



Essex Association of Local Councils

Minutes

EALC Executive Meeting Thursday 3rd February 2022 at 10 am

This meeting will be a virtual meeting via Zoom

3rd February 2022

Executive Members Present

Cllr Jim Devlin	Basildon	Cllr David McPherson Davis	Basildon
Cllr Stephanie Gill	Uttlesford	Cllr Alan Townsend	Uttlesford
Cllr Peter Davey	Brentwood	Cllr Roger Mannion	Colchester
Cllr Danny Botteral	Tendring	Cllr Abdul Hafiz	Maldon
Cllr Paul Lees	Braintree	Cllr Susan Martin	Rochford
Cllr Alan Acott	Castle Point	Cllr Michael Talbot	Tendring
Cllr Sheila Jackman	Epping Forest	Beverley Rumsey	Epping Forest

Also present – Chief Executive Officer Charlene Slade

Executive County Training Officer Pearl Willcox

Cllr Lewis Barber ECC

Adrian Clements – Lodge Information Services Ltd

Nick Shuttleworth – RCCE

Jane Moore - NALC

Welcome

- 1. Chairman's Welcome and introduction to Angelina Marriot from Rochford District Association of Local Councils.**

The Chairman welcomed everyone present and wished everyone well and happy new year. Introducing Cllr Lewis Barber, ECC, - Elected in May 2021. Representing ECC Cllr Louise McKinlay joining us for the whole meeting.

The Chairman attended the following meeting which were mostly online but also some presentations in person.

15 th November	Local Council Award Accreditation Presented to Witham Town Council
22 nd November	EHWB Interviews
23 rd November	Chairing of the Annual CIF Panel
24 th November	EHWB County Hall
25 th November	Personnel Committee Meeting
29 th November	Crime Prevention Strategy Launch PFCC
30 th November	EALC HWB
1 st December	NALC Finance and Scrutiny Committee
2 nd December	NALC Conference
6 th December	Essex Climate Commission
6 th December	EHWB Agenda Setting meeting
6 th December	Local Council Award Accreditation Presentation to Great Notley
8 th December	National Assembly - Election results
8 th December	NALC CVC (Chair and Vice Chair) meeting
9 th December	NALC Finance and Scrutiny Committee
15 th December	ECC Cllr Lee Scott with Wendy Stamp
20 th December	EALC Office
10 th January	NALC CVC (Chair and Vice Chair) meeting
11 th January	NALC Management Board
13 th January	EALC Finance Sub-Committee
19 th January	Safer Essex
24 th January	Meeting with Chris Hossack Leader of Brentwood Borough Council
25 th January	Honour Panel Meeting
26 th January	EHWB
27 th January	EALC Climate Crisis Conference
31 st January	EHWB Agenda setting meeting
2 nd February	Rural Crime Forum
3 rd February	EALC Executive Committee

- 2. Apologies for Absence** Please email pearl.willcox@ealc.gov.uk
Cllr Wendy Stamp
Cllr John Gili-Ross
Cllr Richard North
Cllr Martin Lee
Cllr Angelia Marriot

3. Minutes

- 3.1** Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 18th November 2021.

Proposer: Cllr Michael Talbot
Seconder: Cllr Stephanie Gill

All members present agreed the minutes are a correct reflection of the Executive Meeting on 18th November 2021.

4. Personnel – The Personnel Committee update.

4.1 Update from the Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer gave an update to the Executive Committee on Personnel.

It has been somewhat of a challenge over the last 2 years, with an increased amount of pressure on staff. We were under pressure to ensure to keep within the payroll budget whilst offering a top line service to our membership. Two members of staff left in 2021, thus increasing the workload which had to be covered.

Discussions took place with the Personnel Committee and the issues surrounding pay levels in the market place and concern that the EALC would lose staff. The Personnel Committee supported by the Finance Sub-Committee made the decision to ensure that we could not under any circumstances exceed the payroll budget on a going forward basis and therefore an alternative decision was made following advice sought from Vine HR.

It was decided that the only way to recognise the true worth of the staff for their efforts during the 18 months of covid and the additional work load without a basis increase in the salaries and at that point were running 17K below the core payroll budget due to lack of staff, the Personnel Committee recommended which was endorsed by the Finance Sub-Committee to award a spot bonus to a ceiling of £5,004

We believe it was inappropriate to consider any payments being made from the commission being generated from the ECC funds. Reserves such as IT, all one-off costs are paid for out of the reserves covering, the training room hybrid set up, IT hardware and software, the EALC must meet the current assets over current liability ratio.

Commission, received from management of the funding streams, means the EALC is in a position to create a strong reserve, rather than going to the membership for unacceptable increases in affiliation fees.

The Executive Committee should not be viewing any personal details of the EALC staff, this is for the Personnel Sub-Committee's information only. The Finance Sub-Committee have approved payroll is within budget and within procedures in place.

Cllr Stephanie Gill asked the Chairman to clarify that the grants received from ECC also pay for 2 members of the EALC staff.

A Personnel Sub-Committee meeting will be held on 17th February to discuss the staffing structure of the Association for 22/23 following by a Finance Sub-Committee meeting on 10th March.

5. Finance

5.1 Minutes of the Extraordinary Finance Sub-Committee Meetings held on 2nd December 2021.

Proposer: Cllr Stephanie Gill
Seconded: Cllr Abdul Hafiz

All members present agreed the minutes are an accurate record of the Finance Sub-Committee meeting on 2nd December.

5.2 Budget Report at 30th November 2021 Quarters 1-3 of the Financial Year 2021/2022

Top line course income YTD of £107,759.78 to November 2021 the December figures are already at a total of £113,000 to 31st December the forecast figure will need to be amended.

Tutors' costs have been increased to reflect the increase in the course income.

Line 13a Future funding administration and the forecast to be allocated for the funding streams administered for the financial year and the additional amount will be set aside as an accrual in the next two plan years.

Line 16 Payroll will be reviewed
There is a considerable surplus of £20,073.27 before the funding admin income.

5.3 Bank Balances latest version.

EALC are holding large amounts of money on behalf of ECC. Making sure money was secure EALC now hold a CCLA account. The National Association of Local councils (NALC) also hold a CCLA account and they advise that CCLA have reduced the amount for transfers.

There is a technical and complicated process when transferring funds from Barclays to CCLA. There is a holding account with HSBC and for 24 hours funds are ringfenced until cleared in the system. account

EALC still hold large amounts of funds in Barclays and will be considered by the Finance Sub-Committee, who are also creating a Treasury Management policy to safe guard all funds held.

5.4 Weekly Grant Report latest version

The report gives you indication of the amount of grants we have received from ECC and how much has been appointed to applications. There is a small emergency CIF fund still available.

Noted.

5.5 EALC Financial Regulations

A lot of time and effort has been put into preparing these documents to make sure they all fall into line. They ensure that sufficient processes are in place to correctly handle ECC's money we hold, making sure the associations financial operations function correctly.

Proposed: Cllr Michael Talbot

Seconded: Cllr Roger Mannion

All those present agreed the Financial Regulations and are adopted from 3rd February 2022.

5.6 EALC Internal Control

Proposed: Cllr Alan Talbot

Seconded: Cllr Sheila Jackman

All those present are in favour of the Internal Control Document dated January 2022.

5.7 EALC Financial Risk Assessment

The document was reviewed to ensure it reflects all current risks, there were few changes made. Only operational risk owing to IT upgrade.

Our IT provider is currently working on a business recovery plan.

The Chairman advised the committee that 3 Audits will be carried out this year.

1. Normal
2. Funding
3. Scrutiny of the Association

Noted.

6. Vice Chairman Report – Cllr John Gili-Ross

Cllr John Gili- Ross: Feedback

The Vice-Chairman attended the following virtual meetings: PFCC lots of hard work going on and supporting Roger Hirst in his role.

7. Vice Chairman Report – Cllr Wendy Stamp

Cllr Wendy Stamp: Feedback

The Vice-Chairman attended the following virtual meetings:

17th December EALC Interview Panel

8. Essex Matters

8.1 Essex County Council Report – Cllr Lewis Barber.

Extended thanks to the EALC. Cllr Louise McKinlay extended her gratitude to you all for all the hard work the Association has been doing for Parish & Town Councils and is extremely grateful. Just published our levelling up paper for Essex.

Levelling up agenda has pretty good support across our County chamber for support from our MP's. There is a Lobby Day on 23rd March 2022 it would be good to understand if the Public Standards issue currently about bullying is in the White Paper. Extended safety Nationally, female safety flows throughout ECC policies. Working with Active Essex to support vulnerable people.

ECC are lobbying Government, so far, the current proposals do not go far enough to support the social care issues. Dial in issues for the Parish Councils to lobby for this to remain as a remote meeting facility.

Cllr Paul Lees raised concerns with regards to the incinerators mentioned at the Climate Conference last week. There was no response when questioned about it at the conference.

Essex has got an appalling record on incinerating. This is an ECC decision which is making process. To link Cllr Paul Lee with Cllr Lewis Barber.

Cllr Stephanie Gill Raised the issues with regards to the remote meetings and the contact made with the MP Kemi Bandoch and there is no response. Explained she was unable to hold a meeting in December because of keeping Councillor's safe. Very important that remote meetings are looked at. Difficult working practise. Remote meetings worked extremely well during pandemic.

Cllr Abdul raised an issue with the dimming of the lights and changes to the LED lights send particular issues to ECC Cllr Lewis Barber.

Looking forward to the EALC AGM and ECC Conference, with key speakers on these topics.

9. NALC Update – (By NALC representative Jane Moore)

Jane Moore joined the meeting at 10:50

It is fair to say the local government are in favour of councils to meet remotely. A statement from Michael Gove published stated that he is in support of remote meetings.

Refer to legislation being required and the timetable, what the NALC can do and the EALC can do. Encourage members write to MP's, encourage councillors to write to the MP's, Lobby Day coming up on 23rd March. The message is to focus on remote meetings, to make a permanent measure for the reasons of green, climate, caring related, having the ability to meet remotely to include inclusion and access. A call for evidence last year responded that public attendance had increased in the remote meeting sessions. There is the ability to meet remotely, the Clerk and Staff can attend remotely to meetings, but there might be a lack of facilities and equipment.

Remote meetings links with covid guidance and the Governments 'Plan B'. We are now in the post 26th January 'Plan B', we are back to the position to where we were before.

Public standards and levelling up, the civility project work set up with NALC and SLCC working with parish bodies jointly employed a project manager, to work on governance, lobbying intervention work streams and training. This will include County Officers who met with sector experts to see if there are gaps in documents and standards and civility. It's not just a one-way issue it is across the board within the sector. This is a large piece of work and is lead by the project manager.

National level for civility and sanctions and disciplinary issues, NALC can support but can't change the law.

Levelling up 23rd February, NALC events on levelling up there will be more events launched.

Devolution, mayors not sure where we are. NALC need to clarify the position.

Staffing at NALC, Jane Moore is the Senior Solicitor and Head of Member Services. Charlotte Eisenhart will be returning in the next couple of months and this will mean that NALC will be back to the full level of staffing. The policy and comms team are working on policy work.

10. Lobby Day – 23rd March 2022 Update

11. RCCE / ERP Update – Nick Shuttleworth

Nick Shuttleworth Joined the meeting at 11:02

RCCE manage a delivery of covid recovery fund, to help village halls and community centres to make them more secure and give confidence in the community in using the facilities, as they are a hub to the community and local groups. £750,000 amounts to 150 individual projects.

RCCE are partners with Provide and the Community Agents United in Kind isolation services. They are to continue to run for the next 5 years.

Five to six thousand clients each year are supported.

ERP – EALC will represent these meetings. The rural strategy are working with their partnerships to work together to resume meetings and work with DEFRA.

Essex Police refreshing their rural crime strategy important plan and have asked for support with that.

The rural engagement team, was the last set up strategy. Neighbourhood plans are supported by RCCE. Can progress and can go to referendum. They are very important to support the local development plans, as the neighbourhood plan must be taken in to account by any development when it takes place. Important to lobby for CIL in your area as this is funding from the development that takes place in your own area.

12. New Initiatives and other matters for discussion

12.1 IT Update, By Lodge Information Services Ltd.

Adrian Clements Joined the meeting at 11:22

Cllr Peter Davey welcomed Adrian Clements from Lodge Services Ltd who took over the EALC systems.

Adrian reported that there were a significant number of issues to be addressed immediately when Lodge took over. Resolved most problems with Sage. Backup system in place. Next to Shut off current office server. No gaps in defences. The report shows a back up system is now implemented and is very effective. Resolved the issues with the Sage accounting system fundamentally the next step is for the EALC is to move away from the server.

The document shows areas of 'High Risk' but this is fundamentally safe as there is a sufficient back up in place and the data is secure, there is no gaps in the systems. There are some training requirements needed to ensure staff follow processes in place.

Questions raised by members with regards to the access to the internet. There are some risks to the process of moving to the Office 365 access from anywhere is possible.

12.2 Hybrid Training and Meeting's

There is a timetable needed.

The physical layout of the training room may cause some implications; however, this is possible and comes down to time and money.

Cllr Stephanie Gill voiced that all tutors should be included in the discussions regarding 'Hybrid' training courses.

12.3 Climate Crisis Conference Update

Pearl Willcox, Executive County Training Officer gave an update on the Climate Crisis Conference that took place on the 27th January. 65 delegates attended. Conference was very well received.

12.4 Crouch Harbour Advisory Committee – Nomination request of a Representative (Cllr Mandy Cohen was the previous representative)

Share the commitment with the Executive. Approach Cllr Angelina Marriott, Rochford District.

12.5 EALC Committee Meetings Great Dunmow

Chairman Peter Davey addressed the Executive Committee regarding the Executive Meetings and how they are to be held moving forward. Interaction with members is much better face to face. Really looking to Charlene for a proposal to move forward with a mixture of physical, virtually and hybrid meetings. Executive members asked to have a think about how to move forward with the meetings.

The meetings of the Executive should not be 100% virtual we recognise that there is a lot of travelling for some members.

Proposal questionnaire to the Executive Committee for Virtual, Hybrid or Face to Face meetings.

13. Procedural Documents for Review

13.1 Executive Committee Roles and Responsibilities.

The document is to be redated and adopted as of January 2022.

Indorse what is there already for next 12 months. There were no objections members agreed to endorse the document.

Proposed: Cllr Jim Devlin
Seconded: Cllr Alan Townsend.
All Agreed.

13.2 Strategic Plan (Appendix 11)

Comments from Cllr Michael Talbot: *EALC need to be very careful with correspondence that gets sent out to Parish and Town Council's regarding grants, funds etc. In regards to communications when rejecting an application for a grant, St Osyth Parish Council's last four applications for grants have been turned down.*

The applications have not been successful as there are too many applications and many have to be turned down. The applications total 1.4 million pounds and therefore there is a traffic light process of Red, Amber and Green to reduce the applicants from the selection process. ECC would also agree the letters to the rejections and this is driven by the ECC. Some of the decisions are made because of the reserves.

13.3 Strategic Action Plan (Appendix 12)

CEO to update the Executive Members on the current position to the SAP to show where the EALC are and where we are going. To form a small working party. Input from Executive members for the next meeting.

14. Staff Reports

14.1 Chief Executive Report (Charlene Slade)

Focus on the number of member of enquiries and the number sent to NALC, HR and ELS. The number of enquires are high and the enquires that are sent to NALC.

The enquires are answered by the EALC staff internally and the level of staffing knowledge is high and more resources.

The EALC is seen as a support network which is very important and the EALC must never move away from.

14.2 Executive County Training Officer Report (Pearl Willcox)

The report shows the number of bookings for the year and the number of bookings received in January rose to 180 bookings for course. Courses have been re written; the training calendar has been as success.

14.3 Funding Officer Report (Robert Laurie)

Due diligence is being reviewed with applications that have not been awarded. Noted.

14.4 Parish Council Development Officer (Amanda Brown)

Acknowledge a tremendous amount of work that has been done on the accreditations and the presentations are being resented face to face at the formal meetings.

A huge amount of work on the member enquiries.

14.5 Communications Officer (Eli Haines)

This is a very important part of the intelligence of the membership. The future of the communications and the website will be moved to a WordPress website. This will be a progressive interactive website and there will be an online functionality.

15. Feedback and Next Agenda

15.1 Feedback 15 minutes of open forum for members to raise issues of mutual interest

Hyland's House AGM is a face-to-face meeting not a Hybrid meeting, there is a limited number of delegates to 200 and there is a maximum of two voting members per council. The event is 100% funded and therefore this will be a free event and free parking.

16. Date of Next Meetings

24th March Location TBC.

17. Matters for future agenda items

18. Meeting Closure 12:26pm