



Clerk's Report 21st November 2024

1. Feedback from Somerset Parishes Conference 2024

I attended the Somerset Parishes Conference last week in Bridgwater, you may have seen the agenda that I had forwarded on to you.

The day was useful to feedback some of the challenges we are facing with lack of communication, information, and knowing who to contact at SC. I highlighted that although I am a fan of using the online reporting system for reporting simple issues, there are times when items do not fit with the options and I need to speak to someone, but it is unclear who I need to speak to. I also commented that the public seem to believe that we have a backdoor access to SC, which isn't the case, but it would be helpful for clerks to have access to an SC intranet system to access their library of information and contacts if we are looking at working together.

I have obtained printed copies from SALC of the parish and town councillor guides "Being a good employer" and "The Good Councillor's Guide To Finance and Transparency". I also picked up some useful information from [Somerset Prepared](#), including the following:-

- Information regarding Small Grants funding for activity described in Community Emergency Plan or Community Flood Plan
- Rotary EVAG- Flood resilience support
- FWAG South West
- Templates for Home Emergency Planning, and Community Emergency Planning.

As I am sure you can imagine, the Somerset devolution of services scheme was a hot topic, with small parishes highlighting that they just do not have capacity, and other parishes struggling with the GPC to be in a position to adopt services. There was some positive feedback from Glastonbury who have had a positive experience when adopting the responsibilities for the public toilets. The service director, Sara Skirton, detailed that this has been a massive learning curve for all and apologised for not getting back to queries as quickly as they would like, but they are working through the list. The Asset and Service Devolution is at the start of a 4-5 year process and there is no expectation for parishes to take services on, nor for these services to cease abruptly. Parishes are encouraged to consider setting sums aside now should they wish to take up the opportunity. For any queries; devolution@somerset.gov.uk.

The day ended with the SALC AGM. SALC are currently drafting a Somerset Charter, which is designed to set out how SC and parishes will work together, and will be published in draft form for parishes to view in due course.



2. Updated progress since starting the role.

- I now have the new email address (clerk@sheptonmontagueparish.gov.uk) up and running and I have signed up to useful emailing distribution lists, including Ally Laing, Communications Lead at SC and one.network to receive road closure notices.
- I have updated the privacy policy on the website with the new email address, and the website has been updated by Hugh.
- I have set up an auto-forwarding to the new email address from the old gmail account, but still have access to this for a short time to ensure nothing slips through the net
- I have received training and now have access to the website.
- I have contacted Payroll and completed the new employee joining forms
- Still awaiting access to bank account (plan to meet with Margaret to arrange this)
- I am completing time sheets each week to keep an eye on things and have gone over the agreed hours, which have roughly doubled for the first 2 weeks in post. I would say that this is to be expected initially due to plenty of start up tasks (e.g. Microsoft migration, new email address, website training etc.) and I am hopeful that in time this will level out. I will report back at meetings to ensure a close eye is kept on this.

3. Advice received from ACAS and SALC regarding payment terms for previous clerk.

- ACAS advice:
Unless it is stated in contract that pay can be withheld until return of company equipment then it could be considered a breach of contract/National minimum wage to withhold salary. In terms of unreturned property, this would have to be dealt with separately as a legal matter.
- SALC advice:
NOT YET RECEIVED