

## BABERGH and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

<b>TO:</b>	<b>Joint Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>REPORT NUMBER: JOS/22/32</b>
<b>FROM:</b>	<b>Di Robinson – Interim Director for Communities</b>	<b>DATE OF MEETING: 19/12/2022</b>
<b>OFFICER:</b>	<b>Di Robinson – Interim Director for Communities</b>	<b>KEY DECISION REF NO. N/A</b>

### Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) Update

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Overview & Scrutiny Members regarding the work of the Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC).

#### 2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 N/A

<b>3. RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
3.1 To note the presentation provided by SALC
<b>REASON FOR DECISION</b>
No decision required

#### 4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 There are approximately 10,000 local councils across England. Within Suffolk there are 372 town and parish councils and, together with 56 parish meetings, they form the grass roots tier of local democracy.
- 4.2 SALC operates as a not-for-profit organisation under a formal Constitution. It has a long-standing reputation for providing quality services that support the corporate interests of local councils in Suffolk. It forms part of a national network of 43 county associations and membership includes access to the service of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).
- 4.3 SALC was formed in 1950 to:
- Assist members in the performance of their duties
  - Protect and promote the interests, rights, functions, and privileges of Members
  - Promote good local governance through advice and training
  - Promote and develop the social, cultural, and recreational life of parishes and villages
  - Promote a widespread and well-informed interest in local government

- 4.4 Membership of SALC is more than an insurance policy; it provides local councils with specialist independent support through advice, training, information, and representation. It is a paid service and subscriptions are calculated based broadly on number of electors and supplemented by offering member councils some additional low-cost services alongside a small grant from Suffolk County Council. SALC currently receives a small grant from East Suffolk Council to support their Community Partnerships initiative.
- 4.5 Members access a wide range of services via the online member portal, phone, or email, with the SALC website acting as a marketing tool to showcase the role of Town and Parish Councils play as the tier that is closest to the taxpayer.
- SALC provides a representative role both locally and nationally providing the opportunity to highlight the width and depth of hyper local from the first tier of the public sector alongside challenges and constraints.
- 4.6 At the heart of everything SALC does is the local council. It is a not-for-profit organisation and consists of 3.4 FTE working across Suffolk supporting 375 local councils (97% of Town and Parish councils in Suffolk) with a budget of under £250k
- 4.7 Services continually adapt to meet the needs of members and this often results in enhancements to what is delivered year on year. Examples include topic based webinars working in partnership with sector specific colleagues and stakeholders including District Councils, the Police and Crime Commissioner through to specialist service providers such as Parish Online, insurers etc.
- 4.8 SALC creates forums and networks which occur regularly - monthly and quarterly – allowing for the sharing good practice, problem solving, forming working groups to help lobbying activities where necessary and there is an issue affecting a large number of parishes. The SALC climate forum is a good example of a topic-based forum – called for by councillors and clerks and facilitated by SALC. It shares good practice, has guest speakers and inputs into the Suffolk Climate Partnership with SALC being part of the communities workstream.
- 4.9 SALC delivers weekly e-bulletins to Members through the clerk focussing on technical matters, updates, and changes so they are ahead of the curve as well as training opportunities and vacancies.
- 4.10 SALC has a good range of templates and sector guidance which is currently being reformed to make information easier to access and be utilised for a wider range of uses. SALC invested in a CRM system in 2021 resulting in a new website and a member portal designed to help consolidate information into one place to help Councils find information quickly and independently if they want to. They are also engaging clerks in the further development, content and design utilising the important working relationship SALC has with the network. SALC also run a variety of webinars and record and publish podcasts, using these mechanisms to spotlight topics such as digital champions, speeding, climate solutions, etc..
- 4.11 SALC run core training sessions every week (up to four sessions a week). Councillor and clerk training is broken down into modules and delivered online. SALC are also an accredited trainer for CiLCA, the Certificate in Local Council Administration, a recognised national qualification for clerks.

- 4.12 Training also covers specialist topics which are tailored to the sector - such as being a good employer, planning, communications, and marketing. SALC have also led on developing a regional offer for e-learning which has been adopted nationally.
- 4.13 In October 2022 SALC launched a new website – on the back of the implementation in the autumn 2021 of a new case management system. Member councils now have access to a portal giving them information relevant to the sector at their fingertips to aid efficiency and allowing clerks to raise enquiries with us so that we can monitor trends, issues and feed improvements into the services we offer.
- 4.14 The new website showcases the work of local councils and thereby the support SALC provides. This is a new approach to marketing SALC to ensure there is knowledge amongst stakeholders as well as potential new councillors and clerks about the infrastructure that exists to support local councils. SALC has increased its project work over recent years
- 4.15 SALC is keen to look for opportunities including collaborations and partnerships. They are beginning to see these developing bringing tiers together, reduce duplication and improve engagement. They feel strongly on behalf of towns and parishes that the local voice is heard because they represent a tier of local government that is close to residents.
- 4.16 BMSDC is currently re-looking at the Town and Parish Liaison Meeting structure with a view to developing an approach to reinvigorate this work. There have been some early discussions with SALC to build on our existing relationship to explore potential partnership approaches for some of this work, to align all our efforts to maximise the voices of our local residents through Parish and Town Councils.

## **5. LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN**

5.1 N/A

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 N/A

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 None

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

8.1 N/A

## **9. CONSULTATIONS**

9.1 N/A

## **10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS**

10.1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required. This is an external organisation and this is a service update, not a service change which has potential to impact on equalities groups.

**11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 N/A

**12. APPENDICES**

12.1 See attached SALC Powerpoint Presentation

**13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

13.1 N/A

**14. REPORT AUTHORS** *(Name and title of report authors, such as CM and Professional Leads, who has undertaken work on the report)*

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