

# COTHERSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

## Clerk's Report on recent Continuing Professional Development activity

### 1. County Durham Association of Local Councils' Smaller Councils Forum

Clerk attended the Forum on 25 July, at Spennymoor.

Guest speakers presented on: Community Led Housing (Lauren Broderick, Community Housing Officer at Durham County Council) and County Durham Vision for 2035 (Gordon Elliott, Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement at Durham County Council).

Further information / slides can be forwarded to councillors. The consultation on the County Durham Vision was due to finish on 31 July. The Vision document is quite an easy 12-page read, available from the County Council's website. It is the plan to replace the previous 'Altogether....' themes from 10 years ago with just three — 'More and better jobs', 'People live long and independent lives' and 'Connected communities'. There has been some criticism that the proposed new tagline to the Vision - 'Our future is Durham' – exacerbates a feeling that the focus is on Durham City and not County Durham.

Members of the Forum were encouraged to attend the AGM of CDALC, on Saturday 12 October at County Hall and if possible, the National Association of Local Councils Annual Conference, 28-29 October in Milton Keynes.

### 2. Society of Local Council Clerks, County Durham and Cleveland Branch meeting

Clerk attended the meeting on 26 July, at Easington Village.

Sarah Jeffries, the SLCC President gave an inspiring address on clerks' continuing education and development, encouraging clerks to go beyond CiLCA qualification to the Community Governance programme (to degree level) and also for councillors to take the Introduction to Local Council Administration (ILCA) course online (£99) if attendance at courses is not convenient.

The Chairman's report included a caution to parish councils setting single-use plastic or climate change targets/promises — only commit to do things which are within the council's direct control.

Many councils and clerks are concerned about the website accessibility requirements which need to be implemented by September 2020 for all public body websites. Concerns centre on the technicalities of compliance and the cost burden to small councils.

Encouragement to attend VAT training day, 24 September, when the day will be split into matters relevant to smaller and to larger councils.

### 3. Society of Local Council Clerks Regional Training Seminar

Clerk attended the seminar on 31 July, in Harrogate.

Presentation from Clive Stilwell (Local Council Consultancy) on website accessibility requirements. A public body website must, from September 2020, be perceivable, operable, understandable and robust and contain an accessibility statement. Parish Councils are urged to prepare a plan for moving towards compliance, starting with an accessibility audit, setting a budget for work and an implementation plan. Clerk will prepare a report for this council in due course.

Presentations also on: cyber security and cyber insurance, Local Council Consultancy services, regeneration within a community, writing press releases and headlines from the Standards in Public Life select committee report.

Final session was a case study from Church Fenton Parish Clerk who described how the Parish Council had used Public Works Loan Board borrowing to acquire the village shop and the village pub in one year, taking expenditure from £29k to £918k, and then leasing both premises to community-run businesses.

## Recommendation

To receive a report on Clerk's recent continuing professional development.