

You are hereby summoned to attend the meeting of Haverhill Town Council to be held in The Studio, Town Hall, High Street, Haverhill, on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2006 commencing at 7.30 p.m., for the purpose of transacting the following business



**HAVERHILL  
TOWN COUNCIL**

Haverhill Arts Centre,  
High Street, Haverhill  
Suffolk CB9 8AR

Telephone: 01440 712858  
Fax: 01440 718931

e-mail: [admin@towncouncil.haverhill-uk.com](mailto:admin@towncouncil.haverhill-uk.com)  
[www.haverhill-uk.com/towncouncil](http://www.haverhill-uk.com/towncouncil)

**CONSTITUTION:**      **Town Mayor:**                      **Cllr. T Marks**  
                                 **Town Councillors:**      **L Ager, S Brown, G Crane, S Fanning,**  
   **E Goody, M Graham, E McManus,**  
   **Mrs M Martin, S Martin, E Morton,**  
   **K Richardson, L Samples, A Thomas,**  
   **T Trebble and R Warwick**

**AGENDA**

1.    **Apologies for Absence**  
     Please give any apologies to the office by 5.00 p.m. of the day of the meeting.
2.    **Declaration of Interests**  
     For Members to declare any interests they may have on items on the agenda.
3.    **To confirm Minutes of Meeting held 7<sup>th</sup> March 2006**
4.    **To deal with any urgent matters arising from the Minutes not covered by this agenda**
5.    **Inspector Bruce Gent, Suffolk Police**  
     To discuss Policing issues in the Town.

***PUBLIC FORUM***

6.    **Adoption of Committee Reports**  
     **Planning Committee**  
     To move the adoption of the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held 7<sup>th</sup> February and 7<sup>th</sup> March 2006.  
  
     **Finance Committee**  
     To move the adoption of the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held 21<sup>st</sup> February 2006.

### Personnel Committee

To move the adoption of the minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held 24<sup>th</sup> January 2006.

### Arts & Leisure Committee

To move the adoption of the minutes of the Arts & Leisure Committee meeting held 7<sup>th</sup> March 2006.

7. **Referral of Tesco Planning Application to the Secretary of State for Determination**  
To note the outcome of this request.
8. **To Review Standing Orders**  
To review Standing Orders and amend as necessary.
9. **To Review Financial regulations**  
To review Financial Regulations and amend as necessary.
10. **To Review The Council's Risks**  
To review the Council's Risks and agree measures to remove or mitigate these as necessary (attached).
11. **Meeting Dates**  
To agree the meeting dates for Council and Committees in 2006/2007 (attached).
12. **Committee Membership**  
To note the changed Committee membership following the recent co-option.
13. **Suffolk Association of Local Councils – Delivering Change 2006-11**  
To note and respond to the consultation document (attached).
14. **Christmas Lights**  
To agree to transfer unspent monies in 2005/2006 to earmarked reserves to be spent in 2006/2007 (see attached).
15. **Haverhill Arts Centre**  
To agree to transfer unspent monies in 2005/2006 to earmarked reserves to offset any future reductions in income (see attached).
16. **VAT on Credit Card Purchases**  
To authorise the Town Clerk to make specific purchases of van hire by personal credit card (see attached).
17. **Accounts & Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006**  
To note the amendments (see attached).
18. **Correspondence**
  - a) Department of Health – Inequalities in Health Funding (attached)

- b) St Edmundsbury Borough Council – Parish Conference 20<sup>th</sup> April – to nominate three Members to attend and items for discussion
- c) Haverhill and District Pensioners Association – Formation of Local Patient Forum (attached)

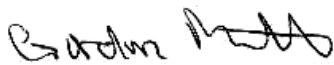
**19. To authorise payments.**

To authorise the following cheque lists:-

Date	Cheque No.s	Value
24.01.06	002022	£37.00
31.01.06	002023 – 002049	£49,837.44
07.02.06	002050 – 002057	£29,261.97
14.02.06	002058 – 002075	£9,486.46
21.02.06	002076 – 002086	£4,511.08
07.03.06	002087 – 002108	£41,659.38

**20. To receive urgent correspondence**

**21. Closure**



**Gordon Mussett**  
Town Clerk

**DATE: 21 March 2006**

# HAVERHILL TOWN COUNCIL

MEETING DATES May 2006 to May 2007

<u>Committee</u>	May 2006	June 2006	July 2006	Aug 2006	Sept 2006	Oct 2006	Nov 2006	Dec 2006	Jan 2007	Feb 2007	Mar 2007	Apr 2007	May 2007
Planning	2	6	4	<b>1</b>	5	3	7	5	<b>2</b>	6	6	<b>3</b>	1
Leisure & Arts	9		11		12		14		9		13		22
Personnel			18			10			16			<b>10</b>	
Community First			<b>25</b>			17			16			17	
Finance		20			19		21		23			24	
Appeals													
Full Council	<b>30</b>	27			26		28		30		27		8
Town Meeting	<b>30</b>												8
Arts Centre Trustees		27				<b>24</b>							15

*Denotes meeting in School holiday*

All meetings are held at The Arts Centre, High Street, unless otherwise notified.

Committee meetings commence at 7.00 p.m.

Full Council meetings commence at 7.00 p.m. Annual General Meeting commences at 7.00 p.m.

All meetings are open to the public, and the public may raise matters of concern to the Town Council at the Town Council meetings.

The Town Meeting is organised by the Town Council on behalf of the public.

# Serving Town and Parish Councils in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Delivering Change 2006 – 2011

## Summary

**This document presents a critical evolutionary phase as SALC becomes a modern and professional organisation that is fully equipped to deal with the challenges that must be faced, together with local councils, to ensure strong, capable local democracy. This Business Plan is designed and balanced to properly address management and meeting issues and workload within the clear terms of reference of Suffolk Association of Local Councils.**

*If you would like the full version of this document please contact the SALC Office, it is also available at [www.onesuffolk.co.uk/SALC](http://www.onesuffolk.co.uk/SALC)*

Please make comments on this paper by July 31<sup>st</sup> 2006 to: -

[adminsalc@btconnect.com](mailto:adminsalc@btconnect.com)

SALC Office, Unit 11A, Hill View Business Park, Claydon, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP6 0AJ  
Fax: 01473 833714

Author: Mary Mitson-Woods  
Chief Executive

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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**This document aims to streamline the County Executive role and to enhance the area meetings. Part of this process has involved input from Executive members and this draft is for the consideration of Area Committees.** It outlines plans to align the Association's governing structure to that of other modern organisations. Any new structure must offer protection to the financial interests of member councils in the event of the Association's financial failure.

The modernised structure will also allow members to determine policy and overall strategy through debate on issues rather than concentrating on the details of the service delivery and administration of the Association. The changed structure will give greater opportunity for member councils to be part of the Association's decision-making through improved area meetings. A pilot will be run in the first year in the Waveney District to have more localised area meetings to focus on local issues for the Executive to consider.

The core staff of SALC will be increased to ensure that outside demands on the office do not impair the provision of the advice and support service to member councils. As in the past funding will be sourced from specific grant funding for work that falls within the SALC policies, support from partner organisations and member subscriptions. Funding for a fulltime Deputy is awaiting confirmation from outside bodies.

### **DISCUSSION POINTS FOR YOUR COUNCIL AND THE SALC AREA MEETINGS**

**Questions your council is asked to consider from this document**

**1. Should the SALC executive be reduced from 30 to 16 or less members?**

It is proposed to reduce the Executive by each area meeting only electing one or two Executive members. This refreshed body will then take over the task of continuing the modernisation of service to members.

**2. Does your council support changes to the Area Meeting structure?**

It is proposed to pilot area meetings that meet only twice per year but in more local venues.

**3. Does your council support the SALC vision?**

"To work with and for the parish and town councils of Suffolk to deliver a high standard of local governance to enable them to serve their communities in a democratic, open, and inclusive fashion by providing facilities and services at the most local level that is sustainable. It is the voice of rural village and market town councils at county, regional and national level that recognises and accepts the challenge to maintain healthy and sustainable communities in a rural county."

**4. The document proposes that Parish Meetings be included in membership free of charge in order to raise their standard, does your council support this?**

At present we suspect that many rural Parish Meetings in small hamlets without a parish council may have fallen into poor practice and may not be delivering a good standard of local democracy. Occasionally we discover one that has not met for years. We would like to work more closely with our 44 Parish Meetings to help local people take responsibility for their communities.

**5. How can we actively promote the role of clerks to young career minded people who are properly employed and developed and would do a great deal to attract younger councillors as well as officers?**

6. If the Executive and Council places were limited to a four-year term, with staggered step down to maintain continuity and experience, do you think that we would find the body was regularly refreshed and reenergized or would the Association struggle to fill vital positions?

7. Should the other area committees be guided by the results of the Waveney Pilot and the lessons learned or present locally decided solutions in individual localities?

8. Do you think funding for a secretariat for the Area Meetings should be found and planning, venues and minutes be organised through the Area Chairman and Area Secretary with support from the SALC office?

## **MODERNISING THE SALC MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE**

### **The Executive**

The Executive should be modernised to drive forward the priorities above.

*The CEO has entered into discussions with other public bodies and analysed details of their structures in order to inform SALC's modernisation. In order to meet the future we need to make real, radical changes at the top. The Executive needs to change in shape and size. A leaner Executive will provide the clarity of vision to drive SALC forward to best effect. There are good practice examples such as Suffolk ACRE where an Executive of 16 discusses current needs of members, subjects that the organisation should be lobbying to change, regional and government policy and how it impacts on members.*

Following this research, the conclusion is that the current SALC Executive should be discontinued and replaced with two bodies.

THE SALC COUNCIL	1 or 2 members elected from each Area Meeting	Meeting three evenings per year with working parties to consult with members <u>to set SALC policy</u> .
	1 or 2 members from the Larger Council Group	To be the debating chamber for policy and issues raised from the grass roots and Area Meetings. To decide policy on matters affecting the sector and to take issues forward to lobby at national, county or regional level.
	1 member from Council [Larger] Officers' Group	To respond to consultation documents through full Council or ad hoc working parties.
	2 members from SCC, one member one officer.	To approve the annual budget as received from the SALC Executive.
		To provide an Employment and Appeals Committee to deal with controversial staff issues.
		To provide a strategic leadership role for the Association.

SALC FINANCE & STRATEGY GROUP	Chairman of Council + 2 Deputies, CEO, Deputy and Treasurer.	To meet three times per year in between council meetings. <u>Setting SALC Strategy</u> and preparing budget for ratification by full Council  Management of the Association's assets
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#### **The Management Culture**

The two bodies will adopt a more modern, dynamic and informal culture that will intermesh with the area meetings. SALC is not a Local Authority and should not be bound by restrictions beyond those required as a matter of courtesy and to ensure all voices are heard. Appropriate changes to procedure and meetings arrangements will be effected to achieve the necessary dynamism and flexibility to respond to modern demands.

The Association could become more representative of the communities it serves. The present Executive has a relatively high average age and men outnumber women by 2 to 1, this reflects the present under representation on parish councils as a whole rather than the communities they represent. Members are reluctant to come forward from the Area Meetings to serve and one reason that is often quoted as responsible for a restricted pool of people who might serve, is that meetings have traditionally been held during normal working hours.

#### **MEMBERSHIP**

Currently the only significant weakness in membership is in the Waveney area. Across the county membership is high, with the exception of one town council and two medium sized rural councils, non-members are mainly representing tiny rural hamlets. There are 44 tiny hamlets where democracy is delivered through Parish Meetings. It is believed that although some of these are truly democratic and serve their community well there are many that do not meet and have fallen into abeyance.

#### **Recommendation**

That all Parish Meetings be taken into membership free of charge for three years in order to work with them and ensure the PM is working as it should by statute.

#### **THE AREA MEETINGS**

It is obvious from the lack of participation that although those who attend value the SALC Area Meetings, far too many member councils never send a representative. The CEO and Chairman of the Waveney Area Meeting have been asked to work in a partnership with Waveney District Council, Suffolk County Council and the Police to improve community engagement. The Area meeting has indicated that 3 meetings per year are sufficient but the Association needs to be far more localised in its approach.

#### ***Waveney Pilot for 2006***

***2 meetings per year will be held in each of 3 locations, the district will be divided into Northern, Mid and West and South Waveney. Each meeting will be preceded by 'surgery sessions'; County Highways, Neighbourhood Police and a SALC Legal Surgery. It is hoped these meetings will be shared with district and county council.***

### **Existing Good Practice**

Five councils, including one from Norfolk, already meet as the Northern Parishes and cover the area north of Lowestoft. This is an informal meeting of representatives who share common issues; these parishes would be the focus of the Northern Waveney Area.

### **Existing Common Practice**

- ❖ The meetings are formalised by minutes and layout.
- ❖ Liaison meetings with Principal Authorities tend to include formal presentations and are perceived by the Principal Authority as 'information' evenings on its policies and services.

Any proposals for the future should require all councillors, County, District or Parish/Town to be engaging within the principles of equality and parity. We need to break away from the 'top table' approach and create an informal arena for debate on issues that interest and affect the parishes.

Although members often complain about too many speakers they invariably ask for a speaker when the CEO asks what should be provided at the next meeting.

Until very recently the CEO had been attending all AMs and providing a Minute service. However, with an increased workload preventing Time Off in Lieu, it was recognised that this was neither practical from a workload point of view nor enhanced the PR of the Association, with the CEO acting as Minute Secretary.

***Suffolk Association of Local Councils Hill View Business Park Claydon Ipswich IP6  
0AJ***

*Doc4Change/Summary*

# Serving Town and Parish Councils in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Delivering Change 2006 - 2011

**This document presents a critical evolutionary phase in the further progression of SALC into an enhanced, modern and professional organisation that is fully equipped to deal with the challenges that must be faced, together with local councils, to ensure strong, capable local democracy. The essential elements contained in this Business Plan are carefully designed and balanced to properly address necessary existing growth and future workload within the clear terms of reference of Suffolk Association of Local Councils.**

Please make comments on this paper by July 31<sup>st</sup> 2006 to: -

[adminsalc@btconnect.com](mailto:adminsalc@btconnect.com)

SALC Office, Unit 11A, Hill View Business Park, Claydon, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP6 0AJ

Author: Mary Mitson-Woods  
Chief Executive

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## INTRODUCTION

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This paper is a commitment from the Chief Executive to encourage SALC members to consider what changes are necessary to enable town and parish councils to take full advantage of the opportunities of the next five years.

There is clear evidence of change coming to local government in the near future and this leaves parish and town councils in a fluid situation in which the government will be considering a wide range of proposals. The preferred option in local government circles is for the changes to happen without further consultation and to avoid delay and damage to the existing structure. In reality a White Paper is expected in early summer 2006.

The role of parish and town councils is at a critical point. They could provide the essential local connection under unitary arrangements or, if the modernising agenda takes a twist, could be replaced by a new breed of 'community' or 'neighbourhood' government. Most of us are aware that the government has concerns about social exclusion and there are fears that parish and town councils do not represent the full socio-demographic spectrum of their communities.

SALC needs to prepare member councils for whatever changes may happen and, through its Executive, must develop a clear vision for the role of the first tier for the future. Moreover, SALC must enable and encourage the parish and town councils to take responsibility for their own future, to decide what they want and, using their Association as a united voice, communicate their views to government through NALC.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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**This document aims to streamline the County Executive role and to enhance the area meetings. Part of this process has involved input from Executive members and this draft is for the consideration of Area Committees. (See page 7)**

It outlines plans to align the Association's governing structure to that of other modern organisations. Any new structure must offer protection to the financial interests of member councils in the event of the Association's financial failure.

The modernised structure will also allow members to determine policy and overall strategy through debate on issues rather than concentrating on the details of the service delivery and administration of the Association. **(See Appendix one for current policies)** The changed structure will give greater opportunity for member councils to be part of the Association's decision-making through improved area meetings. A pilot will be run in the first year in Waveney District to have more localised area meetings to focus on local issues for the Executive to consider.

The core staff of SALC will be increased to ensure that outside demands and new legislation do not impair the provision of the advice and support service to member councils.

As in the past money will be sourced from specific grant funding for work that falls within SALC's policies, support from partner organisations and member subscriptions. Currently funding for a fulltime Deputy is awaiting confirmation from the Rural and Social Community Programme.

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## DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

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*There are drivers behind the need for change that cannot be ignored. The present governance needs updating to be leaner and more reactive because of: -*

- ❖ *The increasing demands placed on SALC by new government legislation and insufficient staff to undertake the workload in paid hours.*
- ❖ *The need for a response to Government initiatives such as Quality Parish Status, Charters and the County Training Partnerships to empower local councils to be pivotal in their local communities; this requires more intensive support from member councils from the Association's officers.*
- ❖ *An increased involvement in consultation with other bodies in order to position local councils to influence decision-making by other authorities.*
- ❖ *SALC must be part of the Local Area Agreement, the Suffolk Strategic Partnership and Local Strategic partnerships in order to help local communities access funding for community projects.*
- ❖ *The Association must maintain its high standing nationally, regionally and locally in order to effectively represent its members.*

*In May 2005 members of the Executive Committee and staff spent an Awayday to discuss the present and future of the Association. The day was facilitated by two professionals and Justin Griggs, Development Officer at NALC helped members and staff focus on the role of Executive members and the Association's role in representing and supporting parish and town councils of the future. (See APPENDIX ONE for report)*

*The positive outcome of the day was that the SALC CEO was tasked with preparing a Plan for the period 2006 – 2011. This document became Delivering Change 2006 – 2011 and explains where SALC came from, what it does and puts forward solutions to fulfil its role in the future.*

***See Appendix Two for information on the future of parish and town councils***

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## SALC'S VISION

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**SALC will work with and for the parish and town councils of Suffolk to deliver a high standard of local governance to enable them to serve their communities in a democratic, open, and inclusive fashion by providing facilities and services at the most local level that is sustainable. It is the voice of rural village and market town councils at county, regional and national level that recognises and accepts the challenge to maintain healthy and sustainable communities in a rural county.**

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## TRANSLATING THIS VISION INTO ACTION

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*The primary purpose of the association is to provide a timely, friendly, comprehensive and professional legal and procedural advice service to member councils.*

### **Key Priorities**

- ❖ *To deliver excellent training through expert practitioners.*
- ❖ *To represent local councils at county, regional and national forums.*
- ❖ *To achieve 100% membership*
- ❖ *To encourage networking, cooperation and inclusivity among local councils.*
- ❖ *To operate efficiently within available resources and maintain a robust and well-managed financial framework.*
- ❖ *To advance and empower local communities through strong leadership from their parish councils.*

#### **THESE KEY PRIORITIES WILL BE PROVIDED BY**

- ❖ Increased staff levels will enable the legal advice service to flourish. **(See Appendix three)**

- ❖ Training and development for member councils  
SALC will continue as lead body in the Suffolk Training Partnership to deliver of high quality training to councillors and clerks through a team of professional tutors who are practising experts in their field.

*The policy of visiting individual or groups of parishes will continue as a way of raising standards and building confidence for newer councillors and promoting excellence.*

*The Association will work with District Standards Committees and Monitoring Officers to reinforce the culture of high ethical standards in the three tiers of Suffolk local governance.*

*It will enable as many chairmen, deputies and prospective chairmen as possible to complete the new National Training in Chairmanship course.*

*Embrace Parish Meetings into membership free of charge in order to revive those that are not presently functioning.*

- ❖ Quality Parish Status  
*It will promote Quality Parish Status as the main development path for every local council regardless of population.*

*SALC will mentor and encourage parish and town clerks to achieve the Certificate in Local Council Administration or the University of Gloucester Local Policy Certificate, Diploma and Degree courses to build a pool of professional officers for the sector.*

- ❖ Parish Plans  
*It will work in partnership with Suffolk ACRE to promote Parish Plans as a method of modernising the sector's approach to serving its communities by quantifying the needs of its communities and as a means of providing key data for local development plans.*

- ❖ Charters  
*In 2006 SALC will work between other tiers of governance and local councils to develop Charters to progress the devolution of functions to those parish and town councils that want to deliver more local services. **The main objective will be to avoid double***

**taxation when functions are devolved to local councils and improve the quality of local delivery.**

❖ Working with other partners

Priority will be given to work with the Suffolk ACRE Rural Housing Enabler and other partners to help local councils identify sites and achieve affordable local needs housing to enable small rural communities to rebuild their sustainability and bring back services

Work through the Local Area Agreement, Suffolk Strategic Partnership, Suffolk Rural Partnership and the Local Strategic Partnerships at member and officer level to source funding for rural and market town community projects.

SALC staff and members will build on SALC's excellent relationships with all tiers of local government in the county to strengthen liaison between the tiers to achieve better influence over local affairs.

**Deleted:** The CEO will continue to voice the concerns of the sector at national level and on national and regional bodies, in future this will be within paid hours. The benefit to the parish and town councils is unchallengeable.¶

## **MODERNISING THE SALC MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE**

### **The Executive**

The Executive should be modernised to drive forward the priorities above. The CEO has entered into discussions with other public bodies and analysed details of their structures in order to inform SALC's modernisation.

In order to meet the future we need to make real, radical changes at the top. The Executive needs to change in shape and size. A leaner Executive will provide the clarity of vision to drive SALC forward to best effect. There are good practice examples such as Suffolk ACRE where an Executive of 16 discusses current needs of members, subjects that the organisation should be lobbying to change, regional and government policy and how it impacts on members.

Following this research, the conclusion is that the current SALC Executive should be discontinued and replaced with two bodies.

THE SALC COUNCIL	2 members elected from each Area Meeting	Meeting three evenings per year with working parties to consult with members and decide draft policy
	2 members from the Larger Council Group	To be the debating chamber for policy and issues raised from the grass roots and Area Meetings. To decide policy on matters affecting the sector and to take issues forward to lobby at national, county or regional level.
	1 member from CLOG (Council Larger Officers' Group)	
	2 members from SCC, one member one officer.	To respond to consultation documents through full Council or ad hoc working parties.

		<p>To approve the annual budget as received from the SALC Executive.</p> <p>To provide an Employment and Appeals Committee to deal with controversial staff issues.</p> <p>To provide a strategic leadership role for the Association.</p>
SALC FINANCE & STRATEG Y GROUP	Chairman of Council + 2 Deputies, CEO, Deputy and Treasurer.	<p>To meet three times per year in between council meetings</p> <p>Setting budget for ratification by full Council</p> <p>Management of the Association's assets</p>

#### **The Management Culture**

The two bodies will adopt a more modern, dynamic and informal culture that will intermesh with the area meetings. SALC is not a Local Authority and should not be bound by restrictions beyond those required as a matter of courtesy and to ensure all voices are heard. Appropriate changes to procedure and meetings arrangements will be effected to achieve the necessary dynamism and flexibility to respond to modern demands.

The core proposal for change is the restructuring of the present Executive Committee into 2 separate but linked bodies - The SALC Council and Executive Strategy & Finance Group Committee, with a brief to provide strategic direction and policy formulation plus fiducial matters. The SALC Council will need a wide range of skills and expertise to operate successfully. People will be needed with current business and commercial acumen, and experience of management in significant organisations as well as a real enthusiasm for the health of the sector and its communities. Finding such individuals is a serious challenge, but many of our Councils have the right people. Making the role of the group clear is the starting point; this will attract the sort of skills & expertise needed.

The Association could become more representative of the communities it serves. The present Executive has a high average age and men outnumber women by 2 to 1. Members are reluctant to come forward from the Area Meetings to serve and one reason that is often quoted for a restricted pool of people, who might serve, is that meetings have been traditionally held during normal working hours.

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#### **THE AREA MEETINGS**

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It is obvious from the lack of participation that although those who attend value the meetings, far too many member councils never send a representative. The CEO and Chairman of the Waveney Area Meeting have been asked to work in a partnership with Waveney District Council, Suffolk County Council and the Police to improve community engagement. The Area meeting has indicated that 3 meetings per year are sufficient but the Association needs to be far more localised in its approach.

#### **Waveney Pilot for 2006**

***2 meetings will be held in each of 3 locations, the district will be divided into Northern, Mid and Western Waveney. Some meetings will be preceded by 'surgery sessions'; County Highways, Neighbourhood Police and a SALC Legal Surgery.***

#### **Existing Good Practice**

Five councils, including one from Norfolk, already meet as the Northern Parishes and cover the area north of Lowestoft. This is an informal meeting of representatives who share common issues; these parishes would be the focus of the Northern Waveney Area.

#### **Existing Common Practice**

- ❖ The meetings are formalised by minutes and layout.
- ❖ Liaison meetings with Principal Authorities tend to include formal presentations and are perceived by the Principal Authority as 'information' evenings on its policies and services.

Any proposals for the future should require all councillors, County, District or Parish/Town to be engaging within the principles of equality and parity. We need to break away from the 'top table' approach and create an informal arena for debate on issues that interest and affect the parishes.

Although members often complain about too many speakers they invariably ask for a speaker when the CEO asks what should be provided at the next meeting.

The increased workload at SALC has made it impractical to have the CEO acting as Minute Secretary. Executive members decided that it was not a suitable role for the CEO.

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### ***DISCUSSION POINTS FOR AREA MEETINGS AND MEMBER COUNCILS***

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- ❖ *How can we actively promote the role of clerks to young career minded people who are properly employed and developed and would do much to attract younger councillors as well as officers?*
- ❖ *If the Executive and Council places were limited to a four-year term, with staggered step down to maintain continuity and experience, would we find the body was regularly refreshed and reenergized or would the Association struggle to fill vital positions?*
- ❖ *How can SALC and member parish councils get involved with developing Parish Charters that will deliver the funding with devolved powers from Principal Authorities should be a priority?*
- ❖ *How can we utilise the skills of SALC finance and Strategy Group and Council members more to spread the load from the office and increase our ability to evangelise for the sector?*

#### **Further decisions to be made**

- ❖ *Whether the other area committees should be guided by the results of the Waveney Pilot and the lessons learned or present locally decided solutions in individual localities.*

- ❖ *Whether funding for a secretariat should be found and planning, venues and minutes be organised through the Area Chairman and Area Secretary with support from the SALC office.*
- ❖ *Whether area meetings should be combined with other tiers of local government and the police.*

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### **SALC'S TRACK RECORD ON DELIVERY**

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**The CEO and Executive are confident of the robustness of the Association to take on the challenges surrounding a culture of change.** In the past it has demonstrated this through: -

The move to financial independence and its own premises was achieved within a period of 9 months from exploration to execution in 1997.

In 2002 the Association took over purpose built premises to accommodate the growing need and provided high class, modern training facilities.

Increased staffing levels have been financed from 1 employee + help from Suffolk ACRE to 3 fulltime employees, one four day training Officer, and part time financial administrator, treasurer and caretaker.

External funding has been successfully sourced to enable the expansion in staffing. The training room has been used to create further financial income and subsidise the office space and strong financial management succeeded in achieving the additional space and facilities.

Member councils have supported these policies through increased subscriptions and membership has been maintained.

SALC is recognised as one of the best county associations in the country, its CEO is invited to input to national, regional and county consultations and discussion and it is accepted as an equal partner in the local government arena in Suffolk.

### **A NEW CONSTITUTION**

SALC should pursue its considered aim from early 2005 to protect member councils by removing the potential financial liability by creating a company limited by guarantee. Although the CEO was advised by NALC that councils could not act as shareholders, common sense dictates that if parish and town councils can be guarantors or shareholders in Suffolk ACRE through their membership they could set up their County Association in the same way.

- ❖ **The final solution may be to set up a sister organisation that contracts SALC to carry out its functions. (See Appendix Five)**

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### **PROCESS AND TIMESCALE FOR CONSULTATION TO PRODUCE FINAL PLAN**

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DATE	PROCESS	STATUS
December 2005	CEO presents to the SALC Executive for expertise and experience input	Completed
January - February 2006	Executive members feed back comments to CEO	In process
March 2006	CEO considers comments and prepares document for distribution to parish and town councils by end of month  Delivering Change on SALC website <a href="http://www.onesuffolk.co.uk/SALC">www.onesuffolk.co.uk/SALC</a>	To Area Meetings starting 27 <sup>th</sup> February 2006
End July 2006	CEO considers feedback from member councils	
October 2006	CEO presents final Document to AGM	

Appendix one

**PLEASE SEND YOUR COMMENTS ON THE FUTURE OF THIS ASSOCIATION TO; -**

SALC Office Unit 11A Hill View Business Park Claydon Ipswich IP6 0AJ  
 ☎ 01473 833713 [adminsalc@btconnect.com](mailto:adminsalc@btconnect.com)

Appendix One

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## **WHAT SALC DOES AT PRESENT**

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### **Membership Services:**

1. Legal and procedural advice to members on immediate request electronically and by telephone;
2. Support to increase members' confidence and capacity to lead their community;
3. The Local Councillor (TLC) – a newsletter aimed at keeping local councils and clerks abreast of local and national developments;
4. Creation and delivery of training packages to Clerks, Councillors, Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen, providing a flexible service which informs and helps local councils to respond to the range of challenges and opportunities facing them and their communities;
5. Visits to councils to improve their service delivery, help create a vision for the future and improve councillors' and clerks' understanding of the role of councils and councillors;
6. Mediates between members by providing an unbiased and fresh approach to long running disputes between councillors during periods of conflict, this often requires a number of visits or follow up support;
7. Encourages QUALITY PARISH STATUS through telephone, TLC or personal visit;
8. Promotes the attainment of the Certificate in Local Council Administration to clerks;
9. Runs the Newsletter of the Year Awards;
10. Encourages high standards for member councils;
11. Works in partnership with other tiers of local government.

### **Working with local government partners in the county.**

It has been widely acknowledged that SALC is a respected and valued partner to a number of other bodies. Without it the Local Area Agreement and related bodies have no voice that can speak for the town and parish sector. SALC Training has also been crucial to providing a discussion arena and cohesion to delivering the requisites of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Code of Conduct. This work has been done through: -

1. CEO on Suffolk Strategic Partnership Board
2. CEO on Local Area Agreement Board
3. CEO on Suffolk Local Access Forum ( a continuation of the Countryside Access partnership of SALC/SCC/Countryside Agency)
4. SALC/Monitoring Officer Group raising standards of ethical behaviour
5. CEO on Suffolk ACRE Community Enterprise Board
6. CEO on Rural Housing Enabling Group
7. CEOs from ACRE/SALC/Suffolk Association of Voluntary Organisations/SCC working together on micro localism to allow service delivery opportunities at most local level – pilot being explored;
8. A14 Corridor Study representing the town and parish councils
9. CEO's Assistant and elected members representation on Local Strategic Partnerships
10. CEO on Suffolk Rural Forum
11. Area Highways Officers at SALC Area Meetings twice a year.

### **Regional Work**

1. Through BENSCH (Bedfordshire, Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Associations) Cllr John Williams, SALC Deputy Chairman, is on the Executive Committee of the East of England Regional Assembly;
2. Chairmen and officers meet regionally as BENSCH to support regional representation;
3. BENSCH Officers meetings
4. CEO input to regional conferences with GO-East and other partners;

SALC is the lead body of the Suffolk Training Partnership and the Village of the Year Awards

## **National Representation at the National Association of Local Councils/Government**

Councillor John Williams is the Suffolk NALC council member.

The CEO fulfils certain roles that are by invitation of national bodies. These add to professional knowledge and expertise and enhance the local and national standing of SALC although they are roles representing the sector as a whole and are not for the promotion of SALC as an individual body. This work keeps SALC at the forefront of service to local councils and has had a significant positive spin off for the Association.

At present the SALC CEO sits on the Defra/Office of the Deputy Prime Minister National Town and Parish Council Development Group, which replaced and combined the National Training Strategy Group (CEO was member) and the National Quality Parish Status Group. The Town and Parish Council Development Group is made up of representatives from Defra, NALC, Society of Local Council Clerks) a County Association officer, Local Government Association and the Countryside Rural Commission (lately the Countryside Agency).

On an ad hoc basis the CEO will be asked to participate in debate on a national and regional level as one of the longest serving county association CEOs. These debates provide the welcome opportunity to discuss real case scenarios and to take a wider view of the SALC experience from an officer's experience.

## **Other Representation on County Bodies**

SALC's elected members serve on a number of other bodies including:

- Sizewell A Liaison Group
- Breck's Project
- Rail Policy Group
- Greenprint

## **Area Meetings**

SALC holds quarterly meetings for member councils in each of the six district areas, with Mid Suffolk divided into North and South. These meetings attract between one third and half of eligible councils and are an invaluable regular opportunity for information and debate on topical issues.

## **Larger Councils Group**

This group meets twice per annum and provides for TC/PCs that are either successor town councils or have an electorate of over 3,000. Compared to the newly created urban councils and larger councils in Hertfordshire, Essex and other parts of the country only Bury St Edmunds can truly be referred to as a large town council.

## **Council (Larger) Officer's Group [CLOG]**

The ten largest council officers meet regularly under the auspices of SALC. This is an extremely successful group of 10 larger councils with a budget of over £100,000 and attracts a good attendance. It creates a forum for debate on consultation, shares information and good practice and keeps the SALC CEO up to date with what is actually happening in the market towns.

## **The County Executive Committee**

This Committee is made up of:

- 3 councillors (or chairman of PM) from the AGM
- 3 councillors/clerks/PM from each of the 7 Area Committees
- 3 members from the Larger Council Group
- Representation from Norfolk Association, SLCC and SCC (member and officer).

The Finance and policy Committee can be delegated to make either recommendations or decisions between meetings of the Executive.

A Personnel Committee is available should it need to deal with discipline or grievance procedures.

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## **CURRENT POLICIES**

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Current policies that form part of consultation and lobbies: -

1. The Association believes that the parish and town council sector is the most local and democratic form of governance and promotes the parishing of the unparished areas of Suffolk in Lowestoft and Ipswich;
2. The Associations supports those member councils that wish to obtain Quality Parish Status;
3. It promotes professional qualification through the Certificate in Local Council administration or the University of Gloucester Local Policy Studies for all clerks and ongoing training and development for all elected members;
4. It supports the devolvement of powers and functions to those local councils that wish to take them on, providing that appropriate arrangements are made to devolve funding with the function and where relevant skills and expertise exist;
5. The Association lobbies for direct consultation on the granting of HGV operators' licences;
6. It supports the provision of Affordable Homes for local people in every community that proves a need through a Housing Needs Survey or as part of a Parish Plan;
7. It supports the use of rural brownfield sites for development that will encourage more, properly paid work for people living in the countryside;
8. It lobbies for significant change to produce more safe footways and cycle ways in rural areas to reduce vehicle use;
9. It encourages councils to Precept sufficiently to create facilities and promote elected councillors as community leaders;
10. The Association supports the lowering of the age of candidates for election to 18;
11. It supports the 10 principles of the Code of Conduct for Parish and Town Councils.

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## THE FUTURE OF TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

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***Anyone who has heard John Findlay, chief executive of NALC present his views on the current plans for the parish and town council sector will be in no doubt that there is a clearly developed and expanded role for those councils that want to take on local service delivery. Quality Parish Status will be the key to taking power locally and entering into agreements with principal authorities that produce improved service delivery at the most local access point. This is an exciting opportunity for local councils to make a structured, considered and positive impact on service delivery to their local communities and requires appropriate support from SALC to maximise the confident progress of local councils seeking to benefit from an expanded role.***

***The NALC Conference, the ODPM, Defra and regional partners have spared no efforts to ensure the sector knows that if it is to survive it must meet higher standards, be more representative of real communities and create enough public confidence to attract more people to stand for election. Local councils must make themselves relevant to modern communities.***

### **How the Association needs to change to meet that future**

The CEO believes that the Association needs to: -

- Address the amateur culture that allows members to continue to pay subscriptions that do not cover the full cost of service provision without seeking funding from outside bodies;
- Appoint sufficient staff to service members and work with partners within paid hours or with TOIL (Time off in Lieu);
- Modernise its decision making body;
- Ensure that the Executive is a body dedicated to discussing policy that affects the sector;
- identifying where it should be lobbying and the main issues that affect the parish and towns of the county;
- Improve its PR to maximise influence, support and knowledge;
- Develop a Marketing Plan to deliver its objectives;
- Meets at a time that allows people with daytime commitments to participate.

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**STAFFING**


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The Association needs the following staff to maintain its current services.

<b>Post</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Job Description</b>
<b>Chief Executive</b>	Full Time		Overall strategic management of SALC Legal advice service to members
<b>Deputy to the CEO/Project Officer</b>	Full Time	Regional Social and Community Programme, GO-East and NALC Quality Parish fund for 2006/7  Local Area Agreement for 2007/08	Assisting in service delivery Promotion of QUALITY PARISH STATUS Engaging with communities to raise capacity to take on a more pivotal role. Local Area Agreement/Local Strategic Partnerships/Liaison with partners Researching and sourcing funding for projects
<b>Administrator/PA to CEO</b>	Full Time		Reception, diaries, administration
<b>Financial Administration</b>	9 hours per week		Financial administration
<b>Treasurer</b>	Ad hoc but up to £3000 p.a.		Draft budget, internal audit, reporting to CEO and SALC Governing body
<b>Training Officer</b>	4 days per week	National Training Strategy and training income	Running Suffolk Training Partnership Administering SALC Training
<b>Caretaker</b>	Weekly cleaning Ad Hoc		Cleaning office Bringing in food for room hire clients and training

	refreshments delivery and clearing for Tony Ward Room		delegates Clearing for room hire
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#### **Funding the Needs**

The staffing in the table above is probably secure until March 2008. This gives time for the Association to look to its own members to secure the long-term future.

It is likely that outside funding from Government Offices and regional bodies will continue to assist the sector through the County Associations and direct grant funding. The Association is in a position to help deliver the aims of Local Strategic Partnerships and the Local Area Agreement, it should consequently be able to access funding through this route. BUT it must be prepared to accept targets that are set by the partnerships and to increase participation in the Local Strategic Partnership.

The increased staff resource should be self-funding; part of the role will be to access finance.

## **OPTIONS FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE**

### **Research**

The chief executive met with Peter See from Suffolk Community Enterprise to discuss the possibility of SALC being reconstituted as a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) or an Industrial & Provident Society (IPS). Both of these could deliver the benefits that SALC seeks to make.

Peter See agreed to provide the following information to enable SALC to compare the benefits of each approach.

### **Industrial and Provident Society**

Regulating body – the Financial Services Authority

Annual Fee payable to the Provident Society is determined by turnover.

### **Benefits**

- Are incorporated within limited liability. This is what co-operatives are based upon and they must demonstrate compliance with International Cooperative principles (11 principles including the need for a democratic process which insists on 1 vote per member).
- It is a legal requirement of an IPS that any surplus/assets will be applied for the community.
- On liquidation assets could be shared equally between member councils or a charity that benefits the county or the community at large. This is built into government document. The government has plans to introduce a structure called a Community Interest Company that is watertight against abuse. (Members closing an IPS in order to take out assets).

### **Downside to IPS**

- Financial Services Authority fees are higher than Company's House. There is an issue of privacy; in a CLG only the members can have access to directors' interests whereas IPS is open for public inspection.

Peter did not rule out the fact that SALC could become a cooperative; the Chief Executive could take an unpaid post on the Board that would necessitate keeping a worksheet to exclude Board work from other. A cooperative could mean a dividend has to be paid to member councils.

### **Company Limited by Guarantee**

- A CLG is controlled by its membership irrespective of size of council it is still 1 member 1 vote;
- it has a legal identity and limited liability;
- is more flexible over activities than a Bencom (Company for the benefit of the community);
- is registered at Company's House and must submit an annual return of directors' details to CH, (name/address/directorship of other companies);
- an annual fee of £15 is paid to CH;
- CLG must have a professional prepare its accounts. SALC could administer its own accounts as is currently does and the Annual report would be the relevant document to send to CH;
- Details of the Limited Company/Annual Report/accounts are public;
- Can trade for profit;

- It is possible to build into the Articles of Association that any surplus could be distributed to members;
- In years where a loss is made this can be made up from reserves;
- In loss or liquidation members have to pay their guarantee (£1).

Suffolk Community Enterprise has a structure that may fit SALC's requirements

Company House is not restrictive about what activities can be undertaken as long as the correct registration goes through.

#### **FITTING SALC INTO A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE**

Object 2(d) of the SALC Constitution gives the Association the opportunity to trade; the rational would be the promotion of social benefit of the training work, empowering local governance/community strength.

It would further allow more commercial work, which could fund the Association in the future.

#### **QUESTIONS THAT MAY INFLUENCE THE DECISION**

What direction does SALC want to go in?

How are members going to finance SALC in future?

Will the Association need to identify more activities to attract further funds – (d) provides for this.

#### **FURTHER RESEARCH**

Peter See has already spoken to the senior solicitor at Cooperatives UK who has set up a number of schemes involving parish councils and has identified no legal barriers to this.

Professional insurance covers this advice both through Cooperatives UK and Suffolk ACRE, the umbrella organisation of Suffolk Community Enterprise.

#### **CONCLUSION**

If SALC members decide that change is advisable a Company Limited by Guarantee appears to be the preferred option. It would be set up as a community business and a model document is available. The use of the premise/trading etc could be built into the Memorandum and Articles.

#### **HOW WOULD SALC WORK DIFFERENTLY IF IT REGISTERS AS A CLG?**

Articles 12 of the present Constitution could still apply to fill seats on a General Council.

Alternatively the Annual General Meeting could elect all the General Council. The conduct of election would be defined by the Articles and would generally be a show of hands. The General Council could nominate a maximum number of elected members to the Executive Board.

#### **Meetings**

SALC Council – three times per year

SALC Finance and Strategy Group – 3 times per year

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## SALC EXECUTIVE AND STAFF AWAYDAY May 2006

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This is a brief report on the outcomes from our Awayday held on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> May. I'm pleased to say that everyone who took part agreed it was a really useful workshop.

Justin Griggs was excellent; his presentation was clear and relevant to our situation. His session has helped us to become much more aware of the rapidly evolving environment in which County Association's need to operate. It enabled us to identify a range of issues which will impact on SALC, and which we need to actively explore. It is also clear that we need to be more effective as an Executive in helping member Councils and Councillors gain a better understanding of the factors driving the agenda for change.

A later session involved everyone in creating an 'all round' picture of SALC as viewed by our: **'customers', 'investors/contributors', 'people', and 'organisation'.**

It is true to say that no one present was aware of just how much there is in this 'big picture'. One delegate summed it up for all of us - **"I now have a much better understanding and respect for the role SALC plays in supporting Councils, in leadership in County Associations – awesome"**

In the concluding session we identified a number of strategic issues which we need to progress over the coming months. Another comment: **"We know now what we need to focus on – we just need to get on with it"**

In summary, there was a unanimous view that the workshop has helped us to gain clarity on those key areas that require our focused attention. Making progress on these will be vital if SALC is to continue to provide effective support to Councils, Councillors and communities across Suffolk into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

I should like to thank everyone who took part – your energy and hard work made the difference. My particular thanks to Justin Griggs, Alan Sarsby, and Anne Bailey for their expert contributions; Brandeston Parish Council for the use of their fabulous Village Hall, and David Risk, Chairman, for his warm welcome.

### **And so now what.....?**

At the workshop we were advised not to jump to conclusions, nevertheless we do need to press ahead in developing our thinking in these areas.

I will be making some proposals at our next meeting, on June 9<sup>th</sup>; on the initial steps I believe we need to take in order to progress this activity as a priority.

Determining the right approach for our Association will not be quick or easy, but it is essential that having taken this first step, we now move forward. I look to the entire Executive for their commitment to support the Association in this journey.

# BREAKDOWN OF STAFF WORK AREAS

## Appendix Seven

Core service to members - TEAM	<p>Legal advice – from CEO or NALC (approx 95% CEO/5%NALC)</p> <p>Publications/Updates/Briefing papers</p> <p>The Local Councillor</p> <p>Visits to mediate/enthuse</p> <p>Employment support – appraisal/interview/selection/salary assessments</p> <p>NALC partnership/National Conferences and seminars</p>
Administration/Meetings – Corinne with TEAM support when possible	<p>Reception/Telephone/E-mails</p> <p>Support to CEO/Appointments Diary</p> <p>Member mailings</p> <p>Database</p> <p>Area Meetings/Larger Council Group</p> <p>Executive</p> <p>AGM</p> <p>Liaison</p>
Promoting the Sector/Raising Standards – Bob + TEAM + CEO	<p><b>SALC Training/Suffolk Training Partnership</b></p> <p>Clerk's Induction</p> <p>Full Courses/CiLCA</p> <p>Video evenings</p> <p>Specialist sessions</p> <p>National Chairman's material</p> <p>Promoting QUALITY PARISH STATUS</p> <p>Clerk's networking days</p> <p>Council (Larger) Officers' Group</p> <p>Village of Year Awards including Parish Council of the Year</p> <p>Conferences</p> <p>Seminars</p>
Partnership Working – CEO, Deputy CEO and Members	<p>LSPs</p> <p>SSP</p> <p>Local Area Agreement</p> <p>Suffolk Rural Partnership</p> <p>Rural Housing</p> <p>Community Enterprise</p> <p>ROW/Local Access Forum</p>
Ethical Standards – CEO/Parish and Town	<p>Queries from councillors</p> <p>SALC/Monitoring Officer group</p>

Councillors/Ethical Tutor	<p>Training/Case studies Contact with SBE (Standards Board for England).</p> <p>PC representatives nominated to District Standards Committees</p>
<p>Finance – Diane</p> <p>Treasurer - Diane</p>	<p>Accounts and audit, Subscriptions Invoicing/Paying in</p> <p>Treasurer/Internal auditor</p>
<p>Regional Work – CEO, Chairman and at present Suffolk supplies the East of England Regional Assembly representative, Councillor John Williams from Claydon &amp; Whitton PC</p>	<p>Attendance at meetings of the Regional County Associations</p> <p>Representation at Regional Assembly</p> <p>Liaison with Regional Support Officer</p> <p>BENSCH Officers' Group</p>
National work	<p>Rural Commissions/Consultation/ Parish and Town Council Development Group/NALC Seminars and Conferences</p>

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## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF SALC**

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The Association was formed about 55 years ago by what was then the Rural Community Council (RCC) of Suffolk. The Director of the RCC took on the role of supporting the parish and town councils and charged a membership fee to finance this part of its work. In 1988 the responsibility for SALC was undertaken by an officer using the title County Secretary and employed on a salary based on a field officer's status.

In 1995 responsibility for paying the County Secretary was passed to the Association members and his work was supported by a part time administrator for a few hours per week and paid by Suffolk ACRE (as the RCC had become).

In 1996 a new County Secretary was appointed who reviewed the funding and status of the Association. The CS understood that there was a great deal of confusion amongst members and partner organisations about the work of the two bodies and advised the SALC Executive Committee to seek independent status and approach SCC for a direct grant. The Chairman of the Executive and the CS met the Chief Executive of SCC, Peter Bye, to discuss the situation and ask for parity with SACRE and a direct grant from SCC. The SCC CEO was enthusiastic about SALC becoming an independent organisation that could work in close and direct partnership with the County Council.

Since 1996 the funding amount from SCC has never been properly reviewed neither has SALC's relationship with the SCC examined in detail. It has risen by approximately by the rate of inflation and SCC has made extra payments at the request of the SALC CEO. The 2005 grant was c£25,000. Without this core funding the Association could not continue its work.

In 2001 the Chairman of the Association, Councillor Arlene Cruickshanks, recommended to the Executive that the role of the SALC CS no longer represented the Job Description and the Executive changed the post to that of Chief Executive. This was a significant decision, which enabled the CEO to work and interrelate with other local government tiers on an equal footing and raised the profile of the Association on a countywide and national stage.

Since becoming an independent body the sphere of influence of SALC has expanded considerably; the creation of a CEO role was a continuation of SALC's 'coming of age'.

**Until 2000 the Association focused on the first tier of local government although by then it had been involved at both county and district level in Best Value Reviews and on a number of specialist committees and work parties.**

## **Christmas Lights**

Thanks to a combination of one-off grants, and a refund from the suppliers, the Christmas lights net budget is in surplus by some £5,500. In order to ensure a better quality of provision during Christmas 2006 some additional structural works need to be undertaken to lamp columns; quotations have been received for those in Queen Street/High Street but a further quotation is still awaited in respect of Market Square. This surplus is required for these works.

**Approval is therefore sought to carry this surplus forward specifically earmarked for Christmas Lights, to be spent on upgrade to lighting columns in advance of Christmas 2006.**

### **Haverhill Arts Centre**

St Edmundsbury Borough Council have agreed that any Grant income not spent within the financial year can be carried forward as an earmarked reserve to offset any reduction in income in future years.

**Approval is sought from this Council for any surplus in the Arts Centre budget as at year end to be carried forward in an earmarked reserve to offset any future reduction in income within the Arts Centre.**

### **Authorisation of Town Clerk to Purchase Van Hire Using Personal Credit Card**

The Town Council needs to hire vans during the year, to assist with moving fencing to its events at the Recreation Ground, Market Square and East Town Park. In order to effect the hire it has been necessary for the Town Clerk to use a personal credit card and reclaim the monies back from the Town Council.

Advice has now been received from NALC and HM Revenue & Customs that, in order to reclaim the VAT element of the bills, the Council must pre-authorise the Town Clerk to make these purchases.

**The Town Council are recommended to pre-authorise the Town Clerk to use a personal credit card to purchase van hire in connection with Town Council events.**

## **Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006-03-20**

The effect of these Regulations, as they affect Haverhill Town Council, is as follows:-

- a) the Town Council can continue to produce its accounts in the same format as previous years (i.e. the requirement to produce accounts to the full SORP standard is deferred until the Council's gross income or expenditure exceeds £1 million; currently the gross income is £920,000)
- b) by 2009 the Council must approve the Accounts by 30<sup>th</sup> June each year (we are currently working to this timetable)

From the Minister of State  
Rosie Winterton MP

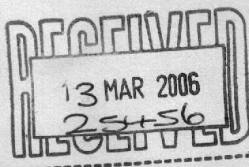


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PO00000068753

Mr Gordon Mussett  
Town Clerk  
Haverhill Town Council  
Haverhill Arts Centre  
High Street  
Haverhill  
Suffolk CB9 8AR



Mr M Mussett,

9th March 2006

Thank you for your letter of 4 February to Patricia Hewitt in response to our reply of 27 January (our ref: TO00063674) about revenue allocations for the Suffolk West Primary Care Trust (PCT). I am replying as the Minister responsible for health services in the Midlands and East of England.

While I can appreciate the concerns you have raised, I would like to reiterate the point made in our previous reply that revenue allocations to PCTs are made on the basis of the relative needs of their populations. These decisions are not based on a subjective process but the commitment to meet the healthcare needs of the population in each PCT's locality.

You mention allocations in Suffolk compared to the national average. Comparing Suffolk PCTs' allocations per person against the national average allocation per person provides a misleading view of health service funding in Suffolk. As mentioned previously, revenue allocations are made to PCTs on the basis of the relative needs of their populations. The weighted capitation formula is used to determine PCTs' target shares of available resources to enable them to commission similar levels of health services for populations in similar need.

The components of the formula are used to weigh each PCT's 'crude' population according to their relative need (age, and additional need) for healthcare and the unavoidable geographical differences in the cost of providing healthcare (the market forces factor).

The aim of the formula is to ensure there is sufficient funding to provide equal access for equal need in all parts of the country, and to reduce health inequalities. The

PCTs in Suffolk receive less funding per person than the national average because their average level of need is lower than the national average.

Allocating funds to PCTs on an equitable basis is an important objective. To ensure this objective is met, the Advisory Committee on Resource Allocation (ACRA) continuously oversees the development of the weighted capitation formula. ACRA is an independent body, made up of NHS managers, academics and GPs. Any recommendations that ACRA makes in relation to proposed changes to the formula are based on the best evidence and research available.

The formula is used to set targets, which then inform allocations. The formula does not determine allocations. Actual allocations reflect decisions on the speed at which PCTs are brought nearer to target through the distribution of extra funds (pace of change policy).

It is important to understand that pace of change policy is decided by Ministers for each allocations round based on the best available data at that time. In determining pace of change policy, a balance must be achieved between moving PCTs closer to their fair share of the allocation and the need to maintain continuity and stability across the nation.

For the most recent round of revenue allocations, covering the period 2006/07 and 2007/08, it was decided to move PCTs more quickly towards their fair share of funds. In 2003/04, the most under-target PCT was 22 per cent under its fair share of available resources. As a result of this allocation round, no PCT will be more than 3.5 per cent under its fair share by the end of 2007/08.

As you are aware, Suffolk West PCT will receive allocations of £256.7million in 2006/07 and £285million in 2007/08. These represent a cash increase of £50million or 21.3 per cent over the two years, compared to a national average of 19.5 per cent. Suffolk West PCT will be 3.5 per cent under target by 2007/08. Pace of change will be considered again by Ministers in advance of the revenue allocations after 2007/08.

I hope this reply clarifies the situation.

*Yours sincerely,  
Rosie Winterton*

**ROSIE WINTERTON**



# HAVERHILL AND DISTRICT PENSIONERS ASSOCIATION

AFFILIATED TO THE NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION



Chairman: Frank Bradsell  
36 Roman Way  
HAVERHILL  
Suffolk  
CB9 0NG

Gordon Mussett  
Town Clerk  
Haverhill Town Council

16 March 06

Dear Gordon,

As directed at the public meeting, members of HDPA met to discuss the consultation documents re PCTrusts, Strategic Health Authority and Ambulance Trusts. Comments and answers to posed questions were then forwarded to the appropriate bodies.

In addition the suggestion made at the public meeting that local Patient Forums would be an important part of a patient led NHS was discussed and the following conclusion was reached.

The Town Council, representing the whole community, was obviously the best group to lead and fund a Patient Forum.

It is requested therefore that this matter be discussed with Councillors and a response made at the next Full Council Meeting.

Yours sincerely,

*Frank Bradsell*

