

Background

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

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

The cost of membership for the 2020-21 year is £2,446.94 and covers both NALC and ALCA, as you cannot join one without the other.

Benefits

NALC updates and technical papers in recent months have covered the Covid-19 temporary regulations, annual and remote meeting guidance, home working health & safety, the NJC pay award negotiations, election, and neighbourhood plan referendum updates. The organisation has also played a central role in lobbying the government for an easement of local council regulation and the additional costs being incurred during the current crisis.

Although similar information can be obtained from other sources the regular newsfeed and supporting technical papers, including legal advice, have been useful and avoided the time and cost of obtaining this information elsewhere.

The website also provides access to model standing orders, financial regulations and numerous other policy documents that, are not readily accessible elsewhere, and will be used as we modernise PTC governance and policies over the next few months. It is also help in respect of study for the CiLCA qualification that is an objective for this year.

ALCA is arguable less focused and well organised, but over the last month I have sought to engage with the local co-ordinator and attended two (online) discussion groups with other town clerks. The discussion has covered Covid measures, online meetings, dog bin contracts, councillor meeting attendance, homeworking, and standing orders. This is new forum but will be helpful in sharing information between councils in an informal and candid manner.

I have also had discussions concerning NJC Green Book and pay awards with the co-ordinator and found them to be useful.

Proposal

Although the cost of NALC/ALCA membership is substantial. The cost of alternative advice at market legal rates may be around £250~£400 per hour. Accordingly, it is equivalent to around 10 hours of professional advice. The regular updates and networking benefits it provides are difficult to obtain from elsewhere and will be useful particularly when undertaking the CiLCA qualification.

Accordingly, it is recommended that the council renews the subscription for 2020-21 and cost vs benefit of membership is reviewed on an annual basis going forward.

Support, advice & other subscriptions

The council currently has the following sources of advice and information:

Body	Annual Cost
NALC/ACLA – for regulatory, procedural and linkage with other local council	£2,447
SLCC – Society of Council Clerks, personal memberships, training & CPD	£600
SW Councils – HR and employment advice	£534
Portishead Chamber of Commerce – local business links and information	£45
SeverNet – Portbury and Avonmouth commercial association	£150
Local Council Review (LCR) – Quarterly publication for local councils	£70

It is considered that all of these are help and represent value for money at the current time and so subscriptions should be continued. Any other association or membership subscriptions that may arise should be reviewed on a case by case basis.