



Essex Association of Local Councils

MINUTES

EALC Executive Meeting Thursday 1st September 2022

**This meeting was held at the EALC Offices, 42B High Street,
Great Dunmow, Essex, CM6 1AH**

1st September 2022

Members present

Cllr Jim Devlin	Basildon	Cllr David McPherson Davis	Basildon
Cllr Peter Davey	Brentwood	Cllr Richard North	Brentwood
		Cllr Stephanie Gill	Uttlesford
Cllr Sheila Jackman	Epping Forest	Beverley Rumsey	Epping Forest
Cllr Mike Eldred	Local Council Representative	Cllr Abdul Hafiz	Maldon
		Cllr Sue Martin	Rochford

Also present – Chief Executive Officer, Charlene Slade
Financial Controller, Stephanie Robinson
Justin Griggs, NALC
Nick Shuttleworth, RCCE
Cllr Lewis Barber, ECC Representative

Agenda

1. Chairman's Welcome.

The Chairman Cllr Peter Davey welcomed everyone present in person and those who joined online. A special welcome to Cllr Lewis Barber on behalf of Cllr Louise McKinlay.

We are also expecting updates from NALC and RCCE and the agenda will switch slightly to accommodate our guest speakers.

The Chairman attended the following meetings and gave a brief update:

26th July PFCC HQ meeting with B J Harrington
8th August NALC CVC remote meeting and NALC MB meeting
10th August EALC Personnel meeting
10th August Maldon Town Council / SLCC Introductions with the Chair
11th August EALC Finance Committee
1st September EALC Executive

2. Apologies for Absence received from:

Cllr John Gili-Ross
Cllr Paul Lees
Cllr Angelina Marriott

3. Minutes

3.1 Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 21st July 2022.

The Chair, acknowledged the support of Cllr Stephanie Gill and the comments raised prior to the meeting.

Under 5.5 of the minutes, remove item Stephanie Robinson to action.

Points under item 15 to be moved up under the relevant sections reflecting the item of discussion.

Proposed by: Cllr Mike Eldred

Seconded by: Cllr David McPherson-Davis

All those in favour agree to the minutes being an accurate record of the meeting.

4. Personnel – The Personnel Sub-Committee update.

4.1 Update from CEO

The CEO gave an update on the personnel structure. The recruitment process has gone well and the new team are settling into their roles. There are two vacant positions for a member support/legal enquiries and an Office Administrator. This recruitment process is still underway. The personnel and finance committee have approved and supported these roles as new roles for the association and will support the concerns of the membership to ensure there is adequate member support.

Cllr Stephanie Gill and Beverley Rumsey voiced their concerns on the member enquiries and feel that the recruitment of the two roles are needed and are now confident that this will support the membership.

Comments raised from Cllr Stephanie Gill on the role of the Clerk, how challenging the role can be for a small or large council's and acknowledged the amount of work that Clerk's, as the Proper Officer of the council do. In some councils the number of hours requested is perhaps not adequate for the amount of work required.

Beverley Rumsey commented and said the Clerk's job is difficult, as Clerks are expected to cover so many different areas, and as we had a virtual pay freeze last year (1.75% in Month 11) and nothing yet this year) all staff are working actually for less money (inflation at 10% and no pay reviews). This will likely impact on recruitment.

Cllr Shelia Jackman commented on the co-option of councillors and the attitude of new councillors who are under committed to the role.

Cllr Peter Davey explained the co-option process of his council and the normal process is to ask potential new co-opted councillors to attend several committees in advance of the co-option interview to enable them to indicate their commitment to other committees once they are co-opted.

Cllr Jim Devlin gave his views on the role of the Clerk and the difficulties with the recruitment process.

Recruitment processes are difficult for the sector. The EALC use free advertising platforms and suggested for all councils to use the free services to recruit for the sector. . A tutor has been approached to write new courses to support the gaps in training in regards to HR for the sector.

5. Finance

- 5.1 Minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee Meetings held on 29th June 2022.
The minutes reflect the amount of work the finance committee are doing along with the financial controller providing up to date figures for the payroll and the budget report.

Confidential item

The minutes reflect that the treasurer will be standing down as the treasurer of the finance committee, the process will be to inform the Finance Committee, Executive Committee and AGM then the replacement will be sought during the annual meeting in November, following the nomination process.

On behalf of the executive the Chair wished to acknowledge the years that Cllr McPherson Davis had held the role of Treasurer of the Association and the professional way that he carried out his role .

Noted.

5.1.1 Minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee Meetings held on 11th August 2022

Proposed by: Cllr Stephanie Gill

Seconded by: Cllr David McPherson-Davis

Abstention: Cllr Jim Devlin

Noted.

5.2 Year end accounts 2021/22 EALC – Balance Sheet.

5.3 Year end accounts 2021/22 EALC – Profit and Loss.

5.4 Year end accounts 2021/22 EALC – Notes to the accounts.

5.5 Year end accounts EA (2013) Ltd – Balance Sheet.

5.6 Year end accounts EA (2013) Ltd – Profit & Loss.

5.7 Year end accounts EA (2013) Ltd – Notes to the accounts.

5.8 Statement and breakdown of reserves held.

The Finance Committee have approved the items from 5.2 to 5.8 to be included in the AGM Annual Report.

The restructuring reserve has been increased to £80,000 to ensure that funds are available to develop the training facilities to be able to provide hybrid training and legal cost reserves have also been increased to £10,000. Both of these increases are being made via transfer from general funds to the earmarked reserves.

Works are being made to improve the kitchen facilities to install plumbing for a sink, water and a dishwasher as there are no water facilities in the downstairs kitchen workspace area. The cost will be approx. £3,500 and funds will be transferred from the restructuring reserves, as that is what they are for.

10:42 Cllr Mike Eldred left the meeting.

The Finance Committee presented the above items 5.1 to 5.8 to the Executive Committee as the accurate record of the yearend accounts for presenting to the AGM on 22nd September.

5.9 Budget Report July 2022.

The budget report is very much a living document and the figures in the report reflect the relevant time in which it is produced.

Cllr Mike Eldred re-joined the meeting 10:44

The payroll might well be understated with 4% pay increase forecast, this does not include the cost of the Health and Wellbeing or Climate Crisis Posts as the funding for these posts is not being shown within the budget report. The funding received for the Health & Wellbeing officer of £16,000 has been transferred to the balance sheet until an agreement with ECC has been reached.

5.10 Bank balances latest version.

A considerable change in the figures in comparison to last year due to the funding streams.

As at 31st August total funds of £575,170.00 with EALC funds of £373,756.00

Compares with £491,460 at the same time last year.

The PFCC grant of £10,000 has not yet been received.

The expenditure and income is broadly comparable to the previous year as is the situation with regards to creditors and debtors.

The financial controller can only conclude that the figures for fund balances on the previous years report may have been out of sync with actual money paid out, thus overinflating EALC funds.

5.11 Grant Report latest version.

As at 2nd August current grant fund balances are:

Community Chest £40,502 20

Communications and Technology £15,796 balance

CIF Emergency £16,049

Ride London £35,019

All other grants are all stable.

CIF fund, ECC wanted to extend the deadline and the EALC refused this due to a number of factors, which was subsequently agreed with the ECC as the fund is currently oversubscribed by £700K approx.

The ECC and EALC will traffic light the applications into three sections red, amber and green, not be funded, mindful to be funded, and possible funding. Prior to the applications being sent to the CIF Panel in October.

5.12 Update on affiliation fees.

21 members unpaid and Uttlesford have the greater number of unpaid members.

The EALC are looking to the Executive members to speak out to their parish councils to encourage membership under their own ALC's to reaffiliate.

In certain districts the membership is low and the Vice-Chair of the EALC is encouraging the members to affiliate.

Action: EALC to give the breakdown of unpaid members to the Executive representatives to make direct contact with unpaid members.

The time has come when the EALC should suspend services. However, members have a 12 months period to affiliate. The constitution would have to change and this is too late for the AGM in September 22 and will need to be a motion to the next agenda in 2023. This does not stop the EALC charging non-member rates for training.

Comfort Break 11:07 reconvene at 11:16

Meeting reconvened 11:16

6. Vice Chairman Report – Cllr John Gili-Ross

Cllr John Gili- Ross: Feedback apologies given

7. Essex Matters

7.1 Essex County Council Report

Welcome to Cllr Lewis Barber. Cllr Mckinlay has not raised anything in particular. The EALC is coming closer to the AGM date and the ECC speakers will brief both the Executive and members then on all the latest initiatives. Cllr Barber is Liaising with Phil Oldershaw to ensure that there is a seamless presentation. We will be delighted if Cllr McKinlay can attend both conferences.

The EALC and ECC are very keen to agree to the SLAs that the ECC have put forward however currently we have reached an impasse for the SLAs on the Health Wellbeing and Climate Change posts. The CEO and Financial Controller have been liaising with officers at County, however there are details that need to be finalised in the SLAs and to quantify the KPI objectives to move this project forward. There will be a meeting with the officers at ECC and EALC along with the Chairman, Cllr Peter Davey. There has been a payment in advance for the Health and Wellbeing post of £16,000 however, this considered to be insufficient for the post at this level of experience and knowledge. The same concerns are

with the Climate Change officer's post which is under the current market rate at £25,000 per annum. The terms of the SLAs must reflect the KPI's and objectives that are achievable and agreeable prior to the recruitment of the person to the post as this will be reflected in their job descriptions.

There needs to be one agreement rather than two and one team at ECC supporting the project.

ECC wish to be involved in the recruitment process with regards to the Climate Change Officer The EALC wish to support the membership with Health and Wellbeing and the Climate Change agenda at the earliest possible time.

The Chairman sits on the Health and Wellbeing and Climate Action Commission boards, to Influence the resources packs being produced for the sector on Residents, School and Business packs.

7.2 Nothing reported.

8. NALC Update Justin Griggs, Head of Policy and Communications.

Justin Griggs joined the meeting at 11:30am

Justin explained that NALC have implemented a series of networks to bring awareness to our members, bringing people online helps to connect people from around the Country. Bringing councillors together to share good practice and update them on the work in the sector.

An update given on the policy making process. The issues that NALC care about come from the EALC and other county associations (CALC'S), they make work easier for the sector. EALC consider policies at AGM level and they are taken to NALC through the policy committee. There are over 150 views and policies in place from motions with issues that are considered across the country.

The Policy Committee sets out the issues and takes action from the CALC's to remove barriers. County Association officers are really important to the work of the NALC, meeting on a fortnightly basis. They are a huge input to the work of NALC. National government and care arrangements from central government will be resolved next week with new ministers, levelling up housing and communities, the work is not overlooked. Representing rural communities and the government's plans for future prosperity and make progress with the new government on the work that ALC's do with their MP's NALC call upon us to share this work.

Cost of living crisis and the work that local authorities voice is heard.

Cllr Lewis Barber left the meeting 11:39

NALC have held Hybrid events on Climate Crisis, Local Elections, Planning Housing and there is an awesome programme of events in November.

Funding the cost of living and the budget setting to include the cost of living. Access to other government funding. NALC will implement a funding finder to support member councils in the sector.

Nick Shuttleworth, Director of Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) and Essex Rural Partnership (ERP) joined the meeting 11:41

Neighbourhood planning is a very important subject and a good way of developing neighbourhood planning in the sector, this is hugely popular and the events are supporting the county associations and members to complement the sector. RCCE and NALC are able to add value in the area of neighbourhood area.

There is a link between NALC and ACRE and this is how the two partnerships link.

Any updates will be fed to Justin through to the CEO

Justin Griggs left the meeting 11:45

9. RCCE/ERP Update Nick Shuttleworth.

Warm welcome to Nick Shuttleworth, village halls and community buildings to become covid secure. RCCE have allocated over £700K to local halls. ECC provided £230K grant funding which has been allocated as a total of 1m for village halls to make them covid secure to give confidence that the halls in the community can be used safely.

The Essex Wellbeing Services a new service launched this year, to allow community agents and wellbeing services means a wider range of intervention for those who use the service.

Affordable housing, an average price of home is £300k in Essex 11 times the average salary and this is an issue for the local communities and the future sustainability for the housing community.

Developing a tailor made housing scheme for the county, one developed in high easter. RCCE and ACRE the national body developed a short film accessible on the RCCE website: link here: [Affordable Rural Housing \(essexrcc.org.uk\)](https://essexrcc.org.uk)

Nature recovery and biodiversity, Climate Crisis and local nature partnership, looking at improving green space infrastructure and sustainable farming and action to support wildlife. The Local Nature Partnership is working and will be updated each meeting to the EALC.

The EALC and RCCE work collaboratively on key areas of interest.

Nick Shuttleworth left the meeting 11:57

10. PFCC Update Jane Gardner Apologies recieved.

11. New Initiatives and other matters for discussion

11.1 AGM & Conferences at Hyland's House update by Chair.

There will be a staff briefing with the chair on 20th September with Marks Tey Radio and to have a run thorough prior to the event. There will be a seamless PowerPoint presentation for the event.

There is facility for the voting members (100 in the banqueting suit and 40 in the dining. There will be voting ability for all members that have voting rights across the two rooms as both room will be interactively linked with both vision and sound.

Tea coffee and pastries on arrival.

The pavilion will be set up for the PFCC and ECC conferences.

There will be a hot finger buffet lunch and police cars and fire engines will be available to inspect outside Hyland's House during the break.

There will be a networking event prior to the closure of the conference.

EALC staff will look at sending a confirmation email of attendance to those who are on the list.

11.2 EALC Website and IT development update by CEO.

There is a huge process and amount of work to update the training room to the latest technology for the training room to be able to fully function as a hybrid centre.

11.3 Hearing Loop update by Cllr Mike Eldred.

Cllr Mike Eldred has been asked to be a part of the accessibility for the training centre, to make sure that the tutors are on board and on hybrid. Hybrid is not accessible for those who are hard of hearing and this is a complex process.

Mike is in touch with Essex Hearing, along with the CEO and the IT providers and with the tutors to ensure the systems work for everyone.

Hearing loop is a thing of the past and is a complex process to implement.

There are accessibility issues in the building not just online learning. The EALC are trying to make sure that everyone in person and online have the best experience that they can. However this is limited to the equipment that the individual person has in their own home.

In the short term, individuals can speak to EALC prior to attending courses.

11.4 Hybrid Training update by CEO.

Update given by Mike. CEO has been in connection with iceConnect and MTR

12 District Association Representatives Feedback

12.1 Basildon nothing to report

12.2 Braintree

12.3 The chairmanship of the Brentwood Association has changed. There is difficulty in finding a clerk/secretary. There are difficulties generally in recruiting in the sector that we have already discussed in this meeting.

Cllr Mike Eldred left the meeting 12:13

Cllr Mike Eldred re-joined the meeting 12:14

12.4 Colchester nothing to report.

12.5 Epping Forest nothing to report.

12.6 Maldon nothing to report.

12.7 Rochford are holding their AGM in October, when representatives will be elected. A new Clerk/Secretary has been appointed. They have introduced an open forum for members to exchange news and ideas and would welcome any support with problems. They have been informed up to 10 Highways issues at a time can be reported to ECC via the respective County Councillors.

12.8 Tendring nothing to report.

12.9 Uttlesford already updated.

13. Staff Reports

13.1 Chief Executive Report (Charlene Slade).

Noted.

13.2 Executive County Training Officer Report (Pearl Willcox).

Noted.

13.3 Financial Controller, verbal update (Stephanie Robinson).

Reports given in the finance section.

Some work is being undertaken on member councils who have not attended training. The

EALC need to identify the training needs, and break down the barriers to councils undertaking training. The EALC need to set aside pre-conceived ideas as to what the barriers are and understand, through conversations with the councils, if they are financial, geographical or technical. Once we have a better understanding of the barriers we can work to address them so that every Town and Parish council can have equal access to training.

13.4 Grant Funding Officer (Caroline Brown).

Thanks to Caroline for a comprehensive overview. Noted

13.5 Communications Coordinator Report (Sophie Wolker)

Thanks to Sophie for a comprehensive report. Noted

14. Feedback and Next Agenda

14.1 Feedback 15 minutes of open forum for members to raise issues of mutual interest
The next meeting is the annual meeting of the Executive. Cllr Jim Devlin stated that the review the Constitution should be on the next and subsequent agendas to enable adequate time for any changes to be put before the AGM.

Stephanie Robinson left the meeting 12:19

The recording of the meeting was stopped.

The meeting closed at 12:20pm

Section 2 confidential item

15 Having regard to the confidential nature of the section 2 business to be transacted, it is RESOLVED that the meeting is now only open to the voting Executive members and the CEO. All others are excluded from the meeting.

15.1 Cllr Mike Eldred provided a verbal report agreed by the Personnel Sub-Committee.

16. Date of Next Meeting

24th November 2022 Annual Meeting of the Executive.

17. Matters for future agenda items

18. Meeting Closure 12:20pm