



**STAFFORDSHIRE
PARISH COUNCILS'
ASSOCIATION**

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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ABOUT STAFFORDSHIRE PARISH COUNCILS' ASSOCIATION (SPCA)

What is SPCA?

Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association (SPCA) is a not for profit, organisation for all Parish and Town Councils across Staffordshire on a subscription basis. Simply, it is a membership organisation made up of Town and Parish Councils.

SPCA is one of 43 County Associations of Local Councils (CALCs) across the country. The Association provides a range of services tailored to help its member councils to achieve their objectives. SPCA provides regular bulletins, the latest news on changes affecting town and parish councils, advice, guidance and support to its members. SPCA also provides a comprehensive training and development programme for councillors and clerks to ensure they are well equipped to carry out their roles as the first tier of local government. The Association also represents councils in talks with unitary and principal councils as well as local and national organisations working in partnership with the sector.

SPCA works closely with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and acts as a liaison between NALC and the membership. All SPCA member councils are affiliated to NALC by virtue of their annual subscription, and this gives access to Legal Topic Notes, legal advice, model documents etc.

The Staff Team at SPCA

The team at SPCA consists of the:

**Chief Executive
Officer
(32 hours/week)**

Lisa Horritt

**Training
Officer
(16 hours/week)**

Ian Cruise-Taylor



The Structure of SPCA

Member councils nominate representatives to serve on the SPCA Executive on behalf of their district and the councils within. These are then voted on by area with the maximum numbers shown below. Each year an AGM takes place which appoints Officers and reviews the work of SPCA over the previous 12 months, with each member having a vote on matters. A member of the Executive is appointed to serve on the NALC National Assembly, and the committee also sends representatives to the NALC AGM.

Who makes up the Executive?



The Executive is largely made up of nominated members of Parish and Town Councils in each district.

District / Borough	Number of seats on the Executive
Cannock Chase	2
East Staffordshire	5
Lichfield	3
Newcastle	2
South Staffordshire	4
Stafford	5
Staffordshire Moorlands	4
Clerks/Honorary Auditor	2 & 1
Total	28

N.B. The Executive Structure is awaiting approval at the AGM in Dec 22

The role of the SPCA Executive Committee

The Executive meets quarterly and oversees the management of the Association. It agrees the annual budget and sets the subscription level.

Elected Members attend meetings and ensure that the Committee sets the strategic direction of SPCA and provides effective oversight of the operation and administration of the Association.





CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The sector, through our National Association, continued during the year under review to press for change through the government's **Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and thereby** empower local communities, promoting community involvement in planning and giving neighbourhood plans greater protection. In publishing its White Paper, the government made clear its own ambitions to help ensure that everyone, wherever they live, has the opportunity to succeed and thrive and to enable people to take pride in the places they live and have a good quality of life; are these not the very same core ambitions of every parish and town council?

Throughout the year, NALC and others continued to push for the standards regime to be strengthened to address poor behaviour, including the reintroduction of suspensions for councillors. The government has committed to engage with the local government sector to seek views on options to strengthen sanctions to address breaches of the code of conduct, notably those which involve incidents of bullying and harassment or disruptive behaviour. As part of its work through its Civility and Respect Project, NALC has engaged with the government on this issue alongside continuing to make the case for other changes needed to strengthen the standards regime.

NALC has also continued to press the case for local councils to have flexibility in meeting arrangements, calling on the government to allow councils to use virtual and hybrid council meetings to keep their proceedings accessible.

It has been encouraging to see the extent to which Staffordshire councils have engaged with NALC's Local Council Award Scheme and also just how many clerks in the county have registered to study for the CiLCA qualification. Taken together with the further expansion of the SPCA Training programme,

this all augurs well for the development of greater professionalism within the sector at these most challenging times. Receiving accreditation under LCAS demonstrates that your local council embraces good practices in governance, community engagement and council improvement, having gone above and beyond the basic legal obligations. It is an excellent way of showing that a council leads its community and is committed to finding ways of improving even further.

I know that many SPCA member councils spent a great deal of time and effort in the early part of 2022 to ensure that the people they serve and represent would have a memorable and enjoyable long bank holiday weekend celebrating the Platinum Jubilee marking the Queen's 70 years as monarch. The Platinum Jubilee weekend clearly demonstrated how councils can help foster cohesion in communities and generate pride amongst those communities in their locality. It behoves us all to build upon the genuine sense of community spirit that the Jubilee engendered and retain the goodwill through what look certain to be some difficult times ahead as the county recovers from the effects of the Covid pandemic and international pressures affecting the national economy.

And as we look forward to elections across most of Staffordshire in May 2023, we should perhaps hope for a greater level of engagement from potential candidates and more contested elections than have been apparent in previous election cycles. I hope that councils will, over the coming months, use NALC's campaign materials to help ensure that the democratic process is engaged with by the electorates to the maximum possible extent.

***Cllr Mrs Pat Ansell,
Chairman and Vice President, SPCA Executive***

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11am - 12pm



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master-year-end](https://tinyurl.com/master-year-end)



CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT



By the time of the publication of this Annual Report, which nominally covers the year ending 31st March 2022, the undersigned will have long since disappeared from 'active service'. So, to avoid appearing to be something of a spectral presence supposedly overseeing the work of the Association, I will limit my own remarks to little more than a brief valediction, and simply express my sincere thanks to all those clerks and councillors with whom I enjoyed a productive working relationship during my nine years in post as Chief Executive. At times challenging, yes, but also very rewarding and on occasions even fun!

Obviously in the role of Chief Executive of a body like SPCA there comes a time when one recognises that a different approach is needed, to reinvigorate and take an organisation forward to a different level; happily, in my case, that recognition coincided with what most of us accept is the right age to retire from working life and to begin to enjoy more important things!

In signing off I will say, however, that the Association has made further great strides in the last year under Lisa Horritt's expert stewardship of the Training Programme, which she has single-handedly transformed into a much more comprehensive and professional offer, vastly improving the limited and rather haphazard arrangements which were in place prior to her joining the staff in March 2020. For this, I take absolutely no credit other than in having been instrumental in Lisa's initial, part-time appointment, which I would argue was the single best decision I was party to during my tenure as Chief Executive of the Association! Since that time, I have enjoyed watching Lisa develop and expand her role to the point where I can feel more than comfortable in leaving SPCA in very safe hands!

**Andrew McRae,
CEO (retired) 31st July 2022**

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

158

Parish and Town Councils in Membership

87%

of Staffordshire Councils in Membership

411,644

Number of electors represented by Member Councils



Benefits of Membership

- Legal advice and guidance.
- Financial and Employment Advice.
- Access to the subsidised extensive Training programme for Councillors and Clerks.
- Represent rights and interests of Member Councils.
- Advice on national borrowing procedures and forms Provision and supply of publications.

Accessing our Membership Services

- 1** Clerk or Chairman to contact SPCA. If a Councillor has a query please direct this via the Clerk or Chairman.
- 2** Primarily via email spca.parish@staffordshire.gov.uk or by phone leaving details of the query.
- 3** SPCA will acknowledge receipt of queries within 2 working days. In the case of more complex queries these will be referred to the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Legal Team and take up to 15 working days.

Training Statistics

58

Courses available in 2021/22

14

Clerks undertaking CiLCA in 2021/22

436

Councillors and Clerks attended a course

11

New Clerk Inductions completed – supporting Clerks entering their roles in the sector



TRAINING OFFICER REPORT

Training in 2021/22 continued at a pace with the introduction of a number of new courses and training partners to complement the existing provision.

These included specialist topics such as Cemetery Management and Charitable Trusts. The Association also established a new partnership with Breakthrough Communications bringing courses including data protection, website accessibility, freedom of information, social media, recruiting new councillors and much more. Councils can book on nationally available dates, increasing opportunities to access these courses.

We also ran a course looking at Climate Change and we continue to try and provide courses on topics which are relevant to our member councils.

The Association also received a number of requests for bespoke “whole council” training and we have worked with those Councils and our Trainers to provide a more tailored training offering to suit their needs. If you would like any information about doing this for your council, please contact either Lisa or Ian.



CiLCA RECOGNISED TRAINER

I am delighted to report that we have had exceptional levels of interest in our CiLCA Portfolio course in 2021/2. For the September intake, SPCA launched a second intake group and both groups were full. In the year 2021/22, 14 Clerks have commenced their CiLCA journey and we are delighted to see the majority of those candidates completing their qualification in the financial year 2022/23.

SPCA's CiLCA course is designed to support our Clerks during the whole of their portfolio completion with a mentoring element included. This is designed to support Clerks outside of sessions and give them the confidence to approach the qualification and submission of the learning outcomes.

New Training Officer

As indicated in Andrew McRae's report, I have now taken over the role of Chief Executive from 1st August 2022. I'm delighted to introduce Ian Cruise-Taylor as the Association's new Training Officer. Ian has extensive experience both in local government and the local council sector and is also a CiLCA Qualified Trainer.

I won't be stepping down entirely from training as I think it's a key area to support our councils and members will see myself, Ian and our Associate Trainers available for different topics and specialisms.

I look forward to working with you all in my new role as Chief Executive as we continue to grow and support our member councils.

Lisa Horritt,
Training Officer to 31st July 2022



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- ✓ Playground installation
- ✓ Playground inspection



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“ I was really impressed by the speed of service and quality of the installation. The Design of the additional equipment really opens the facilities up to a wider audience and we couldn't be happier with the project as a whole. Wicksteed delivered quality equipment at a great price with superb customer service. - Derek Owen, Telford & Wrekin Council ”

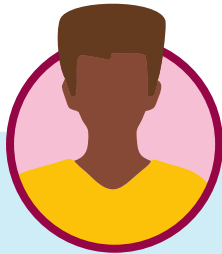


“ It has been a pleasure to work with Wicksteed. They made the whole experience very doable rather than a major stress. - Margaret Smith. ”



“ We chose wicksteed after meeting with the area sales manager for our region, they were helpful, knowledgeable and understood our criteria's, offering us a great design and multiple options. The installation team were friendly and worked quick to get our new play equipment up and running. We have had so many wonderful comments on our new play area. - Fiona Reynolds ”

SOME FEEDBACK FROM OUR COURSES



CiLCA

"It has really strengthened, deepened and broadened my understanding of local government and having a learning group is very helpful. It has improved my confidence at work. I would recommend it to any new clerk."



CiLCA

"Without the mentoring and support I would have struggled to complete this course."



CiLCA

"The trainer was friendly, engaging, kept the training on track and has been helpful post the sessions too. I have completed 4 units to date, receiving an exemplary submission on one, and no referrals. I could not have achieved this without the training."



Councillor Fundamentals

"Most informative and the speaker was inspiring."
"Excellent presenter and material."
"Liked the interaction and therefore tailoring towards us specifically."



Planning, Making Effective Representations

"Hannah's enthusiasm around planning was infectious! Really informative course that offered lots of differing perspectives and highlighted a lot of the challenges, planners, planning authorities and PC's face in progressing and challenging new developments. I would recommend this course to all councillors and clerks."
"Well delivered, informative and very knowledgeable trainer."

BOOK A TRAINING COURSE

SPCA run an extensive suite of training, members are updated via our weekly bulletins and can also visit our live booking site via our website to view courses and book.

<https://spcaonline.org.uk/training-and-events/book-a-course/>

Clerks

Clerk 1-1 Induction

Clerks The Knowledge

Finance - various topics

Planning

Employment

Data Protection

Accessible Documents

CiLCA Portfolio

... and many more

Councillors

Councillor Fundamentals

Be a Better Councillor

Chairmanship Skills

Finance for Councillors

Planning

Employment

Code of Conduct

Social Media

... and many more



QUALIFICATIONS

Qualifications

CiLCA - The Level 3 foundation qualification provides a broad knowledge of all the aspects of a Clerk's work – roles and responsibilities, the law, procedures, finance planning and community involvement.

CiLCA - is suitable for all officers working with Local Councils. CiLCA is flexible enough to suit candidates from the diversity of Local Councils.

Ascentis (the awarding body for CiLCA) recommend that a Clerk is in post for 12 months prior to registering to start CiLCA. Our 'Training Needs Analysis' questionnaire for prospective candidates is designed to identify their areas of strength and areas for development.

Congratulations

Congratulations to clerks achieving the Level 3 Certificate in Local Council Administration qualification (CiLCA) in 2021/22

Sarah Thomas - Lichfield City Council
Kate Clover - Wigginton & Hopwas Parish Council
Karen Daker - Bilbrook Parish Council

Congratulations to clerks achieving Level 4 Certificate of Higher Education in Community Governance (CertHe) Stacey Worden – Eccleshall Parish Council

LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME

The Local Council Award Scheme (LCAS) has been designed to celebrate the successes of the very best Local Councils and to provide a framework to support all Local Councils to improve and develop to meet their full potential. The scheme offers Councils the opportunity to show that they meet the standards set by the sector, assessed by their peers, and put in place the conditions for continued improvement.



Foundation Award

The Foundation award is for councils who want to show they meet a set of minimum standards to deliver effectively for their communities. To meet this award the council demonstrates that it has the required documentation and information in place for operating lawfully and according to standard practice. The council also has policies for training for its councillors and officers and so has the foundations for improvement and development in place.

The Foundation award allows you to benchmark your performance as well as challenge you to consider your council's continuing development and improvement.

Quality Award

The Quality Award demonstrates that a council achieves good practices in governance, community engagement and council improvement. Quality councils go above and beyond their legal obligations, leading their communities and continuously seeking opportunities to improve and develop even further.

To achieve the Quality Award a council demonstrates that it meets all requirements of the Foundation Award and has additional evidence of good governance, effective community engagement and council improvement. Due to the level of this achievement, a council with a Quality Award can also be eligible to use the general power of competence.

Quality Gold Award

The Quality Gold Award demonstrates that a council is at the forefront of best practice and achieves excellence in governance, community leadership and council development. Quality Gold councils provide leadership for their communities, bring people together, have excellent business planning processes, ensuring value for money as well as constantly seek new innovations and opportunities to improve. They highlight the very best we, as a sector, can achieve for our communities.

To find out more information about the Local Council Award Scheme, please visit the NALC website which contains detailed information about requirements and the application process.
www.nalc.gov.uk/localcouncilawardscheme

Interested Councils can also join NALC events held several times a year discussing applications and providing insights into submitting award winning applications at each level.

Would you like a free, no obligation review of your current **insurance** programme?

BHIB Councils Insurance have partnered with Aviva and NALC to provide you with comprehensive insurance cover specifically built for Local Councils.

We are offering a free 12-month Parish Online subscription* as part of our insurance package to all Councils who renew or place a new insurance policy with us.

Contact us for
a quote

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*Terms and Conditions apply. This applies to all councils who take out a new policy or renew their existing policy with us until 30th April 2023.

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National Association
of Local Councils

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ACCOUNTS

Income and Expenditure - Year to 31st March 2022

2020/21	INCOME	2021/22
1,335.05	Interest/Dividends	869.22
8,750.00	Grants Received	8,750.00
101.32	Sales	48.75
54,599.00	Subscriptions	56,790.00
19,994.97	Training	23,219.24
1,142.64	Miscellaneous	83.00
£85,922.98	TOTAL	£89,760.21

2020/21	EXPENDITURE	2021/22
585.14	Meetings	300.00
0.00	Postage	53.36
289.97	Insurance	289.97
139.60	Printing Costs	80.95
172.29	Purchases	15.60
48,288.90	Salaries etc	49,186.42
3,146.00	Pensions	3,867.80
27,942.48	Subscriptions (NALC)	29,371.18
11,668.00	Training Costs	12,658.13
0.00	Bank Charges	106.50
0.00	Computer & Software	316.80
0.00	Miscellaneous	40.70
£92,232.38	TOTAL	£96,287.41

(-6,309.40) Surplus Income/(Expenditure) (-6,527.20)

NOTE: Until the end of 20/21 SPCA accounts were drawn up on a Receipts & Payment basis. With the implementation of Income & Expenditure accounting in 21/22 the 20/21 figures in the above table have been restated to give like for like comparisons. The majority of the adjustments reflects invoiced but unpaid training income at 31.3.2021.

AP
1/10/2022

ACCOUNTS

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2022

Opening balance - 01/04/2021	88,059.69
Income	89,760.21
Expenditure	96,287.41
Closing balance	81,532.49
Represented by:	
CCLA Property Fund	30,000.00
CCLA Cash Fund	25,513.33
Unity Bank Current Account	31,449.39
Trade Debtors	5,155.74
Trade Creditors	274.49
TOTAL	£81,532.49

AK
1/10/2022



Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association
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Telephone: 01785 277499 or 01785 895353