

Newsletter – February 2024

Derbyshire ALC



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1 - 'Safety First' for councillors – free webinar

Canvassing, home visits and unexpected doorstep visitors are among the topics to be covered at a free webinar focused on personal safety for councillors. The LGA-organised event – on Wednesday 29th February 2-3.40pm – will also tackle the issues of online abuse and intimidation. [More information and joining details can be found here.](#)

2 - Section 137 limit raised to £10.81

Up from £9.93 in 2023/24, the Section 137 prescribed sum for 2024/25 is £10.81, the DLUHC has announced. The sum, calculated by increasing the previous year's amount by the percentage growth in the retail index between September '22-September '23, allows our tier of local government to allocate funds for purposes that don't fall under any other specific statutory powers.

3 - Switching to gov.uk? Funding available...

For councils considering a switch to a gov.uk domain and email, the Central Digital and Date Office has launched a new help service. The Parish Council Domains Helper Service can be contacted at parish.helper@domains.gov.uk, and can also advise on funding now available to help with hosting. The switch to gov.uk is recommended for councils seeking to improve their website and email accessibility and security.

4 - Forum report – 24th January

Our busiest forum to date, with over 30 delegates, proved how seriously our communities are taking the issues of climate change and biodiversity:

- Tom Vietch from DCC outlined the ‘Green Town Initiative’ currently in development, which will support town and parish councils to create habitats and encourage biodiversity, with councils able to work towards levels of accreditation. We’ll continue to work with Tom as the project develops.
- A new knowledge hub – the [Great Collaboration](#) – was introduced by Graham Stoddard-Jones, aimed at providing help for our sector on climate change.
- DCC are currently holding an internal review on flood management, to include the role of parish and town councils.
- DALC’s [climate change webpage](#) has details of the Biodiversity Duty of councils to have completed their ‘First Consideration’ by January 1st, 2024.

Also discussed:

- 2Commune – although we’re not able to recommend an alternative provider, we advise any council currently using 2Commune to switch provider as soon as possible. We have been made aware of both Cuttlefish and Parish Online offering to make the transfer as easy as possible, but we obviously cannot provide recommendations.
- Internal Audit – we offer an Internal Audit service at DALC, if you would like a quotation please do get in touch. If you are thinking of using DALC internal audit this year, please let us know as soon as possible.

5 - Pre-election publicity... on your noticeboard

We have been made aware of publicity being sent to parish and town councils from MPs and the Police and Crime Commissioner, asking for this to be placed on parish noticeboards.

We have advised as follows: noticeboards can be used to display information relevant to the community but they should not be used for political promotion. It isn’t a requirement for a parish council to put something like this on a noticeboard but council can decide. However, I would recommend taking note of the pre-election period guidance from the Local Government Association regarding pre-election publicity. <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/short-guide-publicity-during-pre-election-period>

6 - Procurement thresholds increase

From January 1st 2024, the thresholds for public procurement have increased. The new thresholds for public contracts with an estimated value, including vat, are as follows:

Goods & Services: over £214,904 (previously 213,477)

Public works (construction): over £5,372,609 (previously £5,336, 937)

[A full update is available here.](#)

7 - D-Day 80th anniversary – how to take part

With just over 4 months to go until the 80th anniversary of D-Day, plans are underway for commemorations throughout the UK. The gov.uk website has useful details which [can be found here](#), and there's further information – including links to buy lanterns and commemorative pin badges – on pageant master [Bruno Peek's site here](#).

8 - NALC Chair strives to create partnerships

In an [open letter](#), NALC's Chair Cllr Keith Stevens has vowed to extend partnerships with SLCC, the LGA and county associations like ours in a bid to promote and support the sector. In general election year, he also urged councils to engage with current and prospective MPs to help underpin NALC's lobbying work at Westminster.

9 - Banking woes? New webpage offers help

NALC has responded to what it calls "numerous complaints" from councils over high street banking by launching [a new web page](#). Aimed at shedding light on the complex banking environment in which local councils operate, it provides useful links and resources to help councils navigate their way through banking issues.

10 - Discount for LGA 'Employer Link' subs

Following on from last month's newsletter item about the new template and model contracts ([which can be accessed here](#)), NALC have announced a 15% subscription discount for councils signing up to the LGA's Employer Link Service. Giving detailed advice on all aspects of employment law, [further details of the service can be found here](#), and a discount can be obtained by using the code NALC15.

11 - Keeping your cemetery safe

With the law demanding that a “competent person” carries out memorial management and inspection, we’re pleased to be holding a training course which will cover all relevant aspects of this important subject. The full-day course at the Whitworth Centre, Darley Dale, on Wednesday 3rd April (invoiced next financial year) will include a classroom-based morning session to cover aspects of risk, plus responsibilities including health and safety. In the afternoon, a practical session will take place in the neighbouring cemetery to cover all aspects of inspection/testing. The course, [which can be accessed here](#), is aimed at anyone who either works in a cemetery and/or has responsibility for the safety and testing of memorials.

12 - Upcoming training

We have a number of training courses over the next month or two so why not take the opportunity to book a place. Courses are online unless a venue is listed – and **please note** all courses marked **(EM)** are courses to which Enhanced Membership councils can send up to three delegates free of charge. [Full details of all courses, with booking link, can be found here.](#)

The Role of Internal Audit – 1st February 10am

Clerk’s Essentials Part 1 – 6th February 10am

Clerk’s Essentials Part 2 – 7th February 10am

VAT for VAT Registered Councils – 8th February 10am

Engage more effectively with young people – 14th February 1pm

Emotional Intelligence and Resilience – 15th February 1pm

Year End and Audit – Councils over £25,000 – 20th February 10am

VAT – Partial Exemption – 21st February 10am

Finance for councillors – 22nd February 10am

VAT for Unregistered Councils – 27th February 10am

Finance for Councillors – 27th February 6.30pm

Year End and Audit – Councils over £25,000 – 29th February 10am

(EM) Law & Good Practice; agendas and minutes – 13th March 10am

(EM) Councillor Essentials – 13th March 6pm

Memorial Management & Inspection Workshop – 3rd April 10am

Social Media – 17th April 10am

(EM) Code of Conduct – 25th April 10am

(EM) Freedom of Information – 30th April 10am

13 - February Forums

Our forums for February will focus on preparations for year end, Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), internal audit and a review of the Speed Indicator Devices, plus any other matters that you would like raised.

Wednesday 21st February

Clerks at 1pm

Chairs at 2.30pm

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4663925358?pwd=SUNVcFcyG5JaIFsZVZGSkhXVGpyZz09>

Meeting ID: 466 392 5358

Passcode: DALC22

Best regards

Wendy Amis