

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT TO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
2 December 2022**

• **DORSET COUNCIL**

Colliton Annexe | We have been contacted by one of the staff surveyors for Dorset Council to ask if we wish to continue using the two offices currently occupied. If we do, we will need to enter into a lease agreement for the space. This will resurrect a lease that expired back in 2002, albeit a new lease with effect from 1 April 2023.

I have exchanged correspondence to find out more information about the cost and possible rental terms. At this point I've managed to get a notional rent per annum that would be payable based upon the square footage. The heads of terms for the lease will follow for the Executive Committee to consider in due course. The proposed annual rent would be £3,500p.a. DAPTC will need legal advice and someone to execute the lease which will be an additional cost to consider.

So far having asked the team, the view is that we see a benefit in maintaining an office presence using the same footprint. In fact, at our away day shortly we will discuss how the working arrangements are going and whether there is a desire to change the current 3 days in 2 at home arrangements. If we agree to a lease, it would make sense to use the space rather than leave it empty. To summarise the possible options the Executive Committee could consider going forward are:

1. Vacate the office and give notice, although we strictly have no formal lease agreement currently as this lapsed in 2002. This would result in a 100% work from home approach and use of managed office space as and when required.
2. Give notice on one half of the office and use the remaining space for 3 staff and use 'hot desking' to manage time in and out of the office. This would be tight with all 3 in the office, but it could potentially halve the rental commitment.
3. Seek alternative rental property off site from County Hall – this would be significantly more expensive and would require a significant change in budget to support the cost.

Annual Grant | We are now entering a review period for the grant received from Dorset Council and you approved Cllr. Steve Butler and I to hold discussions with Dorset Council. The first meeting is scheduled for 1 December so we will be able to give you a verbal update at the Executive Meeting. The news on the office lease needs to be factored into the equation so news of this is timely.

Climate & Environmental Emergency | Our membership survey earlier this year sought to establish which member councils had declared a climate emergency or those with climate / environmental projects underway. We invited Steven Ford (Corporate Director – Climate & Ecological at Dorset Council) to observe the Clerks' Conference in October and have subsequently held a meeting with his team with a view to bring together all the councils that responded to our survey. The purpose being for Dorset Council to provide an update on their plans and find out how everyone can share their activities and then share and collaborate further in a more cohesive fashion.

We will be contacting all member councils in the DC area to see if there are any other councils that have progressed plans or declared a climate emergency since the survey was issued; we can invite them to an event of which the details are yet to be finalised.

- **BCP COUNCIL**

I have engaged the Chief executive of BCP Council with the proposed establishment of a DAPTC Area Committee and as a result held a briefing call on Friday 25 November with Jess Gibbons for the Senior Leadership Team.

The 5 parish councils located in the BCP area have been contacted so they can consider if the creation of the new committee is something they wish to progress or not. My initial suggestion to them was that they may wish to consider how this might be governed, administered and who the participants should be. Once this is clear we can then talk further about representation on the Executive Committee.

This will necessitate a shift in the dynamic of the Executive Committee which invariably focuses on matters concerned with or connected to Dorset Council. I will be able to give you a verbal update on the discussions at the Executive Committee.

- **TRAINING**

CiLCA Cohort 1 | I am pleased to report the successful launch of the first cohort for CiLCA. We ended up with 11 delegates that made the first session in Poundbury's 'Quiet Space' on 16 November. We have had some very positive feedback from delegates and are also piloting the use of some new processes to support delegates, namely Dropbox and WhatsApp where learners can access support and opportunities to network outside of our prescribed hours and support mechanisms.

Encouragingly, we also have 6 delegates for Cohort 2.

I can see how the regular promotion of this qualification will enhance clerk performance and skills in their role with the added benefit of helping them find new ways of working to improve their efficiency and working with technology and new means of communicating. This will support DAPTC's approach to try and help move forward councils and their ability to function better in the unitary structure. [CiLCA Information Page](#)

Reminder – DAPTC supported 3 small parish delegates to undertake this study in cohort 1 and the SLCC Dorset Branch provided the cost for a larger parish.

Clerks' Annual Conference (Dorset Council Area) | We had just under 60 clerks attend the re-arranged session on 19 October 2022 at Kingston Maurward. The two main topics for discussion were the 'Working Together' project and the onward cascade of information to their councils plus standards in public life and a presentation from Jonathan Mair.

We were heartedly encouraged by the feedback on the day from participants both from member councils, but also exhibitors and guests. The outputs and highlights from the day can be found on our dedicated webpage. The day was run in conjunction with SLCC Dorset Branch. [Clerks' Annual Conference](#)

Councillors' Networking Event | – a date has been held with Kingston Maurward for Thursday 9 March 2023 and now we have completed the work on the Annual General Meeting our attention will turn to the content for the day and finalising the event.

We will need to get the running order finalised in early January to then get invites out to member councils. I have had confirmation that Jonathan Owen from NALC is on holiday on 9 March and he has offered the Chair of NALC and one of his colleagues to deputise.

In terms of exhibitors, we haven't yet decided whether this is something that will feature for this event and would welcome any views Executive Committee members have on the matter.

Possible Theme for a Session	Possible Contributor	Notes
Climate, Ecology / Environment	Steven Ford – Dorset Council	Confirmed would like to attend and be part of the day. Content to be agreed.
NALC – parish and town councils role within a unitary structure	Justin Griggs (NALC) Keith Stevens (Chair – NALC)	Jonathan Owen on holiday, but has asked JG and KS to attend
Parish and town councils role within a unitary structure	Tony Blake - Shared Intelligence LGA Report	Tony Blake is the author of a report produced for the Local Government Association
Importance of Developing and Training Your Employee(s)	David Smith – Motivational Speaker with a specialism in Human Resources	Can do the date and is on hold. Purpose to encourage member councils to fund and support the professional development of their employee(s).
Working Together Project / Local Plan	Spencer Flower or other cabinet member nominated by Dorset Council.	To be discussed further – meeting in mid-December with DC
Economic Growth & Regeneration	Nick Webster / John Sellgren invited to present and undertake a Q&A	Theme / topic to be clarified.
Networking Time		Do we allow extended time at tea/coffee or lunch for councillors to mingle and chat?

We need to make a decision on whether this event is to be pan-Dorset and include BCP member councils or be solely directed to the Dorset Council area. The latter would be my steer as we need to work up the area committee and work with BCP to see what the mirror engagement looks like in that geographic area.

Timings for the event:

Start – 10:00am

Lunch – 12:45pm

Close – 3:00pm

Cost per delegate - £75.00

Registration will open soon and the event will have a dedicated webpage.

- **DAPTC AGM**

The third online meeting was held on 19 November 2022. 86 delegates registered and 82 joined at 10am of which 56 were voting representatives (35% of membership). To be quorate we require 10% of the membership present. This number is consistent with the last two AGMs and is marginally higher than the historic in person meetings at County Hall.

We have issued a feedback survey to attendees and the live results of the feedback can be obtained by clicking [HERE](#). Naturally the length of the meeting has resulted in some negative feedback, but equally praise that everyone got to contribute if they wished to. We will publish the feedback to our [DAPTC AGM 2022 webpage](#). We have provided a bite-sized video of the AGM lasting 12 minutes summarising the decisions reached. These have been distributed to all member councils.

We are now working through the decisions reached and will be undertaking the following activity:

1. Submission to NALC Policy Committee at next opportunity for those motions requiring a response from NALC
2. Draft letters to Dorset MPs where appropriate
3. Draft letters to Dorset Council, amalgamating content where appropriate
4. Draft a letter to the Police and Crime Commissioner
5. Copy in the proposing and seconding councils with the above actions for visibility
6. Update our [DAPTC AGM 2022 webpage](#) with copy materials for wider member visibility
7. We have written to BCP Council area members and put forward an in-person meeting to look at the options for committee administration and governance. At this point I do not propose to 'drag and drop' a Dorset Council area template for meetings onto the new area and will instead get a view of how they might like to run things on the basis that with 5 members it is completely unlike the numbers potentially attending in the Dorset Council area. However, in real terms attendance could be almost identical!

DAPTC 2023 AGM | In light of some of the feedback in the survey and from emails to the office the office team have been looking at 2023 already and preparing meeting dates and deadlines with a view to harnessing any improvements for next year. This will include a snap poll in Spring about the format. Our draft timeline in 2023 is at the moment like this:

- 3 Mar – Publish AGM Timeline to members and issue updated motions form. Notify process for Presidents / Vice Presidents
- 5 May – Poll members on the preferred format of online / in person
- 12 May – Publish poll results
- 31 Aug – Conclude any constitution recommendations from Exec Comm
- 8 Sept – Deadline for Motion Forms
- 15 Sept – Notify members of any constitution changes
- 29 Sept – Issue motions summary to members for consideration at meetings
- 20 Oct- Deadline for nominations for President, Vice President
- 18 Nov – DAPTC AGM

Reflecting on the process and ensuing work involved I am tempted to drop the review by Executive Committee and instead look at how we can enhance the motion submitting form and process. Additionally suggesting we move to making AGMs only business focused rather than including speakers and encourage members to seek out other opportunities to network, which are about but not always taken up. We will no doubt look at this going forward; and I would ask you to think about this ready for when we do.

- **DROPBOX**

As a team we are always looking out for ways to improve how we work with the simple aims of ensuring consistency, efficient working and embracing technology our members may already be using. The license for 3 colleagues is approximately £500 per annum and will enable us to:

- Bring a consistency of approach to version control of files;
- Allow member council access to templates 24/7 to progress council work outside of normal hours for DAPTC;
- Create shared /collaborative workspace for things like the Working Together Project and CiLCA Mentoring;
- Prepare DAPTC for the day if it comes, where we work entirely remotely or work independently of Dorset Council IT services. Our main depository of records and files is held on Dorset Council servers

and shared directories, some unitary councils have already started to migrate to cloud solutions and this option would start this work before we have to do it in a rush.

- Enable the onward cascade of material that would normally clog up email accounts

We have started a month-long trial and are piloting it with the first CiLCA Cohort and getting Lisa, Debbie and I onboarded and familiar with what it can do. If satisfied, we will sign up and expand the use of Dropbox further beyond the trial period.

- **DAPTC STRUCTURE (for e.g. COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)**

An online call was held by Danny Moody from Northants ALC requested by a number of other counties to look at and explore the benefits of incorporation as a company limited by guarantee. As the invite was distributed to all counties, I opted to join the call to find out more.

The background to this was a number of county associations have been exploring moving away from a constituted body to a community interest company, company limited by guarantee or other form of charitable status. The reasons for doing this were many and varied, but one main driver cited was the dwindling participation and rotation in the longstanding structures, i.e. area committees and how their main committee was elected. In many cases it was too unwieldy or had remained static for long periods of time.

I joined the call to hear the discussion and other county views on what is working and what isn't. It was reassuring to learn that most counties struggle with area committee attendance and even those still with a structure like ours in Dorset had stopped pursuing such gatherings and were using other means of engaging and sharing issues amongst members. They too shared a dwindling number of councillors prepared to chair committees and governing committees requiring fresh inputs / contributions.

Northants ALC helpfully provided a number of key documents to support the change in status they underwent back in 2010. I attach the documents they issued after the call which will be of interest to some of you. I will add this to a future meeting of the Executive Committee for consideration as it would sit alongside potentially any strategic plan work potentially to be ruled in or out as something to explore. I witnessed the changes in Leicestershire & Rutland from a member perspective about 5 years ago and more recently Devon and Cornwall have taken the same step.

Reading from 8 November 2022 Zoom meeting:

[Presentation on New Governance Model in Northants](#)

[Northant ALC Articles of Association](#)

[Letter to parishes in 2010](#)

[Board Member Composition and Diversity](#)

[Board Member appointment process](#)

[Appointment Panel Terms of Reference](#)

[Councillor Panel Terms of Reference](#)

[Incorporation Checklist](#)

[8 Nov 2022 Slide Presentation to County Associations](#)

- **COMMUNICATIONS & NEW MEDIA CHANNELS**

One constant challenge DAPTC faces relates to the dissemination of information to member councils and also onward to the elected member audience. It is not that long ago that DAPTC produced in the main a bi-monthly e-news and hardcopy reports/newsletters that were distributed by post.

The pandemic changed significantly the opportunity to meet with the addition of Zoom and Teams. We duly increased our e-news frequency to ensure member councils get information in a timely fashion without swamping inboxes of Clerks.

In the last year DAPTC has established and tidied up its social medial presence but is yet to use this as fully. We continue to persevere with our website providers and will look in the new year at alternative service providers in an attempt to create something more usable and impactful with members; and far better to update from our point of view.

Additionally, I'm keen to explore some other media channels to see if they could support training delivery and other means of communicating key messages. This will include video assisted presentations and podcasts all of which are now far easier to do and highly cost effective. These help in terms of consistency and can be produced in flexible time and watched or listened to 24/7.

Neil Wedge, Chief Executive DAPTC – 24 November 2022

END of REPORT