ALCA ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION REPORT – FROM CHAIRMAN OF ALCA

6.1. National Association

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) is a national body representing local authorities and the Avon Local Council Association (ALCA) is the regional branch of that association.

NALC engages at a national level with government and the Local Government Association (LGA) as well as unions and other collective bodies, with communication to members being mainly by website and email. ALCA has a regional chief officer who arranges more local facilities such as training, liaison, and communication between councils in the Avon, BANES and Somerset areas.

6.2. Benefits

- NALC updates and technical papers in recent months have covered the Covid-19 temporary regulations, annual and remote meeting guidance, home working health & safety, the NJC pay award negotiations, election, and neighbourhood plan referendum updates. The organisation has also played a central role in lobbying the government for an easement of local council regulation and the additional costs being incurred during the current crisis
- Although similar information can be obtained from other sources, the regular newsfeed and supporting technical papers, including legal advice, have been useful and avoided the time and cost of obtaining this information elsewhere
- The website also provides access to model standing orders, financial regulations, and numerous other policy documents that, are not readily accessible elsewhere.

6.3. Regional Branch – Avon Association of Local Councils

- ALCA is arguably less focused and well organised, but over the last month it services have had to be extended much further, as even the most experienced Clerks are no longer on familiar ground.
- An increased number of member councils have sought advice and support in respect of virtual meetings, homeworking for staff, the development of new protocols and procedures, amendments needed to standing orders and much more. This has really stretched the job of our Chief Officer, Deborah White to the extent that some additional part-time admin resource assistance is required.
- The additional support and guidance that Deborah has been providing during these difficult times has meant a cut a back on the usual offering of training which is an essential income stream for the Association. In place of training, Deborah has however been running several virtual Clerks Networking meetings which have been gratefully received by all those attending.
- Although the cost of NALC/ALCA membership is substantial. The cost of alternative advice at market legal rates may be around £250 to £400 per hour. Which makes the support and legal advice that ALCA/ NALC provides an extremely valuable and cost-effective service.
- As an example, membership of our Association is well in excess of 10% less than fees of other South West CALCs#
- In view of the above, ALCA's service is more important than ever and the Regional Committee members have being looking into how to continue to offer this level of excellent support whilst trying to balance the books with a reduced income and the need for additional financial outlay for support admin services and possibly additional book-keeping resources. The only way to continue these benefits of ALCA will be to increase the annual subscriptions by in the region of 10% per annum over the next three years.

2.0 FINANCE & POLICY CTTEE CONSIDERATIONS

The Finance & Policy Cee felt that 10% per annum for 3 years was a considerable amount of increase and had a number of questions which the Clerk has referred back to ALCA and includes responses back from ALCA below.

a) What proportion of the £1827 subscription do Keynsham Town Council currently pay to ALCA? £765.62 is paid to ALCA and the remainder goes to NALC. ALCA support also covers. As, a comparison Somerset Member Councils of NALC with a similar electorate to Keynsham pay £872.76, 14% more.

b) Is it proposed that the 10% increase on the whole total just goes to ALCA? The 10% increase is only on the ALCA proportion of the total subscription paid.

c) What additional services/resources would ALCA wish to offer Councils with the increase in subscription? Currently there is only one paid employee of ALCA, Deborah White, the Chief Officer managing queries from 51 Parishes in B&NES. Such queries, request for support and training have increased massively during this pandemic. The Treasurer is a volunteer but this service may cease in the future requiring appointment of paid financial officer (both Somerset and Wiltshire all ready have one in place) In order to be able to provide the best service to its members there is a need to appoint an additional administration assistant to ALCA, both (somerset and Wiltshire have multiple paid staff members)

d) ALCA and NALC services are explained in the attached documents.

Clerks notes:

ALCA is the professional body for Town and Parish Councils in the Avon area – covering SS Glos, N Somerset and B&NES – each region has a separate Cttee. ALCA represents its membership at Unitary Authority level (ie to B&NES) and provides input to B&NES on the Parish liaison Agenda
Unlike SLCC which is the Clerk's professional body providing advice to the Clerk (Although this is shared with the Council), ALCA provides its services for the Town Council as a collective body.

Membership is based upon the electorate number for each parish/town. Current subscription to ALCA paid by Keynsham Town Council for 14671 electorate is £1,821.93. A 10% rise would increase to slightly over £2000. ALCA are proposing a 10% increase per year for 3 years

The Town Council has used the following ALCA services:
Training for Councillors
Training for Clerks/Officers
CilCA training for the Clerk
Events e.g. Climate Emergency Showcase
Individual request for advice from CEO from Clerk and individual Councillors on matters of Local Government law and procedure
ALCA can also provide support in the form of providing (for a charge) independent people with knowledge of the sector to assist in dispute resolution (e.g. mediation or employment matters)

RECOMMENDATION FROM FINANCE & POLICY
To make a recommendation to Town Council in respect of its response to the proposal to raise ALCA membership fees by 10%