behaviour and crime figures.

Discussion took place on funding schemes, necessary safeguards after completion – a 12 months defect contract being in place with contractors on each project – health and safety issues, and the need to involve young people at every stage of any project, to ensure it met the needs of the community.



As I see it

and not necessarily the view of the Association

Where do town and parish councils sit in the grand scheme of things? – More to the point - Where do we want to sit in the future?

Change appears to be inevitable, and if you believe recent newspaper leaks things are moving. The problem, as I see it, is that every reorganisation in the past 50 years has been “Top down” without getting the local dimension sorted out first.

Will it come before the next election? Who will win the next election? – Is Sir Peter Tapsall correct when he says a future conservative government would abolish regional assemblies?

Members attending my various training events and roadshows will have been bored to death about my constant references to the creeping regionalisation we are seeing. I strongly believe that had the question in the north east referendum been – “Do you want your current regional quango replaced by an elected regional assembly?” the result would have been different.

Not everyone seems to know we have had unelected regional assemblies for many years and they do not come cheaply, with their supporting regional offices and other overheads.

Personally my prediction is that we will end up with a regional police force, whatever alternative is favoured by local people, and the

Home Office has already rejected any amalgamation with North Lincolnshire, which is not in our region. I am also one of the advocates who believe we are in the wrong region.

The East Midlands is a disparate area running from nearly Manchester down to Greater London and we sit on the edge of it with little in common with its other counties. Had we been part of an Eastern region with the likes of Norfolk and Cambridgeshire I think it would have been so much better, but there is little hope of change now.

Observers will have noted the recent “Leaked” document that referred to large unitaries, and we also know that future policies may centre round the large towns and cities. Should that be the future we would probably be looking at centres round Lincoln, Scunthorpe, Grimsby and Peterborough.

To expand them into meaningful unitaries would involve swallowing up large rural hinterlands. Large totally rural unitaries have not much chance of being economically viable, and where would it leave our coastal strip? I do not think the government would be content with a Lincolnshire unitary.

Is clustering the answer? – ie Parish Councils sharing resources but retaining their individual identity and precept raising powers?

Or is there a case for amalgamation? – With each parish retaining its own annual parish meeting?

Would it be better for the market and coastal towns to join with their parishes in something similar to pre 1974? – whilst surrendering large rural areas round the cities to them? – *I live 7 miles from Lincoln and would not wish to be part of a greater Lincoln since the city, in my opinion has lost its way – but what do people living in such places as North Hykeham, Bracebridge and Nettleham think?*

Are people so fed up with local government that no one cares anymore?

Not surprisingly the government is recognising many small parish councils do not share their vision of expecting them to work very hard at the local level with no government funding and little real say in such areas as planning and licensing. It is looking at neighbourhood schemes, and various alternatives.

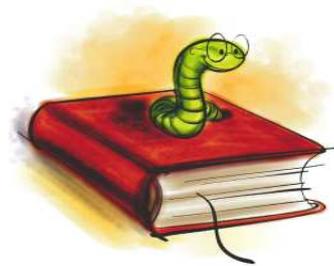
It is my opinion following the Rural Social and Community programme release that town and parish councils are being increasingly linked to the voluntary sector rather than the decision making political sector. Have I got it wrong?

The future rests with government, but it feels it is getting mixed messages from our tier. What do we want? I do think we should be saying something.

The Association would like to hear your views.....

Richard Enderby

Annual Training Scheme



Following on from the success of this Scheme in its initial year, we are now planning training events for April 2006 and details will be issued in the next edition of the County Circular.

The Scheme proved extremely popular with many councils, as it allows Clerks and councillors to attend as many training events throughout the year as they wish, at no cost other than the one-off subscription.

There will be a slight change for 2006 – as you will have read elsewhere in the report of the AGM and Conference, members agreed an additional charge of £5 per head for any all-day courses to cover the cost of catering – unfortunately, considerable losses are being sustained because of non-attendance at these events, as catering has to be finalised more than a week in advance.

Please note that the Annual Training Scheme does not cover the CiLCA Training Package, available separately at an all-inclusive price of £110.

A form for subscription to next year's scheme is enclosed with this Circular – please bring these details to the attention of your Council at the earliest opportunity, as it does provide significant savings for the Council's training budget.

Please also remember that funding is available for clerks of councils with a turnover of less than £25,000 to attend any training – not just the CiLCA package – through the National Training Strategy Bursary Scheme. Forms and further details are available from the office.

Please can we remind all councils of the importance of including a training budget in their overall financial planning each year.

Forthcoming Training Events.....

Booking forms enclosed with this Circular – please return to the office as soon as possible

1 March 10am – 4pm	Clerks' Training Day Wragby Town Hall
15 March 7pm – 9pm	Chairmanship Training
22 March 7pm – 9pm	Chairmanship Training
11 & /25 April 10am – 4pm	Accreditation Training Pointon Village Hall

LALC Office Hours..



Recognising the fact that we have a large number of new Clerks taking up posts, can we please remind everyone of the following:

**Richard's working days:
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday**

**Trisha's working days:
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday**

PLEASE REMEMBER:

**THE OFFICE IS CLOSED ON
FRIDAYS!!!**

Deserved Recognition for “Bert”

The warmest and most generous round of applause at the AGM was reserved for Councillor Bert Barrack, MBE, who received unanimous support following the proposal from the North Area to recognise his service to the Association by electing him as a Vice President. It was indicative of the high esteem Bert is held in, that it was a different Area to his own that put the proposal forward. The South East Area has always appreciated his input and he has also provided sterling support to the County Committee over many years too.

It will come as no surprise to anyone who knows him that his own Parish Council, Tattershall with Thorpe, was one of the first to be awarded “Quality status.” In addition to his Council work he is also very active in many other areas of community life – Royal British Legion, Village Halls, Coningsby Community Hall, Community Council of Lincolnshire, to name but a few.

For many years, Bert, who is renowned for his concise but well considered statements, was active in supporting the cause of maintaining good and economic postal services, and it is still one of his major interests. Never one to suffer fools gladly, he can also be very outspoken in challenging any waste of public money, and he was very concerned about the recent problems within the County Council. Indeed, Ivan Annibal, one of the Workshop speakers felt his wrath in question time, but Bert was reassured to note that things are now getting much better.

I have always appreciated Bert’s keen sense of humour, and if you are ever in any doubt as to whether he is joking or serious, you can always tell by looking for the twinkle in his eye.

This was very noticeable when he attended a recent training course of mine on financial procedures, which resulted in a number of questions about the key role of Responsible Finance Officer(RFO) Bert came up to me at the end, complete with the twinkle, and said “I know why they gave me this job now.”

The President, Denis Glenn, has worked closely with Bert for many years, and said it was an honour that was well deserved. No one would argue with that.

Insurance matters.....

WE hope that readers of this article will already appreciate that a council must have adequate insurance. The importance of a council being covered against third party risks cannot be understated and we are often reminded by newspaper articles and media stories that we live in an ever litigious world. We can debate whether that is a good or bad thing, but the fact remains that insurance is important.

Public Liability

A council should have public liability cover of up to at least £5,000,000. A council should also ensure that its buildings and assets are properly covered against fire and other risks. The cover should include replacement, and therefore regular valuations are often essential to ensure that the cover is sufficient.

Other security measures are appropriate for the council, such as fidelity insurance in respect of financial matters and cover in case an employee brings an action against the council.

But what about officers and members?

Can a council insure or indemnify on their behalf for the actions and duties that they carry out on behalf of the council or on representative outside bodies? There has long been a degree of uncertainty and some disquiet about the extent of the powers of parish and town councils to indemnify their members and officers out of public funds for any personal liability arising out of actions or decisions taken by them in the course of their official duties.

For example, councilors involved in complaints procedures under the Code of Conduct have made it clear that the cost burden of defending such a process can be prohibitive (in terms of expense and time) and councilors were unsure of the position when they represented the council on outside bodies. In April 2000, the case of *R. v Westminster City Council* changed the position somewhat and the court made it clear that a reasonably wide ranging indemnity was lawful within the provisions of Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 in certain circumstances. This point was underlined by Section 1010 of the Local Government Act 2000 which permitted the Secretary of State to make provision for relevant authorities in England to provide indemnities to some or all of their members and officers.

As a result new regulations now provide for a parish or town council in England, or indeed any other relevant authority, to provide an indemnity to any of their members or officers in certain circumstances. This is as a result of the Local Authorities (Indemnities for Members and Officers) Order 2004, which came into force on 23 November 2004.

Indemnity

The effect of the order is that a council may now provide an indemnity to cover personal liability in given situations. This can include the securing of insurance cover for any of its members or officers. The indemnity can be provided in relation to any action by the member or officer in question which has been authorized by the council or which forms part of duties placed upon them or powers conferred on that member or officer, as long as the exercise of that duty or power has the approval of the council or is for the purposes of the council. It also extends to situations where the member or officer is nominated as a representative of the council to an outside body.

A council is free to negotiate such terms for any indemnity or policy of insurance as it thinks to be appropriate. Whilst a council cannot provide an indemnity to cover criminal acts, intentional wrongdoing, fraud and recklessness, or in relation to the bringing of an action in defamations, it is able to provide such an indemnity to defend a claim of defamation.

Indemnity can be provided in relation to any investigation, report, reference, adjudication or other proceedings in relation to the Code of Conduct under Part III of the LGA 2000, but the indemnity can only be provided on the basis that if it is found that the member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct, or if the member admits that he or she has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct, then the council or the insurer as the case may be, shall be reimbursed by that member for any sums expended by the council or the insurer in relation to those proceedings.

If the sums mentioned are not repaid, then they can be recoverable by the council or the insurer as a civil debt. The same type of repayment provisions apply to any indemnity which has been provided, but where the member or officer has been convicted of a criminal offence in respect of the matters for which an indemnity has been provided. The provisions even allow for an indemnity to be available where the action complained of is outside the powers of the council, but there must be a reasonable belief that the matter in question was not outside of the powers of the council at the appropriate time.

The times we live in

We live in a time, as previously mentioned, when claims against public bodies and officials are accelerating. If those with public responsibility are to feel safe in the tasks that they carry out within their community, it is to be hoped that these measures are to be welcomed.



Traditional direction signs..

.....often known as fingerposts, make a very important contribution to the local character and identity of villages and rural areas across England. Many are in a poor state of repair and require refurbishment but, increasingly, progressive local authorities are recognizing their inherent qualities. They are part of the world-famous image of England that so many visitors come to see and enjoy.

Local authorities should do all they can to restore surviving examples and to reintroduce them wherever possible in appropriate locations. Parish councils have a key role to play in documenting their location and condition and in highlighting opportunities for their reintroduction.

Traffic Advisory Leaflet (6/05) published by the Department for Transport, English Heritage, the Countryside Agency and CPRE provides advice on these signs, the repair and conservation of existing examples, and guidance on their reintroduction in appropriate locations.

Copies are available from the Department for Transport – telephone 020 7944 2478, or e-mail tal@dft.gsi.gov.uk.

The leaflet is also available to download from the Department's website – www.dft.gov.uk – once on the homepage, click on Roads and Vehicles, then Traffic and Parking Management, then Traffic Advisory Leaflets.

A Reminder about Members' Allowances

***Please remember that since the introduction of new legislation-
The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances)(England)***

Regulations 2003 which came into force on 1st May 2003 - councils need to follow a set procedure in setting any form of allowance for members, including mileage.

Councils need to consider any recommendations made by the District Council's Remuneration Panel, and either resolve to accept the recommendations, or set alternative rates – a notice giving details of their decision then has to be placed on a public notice board for a minimum of 14 days.

The original legislation allowed for elected members only to be paid any form of allowance, but this was later amended – and co-opted members can now also receive mileage and subsistence allowances for official Council business. However, please be aware that co-opted members are still not able to claim a basic member's allowance.

Please remember that mileage and other allowances for clerks and Council staff are a separate matter, as employment issues need to be resolved by discussion, and will depend on what is agreed between employer and employee.

We are grateful to Jennie Cooper, Clerk to Alford Town Council, for submission of the following article – an illuminating tale of what a Council (and its Clerk) can do to make a difference in the community.....

Market magic!

What? Did my ears deceive me? Is what I've written in the minutes true? I know it's been many years since I studied Pitman, but surely my shorthand can't be SO wrong. No, it's not, Mr Pitman stood me in good stead – it's correct. Councillors DID vote to take over the running of the Friday Stall Market. In the cold light of the following morning all the confidence of the previous evening, all the "Yes we can do it" has evaporated. So, what next...?

A little background – this all came about because the District Council wanted to make sure its market strategy broke even and the Friday Market in Alford was, for them and their accounting procedures, a loss maker (as many markets were). So, the answer for the District Council was to cease operating the Friday Market. The Councillor who proposed that the Town Council take it over had done his homework, and the Council was confident it could be managed locally and show healthier accounts.

So, decision made....

The first move was to apply for grant aid (under the Market Towns Initiative fund) for funding to purchase two custom built and easy to handle stalls to accommodate the existing traders who were vital to the project and who could not supply their own. An application to CCL Fizz Fund followed. Of course, applying for grant aid is not without its problems but discussions and compromise followed and, at the time of writing, the main funding has been awarded.

Stage Two commences now. Between us, the councillor who had the bright idea and myself had a lot of work to do. Cllr Allan organised a local aluminium fabricator (that's a welder to you and me) who could build the stalls to our design and specification and organised someone locally who could make striped canopies to fit. He rushed around organising templates and patterns, visiting the suppliers and generally doing all the outside organising. As it was during the rainy season (that's summer to the rest of us) I opted to remain in the office and do the administrative organisation. There's more to it than you think! Our insurers had to be contacted and their requirements factored in. An agreement had to be reached with the District Council over licensing, hand over date and use of the town's Market Place. Storage had to be organised for the stalls, someone to put the stalls out early morning and clear away afterwards had to be arranged, existing stall holders spoken to, charges for stalls and pitches agreed, licences agreed between the Town Council and the traders. Each stage of the process had to be carefully recorded and reported to Council meetings for approval and resolution.

A potential concern relating to VAT was fortunately resolved by the very helpful Customs and Excise Office. The District Council's Officer in charge of markets has been immensely helpful and given guidance on many aspects. It's been an eye opener on just how complicated running a market can be from issues such as ensuring traders have insurance to how to deal with any rubbish left behind. None of the issues were insurmountable, all can be and most have been resolved. Even down to establishing relationships between tables in my database!

We're almost ready now and the future of the Friday market is in local hands. Can we run it successfully? Can we improve and expand it? Yes, of course we can. Will my Access database tables link together successfully? Of course they will. The coming together of this project owes much to the co-operation of the traders, the assistance given from the District Council in the form of financial aid, a good working relationship with officers there, the enthusiasm and initiative of the individual councillor who proposed the idea and of course the support and backing of all the town councillors.

From a Clerk's point of view this has been an exciting challenge and soon "Market Supervisor" can be added to the varied aspects of this job. One thing left to ask before we start.....do I get a peaked cap?

6th September 2005

DECLARING INTERESTS AT MEETINGS

When do I need to declare my interests?

You need to declare your interests at all meetings where the matters being discussed, or to be discussed, affect your interests.

What interests do I need to declare in a meeting?

As a first step, you need to declare any **personal interests** you have in a matter. You then need to decide if you have a **prejudicial interest** in that matter.

What is a personal interest?

You have a personal interest in a matter if that matter affects the well-being or financial position of you, your relatives or your friends more than it would affect other people in the Council's area. You must look at how any decision reached in a meeting would affect:

- your and their jobs and businesses;
- your and their employers, firms you or they are a partner of, and companies you or they are a director of;
- corporate bodies in which you or they have a "beneficial interest" in a type of share with a face value (as shown on the share certificate) of more than £5,000; and
- the following organisations in which you or they hold a position of general control or management:
 - Organisations where you or they represent your authority;
 - Other public authorities or organisations which deliver public services;
 - Companies, industrial and provident societies, charities or charitable organisations;
 - Organisations with a main purpose which includes influencing public opinion or policy;
 - Trade unions or professional associations.

Under the Model Code of Conduct:

- A "relative" is a partner (someone you are married to or live with as if you were married), a parent, a parent-in-law, a son or daughter, a stepson or stepdaughter, the child of a partner, a brother or sister, a grandparent, a grandchild, an uncle or aunt, a nephew or niece, or the husband, wife or partner of any of these people.
- Other people in the Council's area are people who live in the Council's area, or who pay Council Tax or Business Rates to the Council.

You need only declare the interests you know about, and you do not need to investigate the business or other interests of your relatives and friends.

A personal interest can affect you, your relatives or your friends positively or negatively. So, if you or they would stand to lose by the decision, you should also declare it.

You also have a **personal interest** in a matter if it relates to any interests you must register.

What do I need to do if I have a personal interest in a matter?

You must declare that you have a personal interest, and the nature of that interest, before the matter is discussed or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

Do I need to declare a personal interest in a meeting if it is on the register of interests?

Yes, the Model Code says that even if your interest is shown on the register of interests, you must also declare it in meetings where matters relating to that interest are discussed.

Can I stay in the meeting if I have a personal interest?

You can take part in the meeting and vote on the matter unless your personal interest is also a **prejudicial interest**.

What is a prejudicial interest?

A prejudicial interest is one which a member of the public who knows the relevant facts would reasonably think is so significant that it is likely to adversely affect your judgement of the public interest. You must ask yourself whether a member of the public – if he or she knew all the facts – would think that your personal interest was so significant that it would probably adversely affect your decision on the matter. If he or she would think that your judgement would be adversely affected, then you have a prejudicial interest.

You will also have a prejudicial interest if you are involved in an overview and scrutiny committee meeting which is checking a decision taken by another committee of which you are a member and were present when that decision was taken. However, you can be called to attend the overview and scrutiny committee meeting to give evidence or answer questions on the matter.

What is not a prejudicial interest?

The Model Code of Conduct sets out some types of interests which are not themselves prejudicial. They are interests arising from:

- you being a member of another local authority;
- you holding a position of general control or management in another public authority;
- you are representing the Council in an organisation;
- your Council's functions relating to housing if you hold a tenancy or lease with the Council and are not more than two months behind with your rent (as long as the matter does not relate to your particular tenancy or lease);
- your Council's functions relating to school meals, transport and travelling expenses if you are a parent or guardian of a child in full-time education (unless it relates particularly to a school your child attends);
- your Council's functions relating to statutory sick pay if you are receiving this, or are entitled to this, from your Council; or
- your Council's functions relating to Members' allowances or payments made under Sections 173 – 176 of the Local Government Act 1972, or Section 18 of the Local Government Housing Act 1989.

In these situations you will still need to consider whether there are any other factors present that may make the interest prejudicial.

What do I need to do if I have a prejudicial interest?

If you have a prejudicial interest in a matter being discussed at a meeting, you must declare that you have a prejudicial interest, and the nature of the interest, and then leave the room. You cannot take part in discussions on that matter or try to improperly influence anyone's decision on the matter.

It is important that you leave the room so you and the Council are seen to be acting in an appropriate and unbiased way, and to remove pressure from the remaining members.

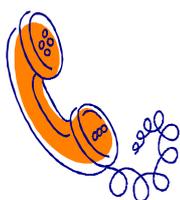
Can I get a "dispensation" to allow me to take part in meetings where I have a prejudicial interest?

You can apply to the Standards Committee for a dispensation if:

- Over 50% of the Council or committee members would be prevented from taking part in the meeting because of prejudicial interests; or
- The political balance at the meeting would be upset.

If the Standards Committee approves your application, it must grant the dispensation, in writing, before the meeting is held. If you need a dispensation, you should apply for one as soon as is reasonably possible.

UPDATE ON THE LCC CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE



OUR AIM

Our Services need to be
CUSTOMER FOCUSED

Access to our services needs to be

SIMPLIFIED

First point of contact queries resolved providing

IMPROVED CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

As Lincolnshire County Council's new Customer Service Centre is now established and receiving telephone calls from customers within Lincolnshire, I wanted to take this opportunity to update you on the new way of working and to share with you the composition of the teams within the Customer Service Centre (CSC). From talking to some of your colleagues I am aware of some of the issues you believe have arisen since the introduction of the CSC and would like to explain the reason for the new set of telephone numbers and how you can interact with the teams and the officers within certain directorates.

How can we fulfil "OUR AIM"?

The aim is to provide a centralised service for advice, questions and problems regarding County Council Services. The focussing of our service delivery through a single point of contact will simplify access and reduce confusion about where and how customers access our services.

The current status of services available at the Customer Service Centre is as follows:-

1) Consumer Direct - East Midlands

A telephone and on line consumer advice centre, supported by the Department of Trade and Industry. They offer support for the whole of the East Midlands area and these counties have moved from their own Trading Standards numbers to the CSC since May.

2) Customer Relations Unit

The Social Services team of Adults who receive calls regarding the welfare and referrals from customers and professionals for Social Services, the Childrens' team who provide an informed response to customers who have concerns about the welfare of a child, and the Registration team who receive calls from customers who wish to make an appointment to register a birth, death or marriage or make an appointment to attend a ceremony to become a British citizen.

3) New Lincolnshire County Council services - phase 1

Consists of the following areas:-

Schools Transport

Responsible for dealing with customer calls regarding a wide range of queries on entitlement to school and college transport - the team works closely with colleagues in the Education Directorate and the Transport Services Group.

Education

Covers all enquiries relating to all the stages of the education process from pre school to lifelong learning including school admissions, free school meals, early years and childcare to special needs and home education.

Cultural Services

The directorate is a diverse one and the team covers several individual areas including community grants, Youth Service, Libraries, Archives, music and heritage enquiries.

Corporate

Covers the internal workings of LCC and also involved in community and development matters, including overseeing the Customer Complaints process.

Highways and Planning

The Lincolnshire highways network totals over 5,600 miles, with over 2,000 miles of footway. The team deals with well over 100 different types of H&P related issues from street lighting to abandoned vehicles and drainage to waste management.

How to contact the service provider you need at the Customer Service Centre:

Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages 01522 782244	Highways and Planning 01522 782070
Cultural Services 01522 782040	Social Services – Adults 01522 782155
Community Safety 01522 782050	Social Services – Children 01522 782111
Corporate Services 01522 782060	Schools Transport 01522 782020
Education 01522 782030	Consumer Direct (East Midlands) 08454 040506

How will this help our Customers?

The County Council aims to put its customers first at all times. We believe that if we can resolve your problems or queries at your first point of contact we will improve your experience and provide the highest quality service.

The Highways and Planning Directorate has a dedicated team of trained advisors dealing with specific service related issues. The advisors had an intensive six month induction period where they all spend the majority of time in the Highways divisional offices and learnt the job.

The Highways and Planning team of advisors have access to information for the whole of Lincolnshire through the use of modern technology. If one of our trained advisors cannot resolve your enquiry immediately the call will be logged as a request for service and passed to the relevant technical officer to deal with. We believe this is the most effective way for you to access our services. Progress on requests is updated regularly and then is readily available to frontline advisors. This allows the most up to date information to be provided to you should you need to contact us again.

Technical staff will maintain contact with parishes and where necessary respond to the specific service requests. Where there is a need for ongoing dialogue or you feel a need to speak to the relevant person directly you will be able to do so. The provision of the Customer Service Centre offers an easily accessible contact point with dedicated and fully trained staff and will therefore make our service delivery to you more efficient, effective and above all improve your customer experience.

Mark Haynes, Customer Service Centre Manager, Lincolnshire County Council

Assemblies seek to move Partnerships forward

East and West Lindsey District Councils joined with the Association to pilot Parish Assemblies this year, and whilst they were slightly different in their format, they were well received and there is every reason to believe these can be built on to create a greater understanding and better ways of serving our communities.

At both assemblies, managers and staff from the various district council departments attended to explain their roles and demonstrate their methods, etc, to our members. It was also good to be able to put faces to names and telephone voices of the contacts we have spoken with over the years.

West Lindsey held their assembly in the evening at the Festival Hall Market Rasen, and took the opportunity to explain how they were moving forward with such things as their community and corporate plans, and answered questions raised by our members. Our President, Denis Glenn, was also there for the occasion.

East Lindsey elected for a morning assembly which was held on beautiful morning at Skegness Embassy Theatre. A pre-meeting very early morning walk was quite bracing. Young people from schools in the district were involved, and in addition to the district council detailing their changes and future plans, a presentation was also given by Richard Wills outlining the future vision of the county council. Our Chairman, Christopher Notley, and the Chairman of East Lindsey signed the new Parish Charter.

The meeting then broke into "Table workshops" and the results of those interesting and lively deliberations were presented in a plenary session prior to lunch and departure. The minutes and outcomes from those sessions are being sent to all towns and parishes in the district.

We are very grateful to all the staff from both districts who gave of their time and made the events successful.

We are currently talking to West Lindsey about a follow up in the spring of 2006, and it is intended to focus on such things as planning at that assembly.

East Lindsey set up a steering group with our members, which had its first meeting on November 22nd where it also reviewed the paperwork from the Skegness assembly. Our representatives at the meeting have indicated it was very useful and has been a way of moving things forward.

The meeting also agreed to have another assembly in the spring of 2006 to build on the first one, and cover the topics our members wish to see covered - ***please let us have your ideas after Christmas.*** We are also extending an invitation to Crispin Moore, the senior civil servant behind the "Quality Council" scheme, and a key player in such things as the National Training Steering Group, to attend.

There was also agreement to put on specialist training courses in various parts of the district in the new year responding to requests, and these will also give an opportunity to develop a greater understanding of what is involved in the various services such as planning, health and safety, IT and election issues.

Tony Williams introduced a new "Customer Services" brochure and updated the meeting on the plans to produce a contact list for members.

Other subjects discussed included the ability to pass planning applications electronically for those that want them, how we can have a better say in licensing control, progress on planning feedback, and the possibility of utilising surplus IT equipment in small parishes. Tony is also still looking at the differential charges to ring Manby, dependent on where you are in the district.

As part of the work to improve communications, Tony introduced Debbie Cook, the new members' services team leader who is going to act as a link with parish clerks to assist with those awkward general queries. This was an initiative welcomed by our members

Debbie is based at Manby, and her direct line number is 01507 329431.

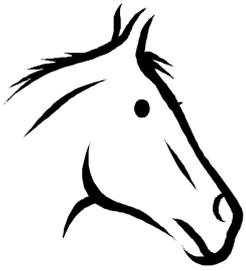
We are also continuing to have discussions with County Council members and senior officers, and we can update you of progress in that area in the next edition.

One positive outcome is that County staff are sharing a pilot IT scheme with us that should lead to free web sites for parishes, but something seen as a negative by many of our members is the new communication system. It is still early days, and very different to the contact list we previously enjoyed, but talks are ongoing, and Mark Haynes, the very capable new Manager of the project, is going round meetings and doing his best to fine tune things. He has also given an open invitation to members and clerks to visit the centre, and Trisha was very impressed on her visit. ***Let us have your suggestions.***

Readers will know from previous editions, I have been pushing the need for the Association, countywide, and individual councils as leaders of their local communities to get more involved with health issues. We highlighted this at one of the workshops at the AGM, and recent things such as the closures of wards at Skegness and Grantham, and the lack of a dentist of any description in Mablethorpe have proved the point.

I am pleased to be able to advise you we have now established a single point of contact with the Trusts, Janette Goodchild, and we are meeting to take things forward. Again we will keep you informed...

Let us have your concerns/suggestions.



On the right track?

This summer, parish councils in Lincolnshire were given the opportunity to take part in a survey, asking for their views on countryside access within their area. The survey was undertaken by Lincolnshire County Council as part of the research required for the development of a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). The production of a ROWIP is a new duty, arising from the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, and local authorities are required to publish their Plans by November 2007.

Questionnaires were sent out during May, and parishes were asked to complete the survey as part of their usual meeting. The response to the survey has been terrific, with 262 parishes returning questionnaires.

Views of the network

The key findings from the parish council survey were:

- Most parishes considered that there were enough routes for walking in their area, whilst the provision for cycling and riding was less well catered for.
- Over half of parishes would like to see more routes for walking, cycling and riding. However, only a minority of parishes wanted to see more routes available for off-road motorised vehicles.
- The current maintenance of paths needs to be improved, although signposting is good.
- Rights of way are not considered to be overused, and people feel safe using paths and tracks.



Respondents to the survey considered that notice boards, leaflets and articles in local newspapers were the most effective ways of providing information to the public. The Internet and parish newsletters were also considered important media for increasing awareness of access opportunities locally.

High priority issues highlighted in the survey were to:

- Improve the maintenance of the network to a better condition
- Enhancement of the existing network, and the creation of circular routes
- Undertake research to ensure all historical routes are properly recorded

The responses are now being looked at in context with other completed surveys undertaken with the public and user group organisations. It is anticipated that all of the assessments will be incorporated into a draft plan. The draft plan will go to public consultation during 2006.

*Article submitted by:
Andrew Watson
Senior Countryside Access Officer
Lincolnshire County Council*



Involving the Citizens of the Future

Young people are the future of our local communities and it is important that parish and town councils recognise this fact. Nearly a quarter of the national population is made up of people under the age of eighteen. They may not be able to vote yet, but it is essential that their views are heard.

Article 12 of the UN Human Rights Convention states that young people under the age of 18 have the legal right to formally express their opinions and for those opinions to be taken seriously. It places a legal responsibility on decision-makers to consult young people about the things that will affect them and recommends this be done through establishing youth based groups such as youth councils. For more information, please visit www.article12.com

Youth Councils

Youth councils can act as a means of involving young people in their communities and can lead to a safer, more vibrant and sustainable community for everyone.

Youth Councils enable young people to:

- Voice their concerns
- Participate in local government
- Be empowered to take decisions and action to improve their local community.

Youth Councils enable local councils to;

- Represent the whole of their community
- Become more vibrant, modern and dynamic
- Encourage young people to vote and become councillors when they are old enough
- Improve services to young people

Youth Councils enables the local community to;

- Become safer and more sustainable
- More vibrant and progressive
- Improve services and be more representative

There is no set range for youth councils but most involve 11-18 year olds – as this is quite a diverse age group, the council may wish to develop some sort of mentoring system between older and younger members or between town/parish councillors and the youth councillors, to ensure that everyone develops their role and does not lose interest.

The council will need to establish how many youth councillors would be suitable for the community, bearing in mind the number who might be interested. It can be difficult to get young people to stand for election, so it can be a good idea to get at least some of the representation directly through schools, etc. It is essential that young people choose their own representatives - it may be useful to draw up nomination forms along the lines of those used by parish/town councils and make them available to possible candidates, who should then be nominated by their peer group, not by adults. The council might aim for a certain number of youth councillors per age group across the parish, to ensure fair representation.

Different colour nomination forms for different age groups can be used, in order to make the nomination process simpler. An election means young people know the parish/town council has not just hand-picked its youth councillors. However, it can be difficult to generate interest and a council may therefore invite nominations from schools, youth groups, etc. The council may begin by creating a Youth Electoral Register – perhaps by contacting all the local schools, community groups etc in the area.

It is important to check with the Local Education Authority (LEA) that this information may be collated (although there is unlikely to be a problem, providing a guarantee is given it will not be provided to anyone else for any other purpose).

It is essential that membership of the youth council is renewed regularly. Membership may be on a yearly basis, with core groups ensuring new representation is put forward at regular intervals. This is where it may be useful to get school teachers and youth workers involved to ensure the profile of the youth council is maintained. The youth council should be advertised on the local notice board, libraries, press, web-site etc in order to ensure maximum publicity. It is also advisable to run the youth council in line with the school year - perhaps commencing in the autumn, to avoid exam times. Remember that young people are not apathetic but they feel institutions do not represent them and they are powerless - make them feel they can make a difference and the youth council will be a success!

Most youth councils mirror the local government structure. The most popular type of youth councils are based around current parish/town council structures and councils may wish to use this or, alternatively, adopt a more informal and flexible approach to meetings and communications etc. It is a good idea to consult the young people involved as to how they would prefer their council to be run. A mixture of formal and informal may be the best way forward. Some formal structure is needed, so that the youth council can feed into the general workings of the council as a whole and be regarded as a serious body with some real power and influence. At the same time, some informality with regard to communications and meeting format may be more appropriate and will keep young people more interested, informed and engaged.

A youth council should operate in a similar way to a parish or town council committee and be considered a valuable part of the decision-making process. Agendas and minutes should be prepared by the council's administration in consultation with the Chair of the youth council or other leading representative. An officer should be there to provide support if requested and providing all decisions made by the youth council are legal and within budget, there should be no reason for the local council to intervene. All youth councils, like any other council meeting, should be open to the public and minutes made publicly available. The minutes may contain recommendations and proposals to be put forward for consideration by the council. It is essential that councillors take an interest in the youth council and ensure there is adequate contact between both parties.

Enough meetings should be held to ensure decisions are agreed and the youth council is active, but not so many that people lose interest and focus. It is useful to have regular meetings, held on the same day and at the same time, so that people do not forget to attend. It can be useful to have some kind of communication method for youth council members between meetings (possibly via a web-based group). It may also help to hold the meetings in a more informal setting, if appropriate, such as a youth centre, where the maximum number of young people will be encouraged to attend.

As with any organisation, it is essential there is a clear focus in order for the youth council to be successful. Councils may find it useful to set out terms of reference, a mission statement or youth council constitution. This will enable the youth council to work efficiently and achieve real results. By giving the youth council a real set of structures, it will enable them to act as a properly functioning organisation with power and responsibility over its own affairs.

A youth council constitution should include;

- A mission statement and set of aims
- The youth council structure
- Members of the council (including the executive committee or any other committees and their roles)
- How the youth council will operate (including how often it will meet etc)

The youth council should not be simply a discussion group, but give real power and responsibility to the young people involved. The council should set aside a budget for youth related issues and make sure the youth councillors have a real input into how that money is spent.

There are also funding opportunities that the youth council should be encouraged to access. It is important that councils suggest other options - such as approaching local businesses, etc. - and encourage the youth council's ideas. Young people may have innovative ideas on how other services (not specifically youth related) can be improved - for example, the environment and conservation. Members of the youth council may also have hidden talents - such as IT, web-designing, photographic or journalistic skills, that may be of use to the council.

What might a youth council be interested in and what can it realistically achieve? Well, that depends on the youth council and the facilities already available. Most young people say that there is not enough to do in their local communities. A youth council can request more facilities for young people and ensure these meet the needs of young people. It can also create a system of ownership and respect among the young people that will ensure services are developed and sustained.

There are many issues affecting young people that a parish/town council may not even consider – such as (particularly in rural areas) feeling trapped through lack of transport to neighbouring towns/villages. A youth council could put pressure on local bus companies to change or provide more routes in order to meet local needs and enable access to vital services in other areas. In addition to existing facilities, young people may have ideas for creation of such things as a skate park, snooker hall or just a safe place to meet and hang out. Youth councils are often able to apply for grants to fund these and other facilities. They can also help to identify suitable sites.

Much of the time young people just want a safe place to hang out with friends and socialise. They may also want somewhere to go to for advice and help. Young people are often interested in conservation work, preventing vandalism, recycling projects and promoting the place in which they live. If a youth council achieves real results in its local community it is more likely to keep its core membership base.

To sum up – the Council should:

- Be prepared to commit financially
- Provide support and advice when needed
- Supervise and assist with administration but avoid being overbearing
- Give the Youth Council enough freedom to operate

Other options

Some councils may feel that, for whatever reason, formation of a local youth council is not practicable or possible. In this case, efforts should be made to involve the young people in the community by other means. This might involve the creation of one or two non-voting seats on the local council for local youth representation, or the introduction of regular meetings with delegates from local youth organisations, schools, etc.

Every effort should be made to consult with and listen to the young people in the parish – they are the voters of the future and should have valuable input into the local community and the local council's decision-making process.



Wild plants and your Village Green

Village Greens can be havens for wild plants that have disappeared from large areas of the countryside. Many are not realizing their potential for wild flowers because they are mown frequently and are no longer grazed by livestock. Today, Village Greens are often flower-less, close-cut lawns.

In many cases, wild plants characteristic to the local area can return, with a little help and very little expense.

Further information and advice can be found at:

- www.floralocale.org - propagation techniques, case studies
- www.english-nature.org.uk – useful publications
- www.wildlifetrusts.org.uk – details of your local wildlife trust
- www.conservationfoundation.org.uk – details of The Parish Pump Programme, community projects, and funding opportunities
- www.rhs.org.uk/britaininbloom/index.asp - Britain in Bloom campaign recognizes the value of managing public open spaces for native wild plants
- www.alge.org.uk – to find your local ecologist
- www.wildlife-gardening.co.uk – for information on native plants, wild flowers, ponds and trees

How to write a press release

A press release can be a very effective tool in getting the Council's message across on any number of issues.

- *It should be no longer than two sides of A4 - one side is better.*
- *The most important aspects of the release should come first, with other points descending with importance.*
- *Your contact details should be at the end of the press release.*

All press releases should answer the following questions.

- *What happened?*
- *Where has it happened?*
- *Why has it happened?*
- *When has it happened?*
- *How has it happened?*

The press release must be presented in an easy to read format – remember that people working in the media are very busy and working towards very tight deadlines.

Set up a database of key journalists and editorial staff in your area that might be interested in the stories that come from your council. It is worthwhile setting up meetings with journalists just to get to know them and for them to get to know you.

You should call the relevant editors or news editors or feature editors at your local regional newspapers, and find out how to submit a press release and provide information for news and feature stories. Be aware of the deadlines for submission of articles for print.

Make sure that either a member or officer is fully briefed on the story, and that contact details are provided should an interview or further comment be requested.

DRAWING UP A POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

What do we value?

- Do we value people from all backgrounds and believe they have a right to be free from prejudice and discrimination?
- Do we believe that while people are all different, they have an equal right to benefit from opportunities?
- Do we recognise that discrimination can be overt or covert – open or hidden?
- Do we endeavour not to discriminate on the grounds of :
Ability; age; colour; ethnic or national origin; gender; gender reassignment; intellect; marital status; nationality; race; religion or belief; sexual orientation; social or economic status (this is not an exhaustive list)
- Is equality of opportunities an integral part of what we do, not an after thought?

How will we do this?

People (members, users, staff and volunteers)

- Would we challenge discriminatory comments, and back colleagues up in challenging discriminatory comments?
- Do we recognise that people on the receiving end may need support?
- Do we welcome discussion with people with special requirement to identify how their needs might be met?
- Will we make sure anyone providing information about discrimination is not victimised?

Resources

- Are the resources balanced, and do they reflect the cultures/languages used in the community?
- Are they accessible to all abilities/cultures/languages of the community?

Meetings

- Do we hold these at a time and place suitable to the majority, if not to all?
- Do we give information/agenda/notes in relevant language/form?

Food

- Do we respect people's dietary needs, whether these are cultural, medical or moral?

Employment and volunteering

- Do we make a commitment to equal opportunities as part of job descriptions?
- Do we advertise, in different languages if necessary?
- Do we focus on ability, not disability?
- Do we treat applicants fairly?
- Do we review our procedures and application forms?
- Are volunteers respected and supported as much as staff?
- Do we have an induction procedure for staff and volunteers?

Training

- Are staff and volunteers encouraged to attend training relevant to their work as a whole, not just in relation to equal opportunities?
- Do we encourage staff and volunteers to look at their persona/career development?

Disability Discrimination Act

- Would we seek advice on making information and premises accessible under the DDA?
- Would we seek advice on recruitment and employment issues under the DDA?

Monitoring and Reviewing

- Does the make up of volunteers, staff, users and members reflect that of the community?
- Do we review our procedures and application forms for recruitment – of staff, volunteers and members?

This policy was adopted at a meeting held on

Signed on behalf of council.....

Position

GUIDANCE ON
DRAWING UP A POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

What do we believe?

- o Do we recognise that some if not all our activities impact on our environment?
- o Do we recognise that *everyone* is responsible for our environment and should play their part, however small?
- o Do we see environmental issues as integral to our practice, and not as an afterthought?

What will we do?

- o Do we make environmental issues an agenda item at each committee meeting?
- o Do we review our activities and procedures to identify and evaluate their impact on our environment?
- o Do we set priorities to address any issues arising?
- o Do we take environmental impact into consideration when considering quotes for services, even if this means going for a dearer option?
- o Do we aim to keep abreast of innovation and ideas?

Equipment

- o Do we maximise the use of recycled and other environmentally friendly products and services?
- o Do we avoid waste and recycle and encourage recycling as much as we can?
- o Do we maintain vehicles, heating systems and appliances to ensure maximum efficiency and minimum waste and pollution?
- o When replacing the above, do we take into account environmental factors?

Communication

- o Do we maximise the use of IT and media for communicating, and IT for keeping records, so minimising 'hard copies'? (But be aware that not everyone has, or wants, access to the Internet)
- o If using paper, do we use recycled where possible, and print on both sides

Premises

- o Do we have a no smoking policy?
- o Do we maximise the use of recycled and other environmentally friendly products and services?

Transport

- o Do we encourage the use of public transport/car sharing/cycling/walking?

This policy was adopted at a meeting held on

Signed on behalf of Council

Position

Clerks' Pay Award 2006

We are now well into budget setting time and consequently we have received many enquiries about the likely pay settlement for 2006.

Many of you will be aware that the agreement for 2006 formed part of a three year agreement established in 2004 and is for a general increase of 2.95%, or the retail price index figure for October 2005, whichever is the greater. As we write this article, the index for October has yet to be published but we do know that the September figure was 2.7%. Therefore unless there is a significant blip this month, 2.95% would seem to be a reasonable figure for budget purposes.

Once the actual figure is established, NALC and SLCC will work together to publish the scales for 2006/7 as soon as possible and we will hopefully publish these in the next edition of the County Circular.



A Seasonal Tale

Long ago and very far away, Santa was getting ready for his annual trip...but there were problems everywhere... four of the elves were sick, the trainee elves did not produce the toys as fast as usual so Santa was beginning to feel the pressure of being really behind schedule....then Mrs. Claus told Santa that her mum was coming to visit.....

This stressed Santa even more...when he went to harness the reindeer he found that three of them were about to give birth and two had jumped the fence and were out heaven knows where...more stress.

And then, when he began to load the sleigh one of the boards on the sleigh cracked and the toy bag fell to the ground and scattered all the toys...so, frustrated, Santa went into the house for a cup of coffee and a shot of whisky...but he found that the elves had hit the drinks cupboard and there was nothing left... and in his frustration he dropped the coffee pot and it broke into hundreds of little pieces all over the kitchen floor... he went to get the broom and found that mice had eaten the straw it was made from.

Just then the doorbell rang and Santa made his way to the door.... he opened it and there was a little angel with a great big Christmas tree. And the angel said: "Santa, where would you like to put this Christmas tree??"

And that, my friends, is how the little angel came to be on top of the Christmas tree.....



A Christmas thought:

STRESSED is just DESSERTS spelled backwards.

What did the big candle say to the little candle?
I'm going out tonight!

'Father Christmas has two reindeer. He calls one Edward and the other one Edward! I bet you can't tell me why he does that!'

'Oh, yes I can.' the elf said.

'Because two 'Eds are better than one, of course!'

Groan.....

*And finally
- from Richard and Trisha -
a very Happy Christmas to all
our councillors and clerks, and best wishes
for 2006!*

**Please note that the office will be closed from
22nd December to 2 January inclusive**



This is a publication by the Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils for its members within the County and the views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association.

This Circular is designed for circulation amongst Councillors and the Clerk. Unless you have a copy each, please read it and pass it on, making sure it is returned to the Clerk for reference.

We can provide additional copies of each County Circular for your Council, for an annual photocopying charge of £1.60 per set of 4 issues per year.

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