

Essex Association of Local Councils

Supporting Town and Parish Councils within Essex

EALC Structure and Executive Member Roles

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Table of Contents

EALC Structure and Executive Members Role and Responsibilities	4
1. Summary Detail	3
2. EALC Positioning and Objectives	3
3. Role of Executive Committee Members	4
4. Responsibility & Leadership	5
5. Values & Vision	6
6. EALC Chair and Vice Chair's	7
7. Finance Sub-Committee - Duties and Remit	7
8. Personnel Sub-Committee – Duties and Remit	8
9. Accreditations	8
10. Democratic Constitution	9
11. Meetings	9
12. Nomination Procedure	9
13. Other helpful information	9

This document sets out the EALC structure and roles and responsibilities of the EALC executive committee, the primary functions of the committee and sets expectations for those appointed as executive committee or sub-committee members.

Essex Association of Local Councils Structure

1. Summary Details

Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) is a member led organisation which supports and serves the Town and Parish Councils of Essex. It provides tailored training and educational courses to council chairman, councillors and clerks on a range of sector related topics. The EALC is the professional conduit between Parish and Town Councils (P&TC), Essex County Council (ECC), Essex Police Fire & Crime Commissioner (PFCC), Essex Rural Partnership (ERP), National Association of Local Councils (NALC), Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE), Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and indirectly through channel partners, the residents of Essex.

The EALC provides professional legal support to its member councils either directly or as a conduit to the NALC or Essex Legal Services (ELS) and comprehensive staff related advice referrals using WorkNest HR specialists.

The EALC distributes various publications, bulletins and news updates, including comprehensive sector specific e-bulletins, PFCC updates, Essex Police engagement messages, ECC topic notes, job vacancies and other important communications that arise throughout the year. The EALC also works hard to keep its membership informed of what is happening in and around the county as well as nationally through the NALC.

From time to time the EALC are asked to administer a number of key ECC grants and community funds to be awarded to applicants in aid of various local programmes and charitable initiatives, with the EALC being tasked with upholding a robust financial award programme ranging in scope from applicant submission checking, financial assessment, benefit analysis and project deliverables that match the applicants stated objectives.

2. EALC Positioning and Objectives

The EALC represents the diverse interests of the large towns, large, medium and small, rural and coastal communities that form the Parish and Town Council sector. To undertake appropriate representation of this diversity the EALC operates through sub-committees, working parties and special interest groups operating either formally or informally to provide appropriate advice and support helping to ensure the EALC remains representative of these different communities.

EALC's primary objective is to promote and support good practice within Parish and Town Councils and hence Councillors and Clerks. While there are many operational similarities between Councils and the EALC, the EALC is an association of its members and therefore not a local council. As a

membership body there will be times when the executive members may need to discuss issues or take actions that are specifically unique to the role of the EALC.

EALC is committed to ensure the voice of local councils is heard at all levels of government, and that parish and town councils have the support in place to deliver the very best for their communities.

EALC Executive Committee Members Role and Responsibilities

3. Role of Executive Committee Members

The Executive Committee is the controlling body of EALC and using its sub-committee structure it maintains overall responsibility for EALC administration and performance. Key functions of the Executive Committee include;

- Setting, overseeing and maintaining policy for EALC governance and management.
- Ensure sound financial planning and auditing through the Finance Sub-Committee and Financial Controller (FC)
- Set policies relating to employment of EALC staff including remuneration through the Personnel Sub-Committee.
- The Health, Wellbeing and Climate Initiative through the Health, Wellbeing and Climate Committee.
- Annual review of the EALC strategic plan and action plan.

The CEO will liaise with NALC to ensure an effective and efficient service for the member councils and maintains general policy documentation. The CEO will seek external HR advice on behalf of member councils as required.

EALC Executive Members are appointed by the member councils district or borough associations and as such they are appointed to represent their specific district association and hence the associated member councils. Executive Members are encouraged to volunteer to serve on sub-committees to provide valuable skills and experience.

Nominations for various positions that underpin the operation of the EALC are held each year at the EALC annual meeting and include the roles of Chair, Vice Chairs, Chair of Finance, NALC representative and deputy, Personnel and Finance Sub-Committees. In addition, appointments are made to partner organisations such as the Essex Rural Partnership as both a strategic board member and standard member.

Executive Members are expected to disseminate county or national information to their respective district or borough associations as part of the EALC conduit process of information exchange.

As members of EALC Executive Committee they set the example to others in terms of standards of behaviour and work ethic and are expected to operate to the same Nolan Principles that underpin the Code of Conduct that elected members agree to be bound to when appointed as councillors.

4. Responsibility & Leadership

The Executive Committee make decisions regarding the work of the EALC to help create the strategic vision as appropriate and governance oversight of the organisation. Executive Members do not oversee the work of EALC employees which is the responsibility of the CEO.

Executive Committee Members must strike a balance between representing their local district council members views with making decisions in the interest of all EALC member councils.

Members should be aware their decisions can directly impact on member councils and the reputation of the sector as a whole and are encouraged to be actively engaged in debate and to vote when required at Executive Committee meetings. Members also work with and share information across a wide range of local partners.

Members are exposed to a wide range of information on topics relevant to the work of the association and are encouraged to enrol in and take part in formal training sessions run by the EALC. They are also encouraged to provide information to the EALC from their own networks, knowledge and experiences.

Some Executive Committee members represent the EALC at partnership events, workshops and occasionally civil appointments at county and district level. On such occasions they will be representing the EALC and the entire Parish & Town Council sector and their conduct should match the high standards expected of an elected official.

In possessing a broad range of sound judgement, expertise, points of view and personal experiences, executive committee members provide significant value to the organisation. There is no formal range of skills or expertise required for the role and all are considered equal irrespective of length of service within the sector or the size of the district association they represent. Member's experience as local councillors will have equipped them well to exercise sound judgement when reaching decisions at committee meetings. Members are expected to successfully balance a range of (possibly competing) views from member councils, the needs of the EALC and their own personal views.

Executive Members are expected to balance a range of approaches when reaching a decision such as being challenging but constructive; honest but supportive; transparent, dedicated and loyal but open and willing to accept that change is ever present especially within the work across the Parish and Town Council sector.

Executive Members are encouraged to undertake appropriate succession planning within their district association such that new potential executive members are identified and prepared to join the EALC Executive Committee when a vacancy occurs.

Executive Committee members are expected to:

- Join in debate at EALC meetings in a positive and constructive manner.
- Read meeting papers thoroughly in advance of meetings and if necessary, undertake research into specific issues and to liaise with the CEO as necessary.
- Use their vote at EALC meetings.
- Respect the confidentiality of EALC internal working papers received by whatever means.
- Personnel Sub-Committee members are reminded that all paperwork and conversations must be limited to this committee. No information of an EALC personnel nature should be retained by an executive committee member in any form once the meeting is ended.
- Assist the EALC to the best of their ability.
- Provide reasonable personal information to EALC's banking provider if they are to become a bank signatory.
- Declare pecuniary or other interests at meetings as appropriate.
- Promote the work of EALC to their contacts within principal authorities, member and non-member councils and wider afield where appropriate.

5. Values & Vision

The Executive Committee plays a vital role in shaping the values and vision of the EALC and members are expected to uphold these values. EALC's vision statement can be found in the strategic plan a copy of which can be downloaded from the EALC's website.

The 2019/2020 strategy states:

- To protect and promote the interests, rights, functions and privileges of Essex Parish and Town Council Members including Parish Meetings.
- To promote good local government and to assist members in the performance of their duties.
- To provide training and information for Officers and Councillors for the proper discharge of their Council business.
- To promote a widespread and well-informed interest in local government.
- To support and promote the development of the economic, social, cultural and recreational life of towns and parishes.

6. EALC Chair and Vice Chairs

The Chair and Vice Chairs fulfil a vital role in shaping the services offered to member councils provided or commissioned by EALC. A good understanding of the needs of councils, district associations, county and unitary authorities is essential as is the ability to work positively with EALC staff, partners and other providers.

These positions are subject to election each year by the executive committee at the EALC annual meeting and the qualities and skills sought from the role holders include;

- Leadership and credibility
- Ability to successfully chair meetings
- Confident and able to interact with senior and influential leaders at a county and national level
- Good communication and presentation skills
- Good team building and team working
- Networking and advocacy
- Ability to work positively with the EALC CEO to set agenda/priorities

7. Finance Sub-Committee - Duties and Remit

The Finance Sub-Committee consists of up to seven members including the Chair of Finance, all being subject to election each year at the EALC annual meeting. The Finance Sub-Committee reports to the EALC Executive Committee to ensure sound financial control and strong association governance. It scrutinises financial processes including meeting financial and income targets, has oversight of the corporate governance framework including risk, contract procedures and general “health checking”. Investigatory skills and enquiring minds are required as well as an interest and aptitude in financial matters. Finance Sub-Committee members are expected to be financially aware and have the ability to read and understand basic accounts and financial reports. The attributes expected of finance sub-committee members include;

- Understanding of sound corporate governance
- Constructive “Challenge and Questioning” of EALC’s financial statements
- Independent thinking from other EALC committees
- Ability to think strategically and in the interests of the sector as a whole
- Understanding the committee’s remit
- Understanding of the P&TC sector

8. Personnel Sub-Committee – Duties and Remit

Confidentiality

Sub-Personnel Committee members are reminded that all paperwork and conversations must be limited to this committee. No information of an EALC personnel nature should be retained by an executive committee member in any form once the meeting is ended.

The Personnel Sub-Committee consists of five committee members which includes the EALC Chair, the Vice-Chair, Clerk plus the CEO. The personnel sub-committee reports directly to the Executive Committee to ensure sound personnel policies and procedures are in place and followed.

The Personnel Sub-Committee liaise with the CEO in staff resource matters including staffing structure, performance monitoring, deployment and review. The committee is responsible for approving vacancy advertising, interviewing and appointing new staff. In liaison with the CEO, the personnel sub-committee is responsible for determining all major staff issues, grievances, conditions and discipline and where appropriate engaging with professional HR specialists to undertake recommendations.

The Personnel Sub-Committee are required to;

- Periodically review staff expense policies.
- Consider any training needs of EALC staff following staff appraisals.
- Produce organisational recommendations when necessary for consideration by the Executive Committee.
- Make personnel related recommendations to the Finance Sub-Committee for Budget purposes.
- Periodically review Job descriptions
- Periodically review the staff handbook
- To keep under review staff working conditions and health and safety matters, including health and well-being.
- All correspondence and discussions must remain confidential to the committee members and CEO.

9. Accreditations

The EALC continue to thrive, and gain national recognition as one of the nation's strongest Associations. This is reflected in its 100% membership of Essex Parish and Town Councils. A maximum of two executive committee members are elected by each district association to represent the district on the executive committee.

In 2022, the EALC achieved the highest number Local Council Award Scheme (LCAS) accreditations in the Country with Essex, increasing its lead to 58. The interest in LCAS by Parish and Town Councils grows annually.

10. Democratic Constitution

Executive Members are bound by the EALC Constitution, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

This democratic structure underpins the EALC's member led principles. The county of Essex has 12 District/ Borough Associations and 2 Unitary Authorities.

The Association is independent from County Council, City, District, and Borough Councils and represents the first tier of Government but retains close collaboration with the other tiers of local government.

11. Meetings

Executive Committee meeting are normally held four times per year, either at the offices in Great Dunmow or by virtual remote means. Meetings normally commence at 10.00am, usually at the EALC Head Office, 42b High Street, Great Dunmow, Essex, CM6 1AH except when held by remote means.

12. Nomination Procedure

At the EALC annual meeting Executive Committee Members are offered the opportunity to represent the EALC at the NALC (which is an elected member only position), join the Personnel, Finance and Health, Wellbeing and Committees. The executive committee may also appoint working groups to focus on specific tasks.

Committee members are often elected for their skills and experience in financial management (for the finance sub-committee) and employment/human resources (for the Personnel Sub-Committee).

The EALC operate a nomination process to select members for key roles and to each sub-committee and this process reviewed annually and a copy sent to all executive committee members in advance of the annual meeting. A copy of the latest nomination process is available from the EALC CEO.

13. Other helpful information

Meeting papers will be sent directly to executive members email addresses approximately seven days prior to a meeting. Executive Committee members who are unable to attend meetings should send their apologies to the EALC CEO. It is important that all districts/borough associations have maximum representation at Executive Committee meetings and that meetings are quorate. Quorum figures can be found in the Standing Orders.

Elected members of the Executive may claim travel expenses for approved duties connected to the work of the EALC and can claim for travel to and from executive meetings and meetings of its committees (when appointed to any of these). Expense forms are available from the CEO. The EALC expense policy is reviewed periodically and executive members are required to be compliant when making an expense claim. A copy of the expense policy is available from the CEO or the EALC web site.



This document will be reviewed annually.