

Stephen Rickitt

From: Northumberland Association of Local Councils <info@northumberlandalc.uk>
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To: Stephen Rickitt
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Northumberland Association
of Local Councils

NALC Enews

28 November 2018

Social Media and Other Training

There are still places available on the following courses - more details and booking via the links

1: Social Media - To Tweet Or Not To Tweet - Saturday 1 December 2018 0915 for 0930 - County Hall Morpeth

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/nalc-social-media-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet-tickets-52602117349>

2: Local Council Finance - Tuesday 11 December 2018 - 1900 - St James Community Centre, Morpeth

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/local-council-finance-tickets-50123216891>

The Raynsford Planning Review

The Town and County Planning Association have now published the final report.

The RTPI welcomed the report saying

"The report offers vision for a strong planning system with statutory power to promote sustainable development and public welfare. It argues that critics of planning often blame the current planning system for outcomes that in reality stem from a lack of investment or political vision. The RTPI welcomes the focus on empowering local authorities to take a pro-active approach and act as 'master developers' to facilitate and guide development."

The full comment and a link to the report are at the link below. I shall be studying the report over the next few weeks.

<https://www.rtpi.org.uk/briefing-room/news-releases/2018/november/raynsford-review-highlights-some-rtpi-core-issues/>

A direct link to the report and associated papers is at

<https://www.tcpa.org.uk/raynsford-review>

External Audit

I recently had the opportunity to speak with a senior officer at PKF Littlejohn regarding lessons learned from the first year of the exempt councils provision. These are being discussed nationally and I expect there will be changes in the

process next year. AGAR is the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

Themes emerging are

- Councils duplicating their submissions, i.e. by both email and post
- Exempt Councils using the wrong AGAR and then being surprised at being billed. If I heard correctly this may apply to approximately 1500 councils nationally
- Exempt Councils submitting the Exemption Certificate but then accompanying it with the same papers as under the old system.
- There was an email problem sending out one of the batches of interim reports, which was late being reported to the audit team
- The issue with precepts and burial authorities came as a surprise to PKF Littlejohn as they had audited local councils before and the position has not changed. Councils and Burial Authorities affected are across the country.

I will press for an early release of any revised forms so that Councils are aware of changes before preparing the AGARs in 2019 for the current financial year.

Dementia Friendly Communities

Dementia Friendly Communities is an initiative led communities and supported by Alzheimer's Society to enable people living with dementia to remain an active part of their local community. Alzheimer's Society provides the support and structure for people from within the community to encourage businesses and organisations to make small changes that make a big difference to people living with dementia, their carers and families. By working together and becoming a recognised dementia-friendly community you have the potential to improve the social well-being of those living with dementia. If you would like to know more about how you can support this initiative in Northumberland please contact Andrew.ball@alzheimers.org.uk and visit <http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-involved/dementia-friendly-communities/what-dementia-friendly-community>

Public Sector Websites and Accessibility

The national NALC have produced a briefing note (L09-18) which is available on the members part of their website - <http://www.nalc.gov.uk>

There is also information on the blog from the Government Digital Service at <https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2018/11/21/public-sector-website-accessibility-statements-what-you-need-to-know/>

The key comment which struck me is that they are producing a model

accessibility statement for publication in the New Year

Pensions and Auto-Enrolment

The Pensions Regulator has been reminding Councils of the forthcoming increases if staff are in the automatic scheme - details from their email are below or there is more information at

https://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/en/employers/increase-of-automatic-enrolment-contributions?utm_source=portrait

The minimum amounts you and your staff pay into your automatic enrolment pension scheme will increase from **6 April 2019**.

How this applies to you

- If you have eligible staff in an automatic enrolment pension scheme you will need to make sure that at least the minimum amount is paid by you and your staff into the scheme.

- If you don't have any staff in an automatic enrolment pension scheme, you don't need to take any further action.

The increase

The table below shows the minimum contributions payable and the date when they must increase:

	Employer minimum contribution	Staff contribution	Total minimum contribution
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New rate: 6 April 2019 onwards	3%	5%	8%
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Current rate:			
6 April 2018 to	2%	3%	5%
5 April 2019			

What you need to do

It is your responsibility under the Pensions Act 2008, to make sure the right minimum contributions are being paid for your staff. If you are already paying above the increased amounts, you don't need to take any further action. You should also let your staff know about any increases being applied to their contributions.



If you have any comments or observations, please contact
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Our website is at <https://northumberlandalc.uk/>

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