Notes from LCC Clerk's quarterly liaison meeting 6/2/19

Leicestershire County Council

Unitary proposals – Simon Lawrence (LCC)

- LCC Cabinet have considered a 90 page report including appendices looking at the Unitary Proposals from the point of view of difference services
- There have been debates at Scrutiny Meetings and a report of these will go to Cabinet in the spring
- There have been three meetings of the Parish Unitary Group, which have been invaluable
- Met with representatives from LRALC, SLCC and Scrutiny received a presentation from NALC
- There has been engagement with Voluntary and Business sectors
- Met with MPs, which was not positive
- Met with District Council leads
- Have made presentations to Parish Councils. This is an open offer to come out to meet Parish Councils to debate the pros and cons. These sessions are considered to be important. 30 minutes is the ideal length for a presentation and they are willing to do two or three parishes together. Would need to be done by mid April.
- There has been a subtle shift in the argument. Initially around the financial predicament, but there is now a view that services can be better managed from a unitary perspective.
- Cabinet are considering whether to go for a single authority or a two unitary authority model, which Northamptonshire are adopting. Noted that some smaller Unitary Authorities are starting to struggle financially
- The Secretary for State approved the proposals in Buckinghamshire in spite of all District Councils having objected.
- In Dorset they have adopted a model of three Unitary Authorities and are finding the biggest problem is the disaggregation of the Dorset CC services into the three new authorities.
- New guidance for councils on Unitary Proposals is anticipated.
- As part of the debate a Parish and Town Council Devolution Framework is being created, which will be a valuable document even if the Unitary Authority is not adopted.
- The opportunity for services to be devolved to Town and Parish Councils is at the digression of Town and Parish Councils
- There would be a three to four year transition period.

Leicestershire Highways update – Ann Carruthers (LCC)

- **Permit scheme for works on highways –** Utilities have to apply for a permit from LCC to undertake work on highways. The exception to this is for emergency work. Utilities are encouraged to consider the impact of the work to the public. Once the permit is granted it is the responsibility of the utility to notify public, parish councils etc. Details of permits granted can be seen at www.roadworks.org .

- **Gully Cleansing –** during the next financial year LCC are collecting more details of how frequently different gullies are filling up and require cleansing. They will then be categorised as follows:
  - 10 monthly for those which fill up quickest
  - 24 months
  - 36 months, these are inspected at 24 months

  Parked cars are a problem if the cleansing vehicle can't access the gully. LCC will write to the frontages and sometimes grant a temporary traffic order and ask for assistance from Parish Councils
- **Winter Gritting –** 47% of roads are gritted, this is high compared to other authorities. Gritting takes place at night, however sometimes if it rains it has to be done again. For maps of gritting routes see https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/winter-weather/gritting-and-travel-this-winter LCC do not grit footpaths as they don't have the resources. LCC are keen to support the snow warden initiative which is a valuable local resource. Farmers support gritting of roads in particularly hard winters.
- **Grass cutting –** LCC are not widening the offer over the county to other parishes who are not already involved in the scheme. In response to my complaint about the timescale of the notice of changes to requirements and return of the extension form I received an apology and that they have taken this on board for the future.
- **Passenger Transport Policy / Strategy-** subsidised routes are being assessed against the strategy to see if they meet the criteria.   LCC are currently working through the review and assessing each individual service, some will be retained if they meet the criteria. For those that are not retained LCC will work with communities to put an alternative service in place. Those services affected will be notified March / April and changes will be rolled out over the calendar year.
- **Trees on highways –** LCC are undertaking an inspection of the trees they own on the highway to increase asset knowledge and establish an inspection regime. For trees on land owned by Parish Council they have to have their own regime and in the light of the recent court case (see link below) three yearly is not regular enough for those near the highway https://www.getsurrey.co.uk/news/surrey-news/witley-parish-loses-bid-overturn-15233785

LRALC   - Frances Webster
- Encourage members to complete the Member Survey. Still waiting to hear from two thirds of the councils. Elected members also encouraged to complete it. Helps to shape the future direction of LRALC
- The Staff Recruitment Manual has recently been upgraded and is on the website
- Invoices for membership subscriptions will be sent out at the end of March for payment by the end of June
- Internal Auditors – an auditor has been allocated to each council and councils will be notified shortly. LRALC are still recruiting internal auditors
- NALC media release on the recent parliamentary enquiry by the Committee for Standards in Public Life which backs call for strengthening

the standards regime for local councillors. NALC is pushing for councillor training to be made compulsory.

- LRALC have run two election workshops and slides are on website. In process of compiling and adding FAQ
- LRALC have been awarded grant from HDC for bitesize webinars to help clerks modify procedures and for use at Parish Council meetings. This is a LRALC project to be developed during 2019 for councils in HDC area only

Conclusion
- LCC Annual Parish Conference for Parish Councils will be on 8/7/19 in the evening
- Date of next LCC quarterly meeting to be confirmed.