

LOCAL COUNCIL CONSULTANCY (LCC): A NEW NORMAL?



LCC Associate Manager, Clive Stillwell, discusses how SLCC's response to coronavirus resulted in new ways of working for the team and explores the challenges and benefits of this approach.



SAFETY FIRST

On 18th March 2020, our Chief Executive Rob Smith issued detailed guidance to the various teams across SLCC on delivering our services and the measures all managers needed to take to safeguard our people, our customers and our partners in the sector.

Not surprisingly, this included changes in working patterns and locations and cancelling all of our face-to-face events, such as conferences and training. For Local Council Consultancy (LCC), this meant stopping some consultancy projects that were in the pipeline and ensuring that safe working arrangements were in place for our locum clerks supporting councils at their premises.

VIRTUAL CONSULTANCY

Having helped to develop some of the initial guidance for virtual meetings as we anticipated changes in legislation, LCC began to explore alternatives to face-to-face consultancy. It was at this time that LCC were approached by Grayshott Parish Council in Hampshire. They were seeking a review of their staff structure, job roles and their remuneration package, together with some other people processes within the Council, driven by the impending departure of one of the two part-time members of staff. It was therefore a time-critical project.

LCC submitted a proposal and quote based on interviews being carried out remotely and the Council took a bold decision to press ahead as the timing was so important to them. Reg Williams, previously Clerk to Salisbury City Council and one of the founding Associates for LCC, was appointed to undertake the project.

A series of Skype calls were arranged to kick off the project and some of the key documents were provided by the Clerk. Interviews were then conducted remotely with the two members of staff, the Chairman of the Council and the Chairman of the Staffing Committee.

A report was developed based on the review of documentation and the remote interviews. It was submitted to the Council in draft form for an initial review before the final report was completed. Both the project and the report were completed on time and within budget.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Reg said: *"There is no doubt that visiting a location and undertaking interviews compared with doing them remotely does provide a slightly different situation, with each having nuances that the other doesn't. That said, it quickly became clear that in actual fact there was nothing which was in any way compromised as a result of undertaking this project remotely. Videoconferencing these days, via whatever format, is a great way to speak with people - not visiting the location didn't present any shortcomings or limitations that couldn't be resolved."*

As the Associate Manager for LCC responsible for putting forward a proposal and quote, I found that whilst it might take a little more time in a remote meeting to achieve what you might face to face, savings in travel costs for the Associate will usually balance this. There is no doubt that this project presented a challenge in adapting to new ways of working. Being able to achieve this successfully was key to the project and the successful outcome for LCC and the Parish Council speaks for itself.

WHAT WAS THE COUNCIL'S EXPERIENCE?

Grayshott Parish Council was delighted with the speed of the process, the final report and its recommendations. The report was considered by the Staffing Committee, who all agreed that the review had been a worthwhile exercise as a project and that they were grateful for the flexibility shown by LCC and impressed by their approach.

All of the recommendations were considered individually, and with one exception (which will be considered again in due course), all were adopted by the Council.

The Chairman of Grayshott Parish Council, Cllr Richard Lyon, concluded: *"The report has been reviewed and considered in detail by the four councillors of the Staffing Committee and by our Clerk and Deputy, our officers. The quality and thoroughness of your report has been recognised and commented upon by all. When times return to some form of normality, there is an open invitation for you to come across to Grayshott."*

HOW CAN LCC HELP YOU AND YOUR COUNCIL?

LCC has access to a depth of expertise and we can support you across a diverse range of areas, including: Clerk Pay Evaluations, Governance, Procurement, Staffing, Policies and Procedures, Service Delivery, Community Engagement, Strategy and Plans, Risk Management, Markets, Horticulture, Managing Volunteers, Locums, Allotments, Burials and Cemeteries, Play Areas, and Sports Facilities. Further information is available at www.slcc.co.uk/consultancy



LOCAL COUNCIL CONSULTANCY

LCC is dedicated to ensuring best practice and continuous improvement in the local council sector. We understand the issues faced by clerks and councils and our trained and experienced Associates, most of whom have been clerks, will offer solutions to meet your exact needs.

**LOCAL
COUNCIL
CONSULTANCY**
AN SLCC ENTERPRISE

WHAT WE OFFER

- ✓ Access to skilled clerks available to work as locums at short notice
- ✓ Each project is individually costed during the scoping process. You will be provided with a simple and clear competitive charge
- ✓ Strong connections across the sector utilising our association with the SLCC
- ✓ Experienced and qualified Associates to work with you and an Associate Manager to manage your project
- ✓ An honest approach – we'll help if we can but we'll be honest if we can't
- ✓ A comprehensive range of skills and experience taken from all sizes of council

AREAS OF EXPERTISE INCLUDE

Governance | Procurement |
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Job Evaluation | Policies and
Procedures | Service Delivery
| Community Engagement |
Internal Audit | Strategy and
Plans | Risk Management |
Markets | Horticulture |
Allotments | Managing
Volunteers | Burials and
Cemeteries | Play Areas |
Sports Facilities



Contact LCC to discuss your requirements

consultancy@slcc.co.uk www.slcc.co.uk/lcc