



Understanding and influencing parish and town councils in England and Wales

Friday 20 October 2023

Guest speakers

Will Austin – Clerk, Bridport Town Council – <https://www.bridport-tc.gov.uk/>

Jonathan Owen – CEO, NALC - <https://www.nalc.gov.uk>

Lyn Cadwallader – One Voice Wales – <http://www.onevoicewales.org.uk>

Sue Baxter – Vice President, National Association of Local Councils (NALC)

Making Music Links

Making Music website: <https://www.makingmusic.org.uk>

Making Music Awards: <https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/news/2023-mm-award-winners-revealed>

Why local parish and town councils matter: <https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/news/why-local-parish-and-town-councils-matter>

Make Music Day: <https://makemusicday.co.uk>

Type of organisation supported

Q: *From thepit To Everyone:*

I run a small community pub with a very strong emphasis on music. I have a good relationship with my parish and have delivered lots of very large community events with their support. But the pressing issue I have is that I am LTD and they keep telling me they can't pay anything to me. I have explained that paying me as a co-ordinator of these community events they want me to deliver or even for hiring my space is no different to paying a local gardening company to keep the green tidy! Am I wrong? This is always a huge hurdle I have been unable to overcome. I wondered if there was some legal reason. They say it means I am making money, I'm saying I'm just charging for venue hire/my time and I don't see how it is any different from them paying for a music act for instance.

A: *From Will Austin - Bridport Town Council To Everyone:*

Hi. There's no legal reason (that I'm aware of) why a town or parish council can't pay a company to deliver an event. It can be a sensitive issue for some councils though, and the key thing in Bridport would be to demonstrate community benefit that makes funding a commercial body worthwhile.

A: From H Kim, Hoylake Chamber Concert Society To Everyone:

Thank you, Will. Sue's advice on our need to quantify 1) impact on the local community and 2) reach — these are important ways of measuring the value of what we do as a local concert promoting society, but we would find it very difficult to quantify 1) in monetary terms, while 2) can be about how many people attended any given concert during our annual series. I would think there can be another way of arguing for support from the council in terms of reputational boost to the town where concerts take place as the place where top-quality classical concerts take place, a sort of 'if you are interested in classical chamber music, this town is the place to go to'. But I am not sure if this will have any resonance with the council in their current constrained budgetary situation.

In response to Sue's point about community benefits, we would like to consider ourselves being in a position to make an 'educational' impact on local students who may be studying to pursue music at university and beyond.

Funding music groups/performers from outside council area

Q: From Stephen Bashforth Phoenix Saxophone Orchestra To Everyone:

Question for the councillors and town clerks - if a music group was wanting to do a 'tour' outside of their own area, would a town council consider a grant request/support request from an 'out of town' music group? Or is local funding ring fenced for local groups - people resident in the local community?

Q: From Victoria Helby To Everyone:

Does Bridport have a specific arts budget?

Q: From H Kim, Hoylake Chamber Concert Society To Everyone:

Would councils support local concert promoting societies (they are normally constituted as charities) who invite professional musicians from outside the area to perform for local residents? So it is not exactly a case of 'local music for local people'. But an argument can be made in favour of pro

A: From Will Austin - Bridport Town Council To Everyone:

This will vary from council to council, but in Bridport we support event organisers such as Bridport Folk Festival and Jurassic Fields music festival which bring artists from around the world. The deal is that the organisers also provide opportunities for local musicians! ...in addition I'd say we already grant aid local organisations that bring artists from elsewhere. The key is to demonstrate the direct benefits to the local community.



A: From Jonathan Owen NALC To Everyone:

Local councils may also be able to support/endorse your requests for funding from other national bodies/lottery etc.

A: From H Kim, Hoylake Chamber Concert Society To Everyone:

Your last point is very important, especially in terms of making an impact on local students (if not local musicians) who may be interested in studying and pursuing music. We offer free tickets to students. I am also interested in knowing that another way for asking for support from the council is to get on their 'What's on' list, through which we could reach a wider audience.

Structures

Q: From Howard Rogerson Promenade Concert Orchestra To Everyone:

Are either of the speakers town councils unitary, or a part of three-tier local government? Not all parishes/town councils charge a precept so no funding available. Presumably, declaration of interest must be made by those elected councillors who are also involved in arts and culture, as the implication could be given that to get council help is best achieved when becoming a councillor!

Q: From Howard Rogerson Promenade Concert Orchestra To Everyone:

Our own Morecambe Town Council increased the precept last year by 230% in order to have an influence on a brownfield site in the town which had already been purchased by Lancaster City Council. They are now considering returning this extra fund back to the residents as a result of a change of council since last May elections!!

A: From Will Austin - Bridport Town Council To Everyone:

Bridport is in a unitary area - Dorset. You're right that raising a precept is a choice that councillors make - all the more reason to become a councillor and encourage other councillors to support the cultural sector! Declarations of interest would be needed if there was a direct benefit to a councillor, but a musician councillor just supporting local music wouldn't need to declare an interest.

Approaching/pitching to local town council

Q: From Bev To Everyone:

If our group wanted to 'pitch' to our local town council, who would we approach in the first instance to get a slot at a meeting?



A: From Will Austin - Bridport Town Council To Everyone:

Best to contact your town/parish clerk.

Q: From Bill Anderton To Everyone:

Can someone say more about making a pitch to a council to make councillors more aware about a music group such as my local 'Newent' orchestra. We are just in the process of collaborating with our community school's music department. Would our council like to know about this, etc.?

Q: From Angela To Everyone:

And I want to know exactly the same on behalf of Newent Choral Society! It often feels difficult to engage with people, as if we are a tiny minority, and we would love to share our love of music with more people.

A: From Will Austin - Bridport Town Council To Everyone:

I can't speak for all councils but in Bridport, you'd just come to me if you wanted a specific agenda item at the meeting, or you could simply turn up at the meeting and speak as a member of the public.

A: From Jonathan OWEN NALC To Everyone:

Many local councils will have newsletters and websites where you could possibly showcase some of your work.

A: From Ann Diment - Somerset Association of Local Councils To Everyone:

We have a website that councils can apply to and I am employed to coordinate links between councils and organisations to facilitate collaboration and co-production of wellbeing activities and training - [Somerset Association of Local Councils](#). Also worth talking to the ICB as it could be a social prescribing activity that the NHS and councils could jointly support.

Q: From Jan Murray Churchill Music and Churchill PC To Everyone:

Message for Jonathan. What can NALC do to give more weight to the views of parish councils. Parish councils know their rural communities better than an officer sitting in a desk in a town. We cannot keep younger parish councils because we are continually frustrated by being totally ignored and of course resign as there is little point in giving up their valuable time.

A: From Will Austin - Bridport Town Council To Everyone:

Bit harsh - I'm an officer but also a resident of the parish, and a passionate one! Your point about younger councillors is well made though, and we're currently asking people to come and talk to us about how to make their influence more meaningful, as well as keeping the time commitment to a minimum. We need to do more, but I could point you towards some successes we've had here - our



youngest councillor for example is currently a committee chair and very active in determining our policies and our work.

Further info

Ann Diment: Somerset Association of Local Councils To Everyone:

In winter the warm welcome spaces are an additional opportunity for musicians to entertain people using the spaces. Here in Somerset we have some brilliant organisations supporting music and performing arts in various rural and urban locations - SEED Sedgemoor and Take Art. SEED are a collaboration between the local council and arts organisations : www.seedsedgemor.com

Angela Squire Danetre Ukulele Orchestra To Everyone:

Great presentations. Sue talked about knowing the locality. This is important. My husband and I are in our local ukulele orchestra, and he is also a town councillor and currently the mayor. This role is for a year and we have found it is all about joining up our connections and new ones we become aware of. Our music group plays at three special town market events every year. We can tell others how to apply for a grant and how to do it. We can link up with other groups (not just music) and do things together. We can contact our town council via their website, phone and local councillor. As mentioned we can attend and speak at the start of any town council meeting for max. 3 minutes. The relationship is a two-way street.

From Jonathan OWEN NALC To Everyone:

We have an annual star councils award which is currently open to a public vote - have a look and vote!

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/news/entry/2650-nalc-announces-star-council-awards-2023-finalists?format=amp>