

What we do in West Sussex

Advice up to 7.30pm each day and for urgent matters outside the normal working week, principally

- Legal support, either referred to NALC or for urgent matters to a firm of solicitors under our retainer arrangement that the CEO / DCEO can authorise at their discretion
- Finance advice, response usually with 24 hours from an experienced accountant or auditor
- Planning guidance, available from SSALC's Planning Associate

Training – full programme to cover needs of Chairmen, Councillors and Clerks

- Programme set out on SSALC website, available as open sessions or bespoke for individual councils

Communications

- Website – our main method of conveying information from Government, NALC and other agencies
- Newsletter – electronic, normally sent out weekly for Clerks to share with councillors containing matters of local and national interest

Collection of income

- Subscription income is the life blood of SSALC and its receipt ensures we can continue to provide the services our member councils require; unlike some County Associations SSALC does not take any contribution from County or District Councils thus ensuring independence

Conflict resolution

- It is an unfortunate fact that many of the issues encountered by parishes result from councillors in dispute with each other or with the Clerk. A pragmatic approach to resolving tensions can often be achieved by the CEO or DCEO working with councillors, drawing on HR advice as required. We are fortunate in that the DCEO is a solicitor and former Monitoring Officer, well equipped to deal with such issues.

Recruitment

- SSALC has built up a knowledge base to assist councils with the recruitment of staff; detailed records are maintained of the level of interest around each vacancy and the number of applications received. Pay levels for vacancies are retained and assist councils to recognise market forces when a vacancy arises.

Business Planning

- Visioning and objective setting, this process assists councils to engage with residents and share thoughts on future direction of council priorities. Having agreed objectives makes it easier to monitor performance and undertake staff appraisals.

Engagement with principal authorities

- Where a council might be in dispute with the County or its District Council, SSALC CEO will discuss it with the Chairman and if appropriate arrange to speak to the CEO of WSCC or the DC.
- A constructive dialogue exists between SSALC and the principal authorities in West Sussex

Advice on creation of new councils or merging existing councils

- From time to time a community will petition for a Community Governance Review and SSALC CEO is required to advise. In East Sussex for example the Bexhill situation is moving towards elections in May 2021 and the creation of a new parish/town council, this has involved significant input from the CEO

and likely to continue through 2021. In West Sussex advice is being provided for the non-statutory Neighbourhood Councils in Horsham and interest expressed in the creation of a new parish west of Horsham. The idea of parishing the whole of Adur District has also been floated.

Engagement with Sussex Police and the PCC at all levels

- Regular engagement with the Chief Constable and District Commanders helps ensure that operational policing concerns of member councils are dealt with at the highest level.
- PCC / SSALC Focus Groups with local councils and communities attended by the CEO is a way of providing those communities with a means of getting their concerns to the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable. Also CEO attends the Business Crime Group with the aim of protecting vulnerable rural and farm shops across Sussex
- The CEO is currently Chair of the 101 Independent Advisory Group, a team of 20 people from all sectors across Sussex including local councillors and clerks, established to monitor the effectiveness of non-emergency contact
- The development of this relationship means that requests from SSALC for attention in a particular community is taken seriously by the police.

Support for the Board

- Preparation of agendas and reports
- Production of minutes and action arising from decisions
- Attendance as required at District Association meetings

Engagement with NALC

- CALC Chairmen attend NALC Assembly once a quarter, the CEO meets with NALC staff and colleagues around the country once a week to share concerns and learn from each other.

Engagement with East Sussex Civilian & Military Partnership Board

- With 42,000 military veterans in West Sussex, the County Council has the CMPB where a representative of each Borough or District, Regular and Reserve Forces, Cadet Forces, NHS, Service Charities meet to uphold the Military Covenant; SSALC CEO also has a seat on the Board. Maintains awareness of grant availability for local groups and parish councils.
- The CEO Chairs the Events and Engagement Group which monitors commemorative events and if a local council requires a uniformed presence, this is secured by the CEO using military contacts.
- The CEO has held an Army Reserve Commission, albeit many years ago and appointed by SERFCA to represent SSALC on the Sussex Reserve Forces & Cadets Committee

Organise the election of parish representatives to the National Park

- All parishes wholly or partially within the SDNP are entitled to nominate representatives to serve on the NP Board, elections every four years and possible bye elections in between; SSALC manages the process for SDNP in calling for candidates and conducting the postal ballot election.

SERCAF

- A group of nine counties in the south east containing 1600 local councils, CEO of SSALC coordinates its activities by agreeing content for discussion and arranging meetings.

Arrange locum Clerk to support councils at times of need

- A database of those willing to locum as Clerks in all parts of the three counties is maintained and, when required names are offered to councils with a need.

