

**Open Report on behalf of Trisha Carter,
Chief Executive, Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils**

Report to:	Community and Public Safety Scrutiny Committee
Date:	01 June 2016
Subject:	Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils - Update

Summary:

This report updates members on the Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils (LALC) activities in respect of support for local councils, partnership working with LCC, and training provision during the period September 2015 – May 2016.

Actions Required:

Members of the Community and Public Safety Scrutiny Committee are invited to consider and comment on the report, and to continue to endorse partnership working wherever possible within their local communities.

1. Background

The Association continues to work closely in partnership with the County Council, with a number of current initiatives in progress around the Prevent, community cohesion and emergency planning agendas.

2015 saw our busiest training year to date, and at end of year we had delivered 70+ sessions, and provided training on a wide variety of topics for around 1000 attendees. As pressures on local councils grow to deliver more assets and services than ever before, we are finding that more and more councils are accepting the need to upskill and develop better administrative and management techniques.

The last quarter of 2015 was particularly hectic in respect of training, with not only the scheduled events, but some additional ones included to ensure we could cope with demand. Councillor Training Days are proving particularly popular nowadays; five were originally planned for 2015, by the beginning of December we had delivered eleven in total, with a waiting list for 2016 and already enough requests to fill a further two dates.

In addition, we have accommodated six 'Prevent' seminars, being delivered in conjunction with the Police, and LCC's Emergency Planning and Community

Engagement teams. The initial events took place in September and November 2015; a further four were scheduled for 2016 from January to July.

Our IT courses also continue to be very popular, and again, eleven in total were delivered during 2015, despite only six being planned at the outset.

A Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) course in October was well attended; we are seeing a renewed increase in interest in obtaining the qualification from Clerks, in some instances because the council concerned wishes to become eligible to use the General Power of competence (GPC). Several candidates also attended one-to-one sessions for a final review of portfolio evidence. (During the last seven months we have seen 12 clerks obtain their qualification and more candidates currently have their work in with the awarding body, Ascentis, for marking.)

During that quarter we also delivered training events on employment and FOI/data protection, planning and neighbourhood plans, burials and grave rights documentation, council finance, VAT legislation, and insurance/risk management. We also oversaw a Safeguarding conference at Gainsborough Academy, in association with the LCC Safeguarding team - as a result of which a model safeguarding policy is being developed which can be used by our member councils in the future.

A Chairman and Clerks afternoon on 18 November had 40+ delegates booked; that, together with two more Councillor Days and one further IT session (as above) brought the 2015 training to an end.

Moving to this year, for the first time ever, it was necessary to commence the training schedule in January, to accommodate the total no. of events needed throughout 2016. December and January are usually avoided due to weather and travel conditions, but it has been necessary to expand into these months to ensure we can meet demand whilst maintaining all our other advisory and support services to the councils.

We are also delivering more events in conjunction with LCC throughout the year on community cohesion and emergency planning, and in addition, SHDC has requested assistance in delivering seminars to councils in their area in relation to community engagement.

We held the first Councillors' Day of 2016 in January to accommodate some of those still on a waiting list from 2015, and a LALC/LCC seminar also took place that month.

The first CiLCA course of the year took place in February, with more new candidates coming forward. The style and content of the portfolio changed from April 2015, but there was a period during which existing candidates could complete their work under the old format. This period came to an end as of 31 March 2016, so there was also a flurry of candidates who registered under the old rules seeking to submit their work before the cut-off point.

A session on Charity Law, tutored by Roger Taylor of Hedleys Solicitors, held on 23 February at Cranwell was very well received, as was the External Audit Seminar on 29 February at Navenby delivered by Bridget Bowen of Grant Thornton.

As everyone will be aware, legislation is constantly changing at present and, for town and parish councils, particularly in terms of financial matters as a result of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. To this end, an in-house Finance session run at the Old School premises on 16 March was also well attended. The processes for external audit are changing, as have those for tendering and publication of data relating to a council's accounts and decision-making processes.

March also saw the delivery of an all-day session on practical application of key legislation in respect of Freedom of Information and Data Protection, further sessions on Prevent, Community Engagement and Emergency Planning, (jointly with LCC), IT skills training, another full day course for councillors, and one for new clerks.

During April and May, the pace has continued with sessions on Burials procedures and paperwork, employment law and pension provision, insurance and VAT reclamation, more Prevent and community engagement training, planning and creation of neighbourhood plans, two more Councillors days, and IT training.

I am also regularly requested to provide onsite bespoke events for individual councils on policies and procedures, administration and employment, and ethical standards issues.

During April and May, the Association has also been through the process of recruiting a new Training and Support Officer, who will work alongside me for the next few months. Our new officer, Paddy Ibbotson, is now in post, and is already participating in our numerous events that we have scheduled from now until the summer break at the end of July.

Paddy's role, once his induction period is complete, will be to support Katrina Evans, our Assistant Chief Executive, when she takes over the post of Chief Executive from 1 October this year, as I shall be retiring at the end of September.

2. Conclusion

The Association is grateful for any continued support from the County Council towards its activities and objectives. This is a challenging time for town and parish councillors and their clerks as they try to cope with the increasing demands of their role, particularly where they are faced with the prospect of devolved services and assets as a result of cuts elsewhere.

The range of topics, and frequency of events, is having to constant change to meet the demands of the sector.

3. Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

n/a

4. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Trisha Carter, who can be contacted on 01673 866596 or trisha.carter@lalc.co.uk.