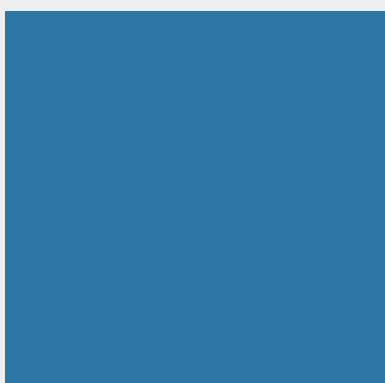


Annual Report



2023-24



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Executive Committee

Chair

Cllr Peter Davey

Vice - Chair

Cllr Mike Eldred

Vice - Chair

Cllr John Gili-Ross

Chair of Finance

Cllr Stephanie Gill

District Representatives

Cllr Jim Devlin & Cllr David McPherson-Davis (until 31.01.24), Cllr Nicola Hoad (from 01.02.24)

Basildon District

Cllr Paul Lees & Cllr Martin Lee, *Braintree District*

Cllr Richard North & Cllr Peter Davey, *Brentwood District*

Cllr Brian Butcher & Cllr John Gili-Ross, *Colchester District*

Cllr Sheila Jackman MBE & Ms Beverley Rumsey, *Epping Forest District*

Cllr Abdul Hafiz, *Maldon District*

Cllr Frank Belgrove, *Tendring District*

Cllr Alan Townsend & Cllr Stephanie Gill, *Uttlesford District*

President

Cllr John Jowers

Vice Presidents

Mr Mick Page

Mrs Jennifer Tolhurst, Lord Lieutenant of Essex

Cllr Sheila Jackman MBE

Mrs Anne Brown

Staff Members

Chief Executive Officer

Charlene Slade, AATQB CiLCA

Executive County Training Officer

Pearl Willcox, CiLCA

Financial Controller

Stephanie Robinson, ICAEW CiLCA BSc (Hons)

Head of Member Enquiries

Ann C Wood

LLB(Hons) CertHE Local Policy DMS

Grant Funding Administrator

Michelle Pavey

Office & Communications Co-ordinator

Sophie Wolker, BSc (Hons)

Office Administrator

Kristi Lewis

Chair's Report– This Year in Review



Cllr Peter Davey

Chair of the EALC Executive Committee

As Chair of the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC), I present our Annual Report for the Financial year 2023-24. The EALC continues to garner national recognition for its unwavering commitment to supporting the Parish and Town Council sector within Essex.

The County Association of the Year Award - 2023

The National Association of Local Councils announced the Star Council Awards winner at a ceremony held on the 29th of November 2023 at the prestigious House of Lords. Essex Association of Local Councils was awarded 'County Association of the Year'. The event brought together Councillors, Clerks, MP's, Parliamentarians, academics, national stakeholders and leading opinion formers to honour the individuals and organisations that have demonstrated excellence in supporting their communities. I would like to acknowledge both the staff and our membership for contributing to this prestigious achievement.

Our Core Priorities

Our unwavering focus remains on the development and delivery of a highly professional training program and comprehensive council support services. This program aims to equip individuals with the necessary skills, knowledge, and expertise to excel in their roles within the parish and town council sector; whether it's training for employees, council members, or other stakeholders, we strive for excellence. We meticulously design training modules that cover essential topics relevant to our field, these may include technical skills, leadership development, communication, and more. We engage qualified instructors, experienced professionals, and subject matter experts to lead these training sessions. Their expertise ensures that participants receive high quality training. We regularly assess and continuously improve and enhance our training content based on feedback, industry trends, and emerging best practices. Simultaneously, we actively seek new avenues to enhance value for our member councils.

Collaboration and Mutual Benefit

To address the challenges that arose throughout the year, we worked diligently and successfully with our primary partners. As the County Association, we seize every opportunity to collaborate with Essex County Council (ECC), the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner (PFCC), the Essex Rural Partnership (ERP), the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE), and the Safer Essex Initiative. Our Joint efforts contribute to the well-being and safety of our communities and benefit our esteemed membership.

Chair's Report



Strengthening Our Capabilities

Sophie Wolker BSc Hons, our Communications and Office Coordinator, has successfully re-designed and launched a new EALC website and is currently carrying out an internal review to further enhance our new website as part of a three phase project incorporating a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System. The goal is to create an interactive platform that will enhance communication and engagement. This exciting project is in its initial stages.

NALC Vice-Chair (Finance) Responsibilities

In my role as NALC Vice-Chair of Finance, I oversee finance matters and serve on the NALC Management Board. Our influence extends beyond Essex. We actively shape strategic initiatives across the UK. My objective is to ensure that the NALC maintains financial stability, fosters a positive relationship with central government, and delivers exceptional value to our member councils.

Honoring Unsung Heroes

I encourage you to nominate individuals in your community whose impactful actions often go unnoticed. The Honours Brochure initiative launched this year through the offices of Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Essex, Mrs. Jennifer Tolhurst, who is also a Vice-President of the Association, provides an opportunity to recognize these unsung heroes.

Strategic Planning for the Future

To enhance value and services, our Executive Committee is conducting a comprehensive review of the Strategic Plan and Action Plan. This will culminate in a 4-year Business Plan and Marketing Strategy, set to be announced in 2024. This strategic review is pivotal to our organization's continued success and long-term sustainability.

Acknowledging Our Team

Our achievements would not have been possible without the unwavering commitment of Charlene Slade and her team. Their professionalism, foresight, and hard work in critical areas such as training, communication, professional advice, and finance have directly supported our town and parish council members. I extend my thanks to all EALC Executive members who tirelessly ensure that our members' voices are heard and acted upon.

Continued Commitment

I have served as Chair of the EALC for the last seven years and will remain dedicated to supporting our proactive staff as we strive to offer advanced support to you, our valued membership. I extend our gratitude to Essex County Council for their unwavering support during these financially challenging times. Their speed and efficiency in assisting vulnerable residents has been commendable. Thank you for your continued support, and I anticipate another successful year ahead based on the launch of both the Business Plan the Marketing Strategy together with further progress being made with our Hybrid communications system, our new training programs and the introduction of the CRM system into our new website.

Kind Regards,

Cllr Peter Davey, Chair of the EALC Executive Committee

CEO Report- Our Successes



Charlene Slade AATQB CiLCA

EALC Chief Executive Officer

I am delighted to address you as the Chief Executive Officer in this year's report, providing an overview of our accomplishments during the past year up to March 31, 2024.

Our Successes

One major milestone this year was becoming the 'County Association of the Year' winner of the NALC Star Council of the Year Award.

Training Excellence

Our commitment to enhancing training programs remains unwavering. We have expanded our course offerings, both in-house and online, with new modules developed by our expert tutors. These courses have elevated standards across various areas, including Councillor training and the Clerk's qualification.

Local Council Award Scheme

The EALC continues to support numerous parish and town councils in achieving recognition under the Local Council Award scheme. This prestigious award celebrates outstanding local councils and provides a framework for all councils to enhance their capabilities. Our association takes pride in leading the country with the highest number of accreditations. By March 2024, a total of 5 member councils successfully completed the accreditation process, resulting in 4 Foundation awards, and 1 Quality Gold award.

Appreciation

I extend heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated staff, who work tirelessly to improve member services. Their efforts ensure that the association remains responsive to the evolving needs of modern councils. Special thanks go to Pearl, Stephanie, Ann, Sophie, Michelle and Kristi- their appointments play a pivotal role in delivering exceptional member services, supporting council enquiries, maintaining high training standards, facilitating communication with partner organisations, and safeguarding our financial health.

As we navigate the challenges of our dynamic world, we remain committed to serving our members with excellence.



CEO Report



April - June '23

Year at a glance

Training room facilities upgrade with bespoke Audio Visual equipment and hearing loop.

Partnered with a specialist in Human Resources provider Worknest. Delivering expert advice and training to the membership, an introduction briefing to the membership.

Clerk's drop-in sessions face to face for coffee and catch up to offer general support and a safe space for conversations.

EALC became members of the Parkinson Partnership and Auditors Forum.

July - September '23

Grant Administration of the Community Initiatives Fund, Microgrant, Active Essex Food Support Fund, and Ride London.

NALC Policy Committee, County Officer representative. The Committee supported the protection of premises bill 'Martyn's Law', released in the Kings speech.

Redesign and launch of new EALC website.

October - December '23

Review of the Business forward plan for the next 4 years. Working groups focused on the Business and Marketing elements for the Association.

Launch of the Councillor Bursary. £30,000 of the EALC's reserves has been set aside to subsidise Councillor training for councils with a precept under £25,000 (increased in April 2024 to £80,000).

Star Council Award - Winner of 2023 County Association of the Year.

January - March '24

Review of parish Borrowing processes with Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities.

Became part of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy working group, to support to members on restoring nature, and building resilience on behalf of County.

Local Councils Awards - The Essex Accreditation panel assessed 8 awards, personally presented by the Chair and Vice-Chair's.

Chair of Finance Report



Cllr Stephanie M. Gill

Chair of Finance, EALC Sub-Committee

As determined at the 2023 AGM, the Association's role previously referred to as 'Treasurer' is retitled 'Chair of Finance Sub-Committee' as this was more appropriate. Stephanie Robinson, ICAEW, continues in the position of EALC Financial Controller.

The Association continued to support Members via the services of Governance Advice, Communications, including the advertising of staff vacancies, plus the provision of Clerk and Councillor Training.

The Association continued to administer the Essex County Council CIF Grants and also undertook other grant administration for Essex County Council via separately negotiated Service Level Agreements.

The Association thanks Essex County Council for its continued support and financial commitment given over in 2023-24 to enable services to be delivered to the Parish and Town Sector, and the PFCC for the 2023-24 grant relating to the stipend working partnership.

Last financial year saw expenditure of £22,472 from restructuring reserves for the installation of new audio/visual equipment in the training/meeting room and the first instalment due for the Subscriber CRM software.

The new EALC Councillor Training Bursary, which is a finite sum, did not receive the expected uptake. It has therefore been opened up to Councils with a yearly income below £80,000 (previously £25,000).

The result of the Association's activities for the year ended 31st March 2024 brought about a surplus of £26,214.

This figure is attributed to the taking on of extra grant administration for ECC in the year. However, it should be noted that given the expected deficit budget for the year end 2025, this surplus will be carried forward as accumulated funds.

The Financial Report and Financial Summary compiled by the EALC Financial Controller explains in detail the financial performance of the Association.

The Finance Sub-Committee held regular meetings throughout the year to discuss and monitor the ongoing performance of the Association, including any relating financial implications, and accordingly to deliver reports and recommendations to the Executive Committee.

Chair of Finance Report



Risk Review

There is continued reviewing of risks relating to internal procedures and external financial risks to minimise the exposure of the Association.

The Financial Regulations were revised to include the Treasury Management Policy, and renamed and adopted in January 2024

After review, the Association ceased holding funds with one of its investment suppliers. The insurance policy is reviewed annually per the adopted Financial Regulations.

Auditor

Mr Trevor Brown, CPFA as Auditor completed the Audit for 31st March 2024.

Pensions

EALC participates in two pension schemes, administered by the Essex Pension Fund and by Nest, on behalf of its employees. The EALC Pension Scheme is administered by the Essex Pension Fund and is part of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

The smoothed market asset valuation of the Fund as at 31 March 2022, the latest available valuation was £8.1bn. Liabilities were valued at £7.92bn leaving a surplus of £182m in the Fund at the valuation date.

The surplus of £182m represents a funding level of 102%. However, if the EALC funding position was considered on a cessation basis, it would show a funding deficit. Recovery of this deficit is targeted in line with the Fund's FSS and as projected to be fully funded after a recovery period length of no more than 18 years from 1st April 2023. This matter is being addressed and additional annual contributions are being made to extinguish the deficit. The contribution required for the coming year to 31 March 2025 is £5,180.

Financial Report



Stephanie Robinson ICAEW CiLCA

Financial Controller

With a financial qualification (ICAEW) and also experience in local government as a CiLCA qualified clerk for 2 parish councils, I have knowledge and experience in both the local government sector and the world of finance.

Previous roles include Global Financial Controller for MMS and more recently as Financial Controller for Rainham Steel.

The year ending 31st March 2024 has been a busy and successful year for the EALC with course income of £136,510 (2023: £99,129) and exceptional income of £31,701 (2023: £34,000) from the administration of food support funds.

Subscription income increased by just over 4% to £88,463 (2023: £84,670) due in part to the creation of 2 new councils – Chelmsford Garden Community Council and Chelmer Village Council.

There was an overall surplus of £26,214 (2023: £29,614) which was added to reserves

The training room was upgraded during the year with the installation of new audio-visual equipment including OwlLab cameras and large display screens.

On behalf of Essex County Council, a total of just under £916,000 (2023: £797,00) of grants have been awarded in the 2023/24 financial year including 68 (2023: 128) micro-grants to the value of £60,980 (2023: £59,705) and Community Initiative Funds to the value of £220,997 (2023: £170,908).

Separate accounting practices, including Treasury Management, Risk Assessments and robust Financial Regulations are in place to ensure that all the funds administered on behalf of Essex County Council are transparent, accountable and separately managed from the core purpose and functions of the Association.

Membership
Subscription

▲ 4%

Course Income

£136,510

Funding Administration
Income

£31, 701

Financial Report



The financial statements for the year ending 31st March 2024 can be found at pages 26-34. These accounts have been subject to an external audit by Trevor Brown (CPFA) on the 21st June 2024 and his report concludes with the following statement:

I have audited the financial statements of the Essex Association of Local Councils for the Year Ended 31 March 2024.

The audit work has been undertaken so that I might report to the Association's members on the financial statements and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Association and its members for my audit work, for this report, or for the opinions I have given.

The Financial Controller and the Chair of the Finance Subcommittee of the EALC are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view.

My responsibility is to audit and express an opinion on the financial statements presented to me.

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error.

Opinion on financial Statements:

In my opinion the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of the Association's affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the EALC Financial Regulations dated January 2024.

Trevor Brown

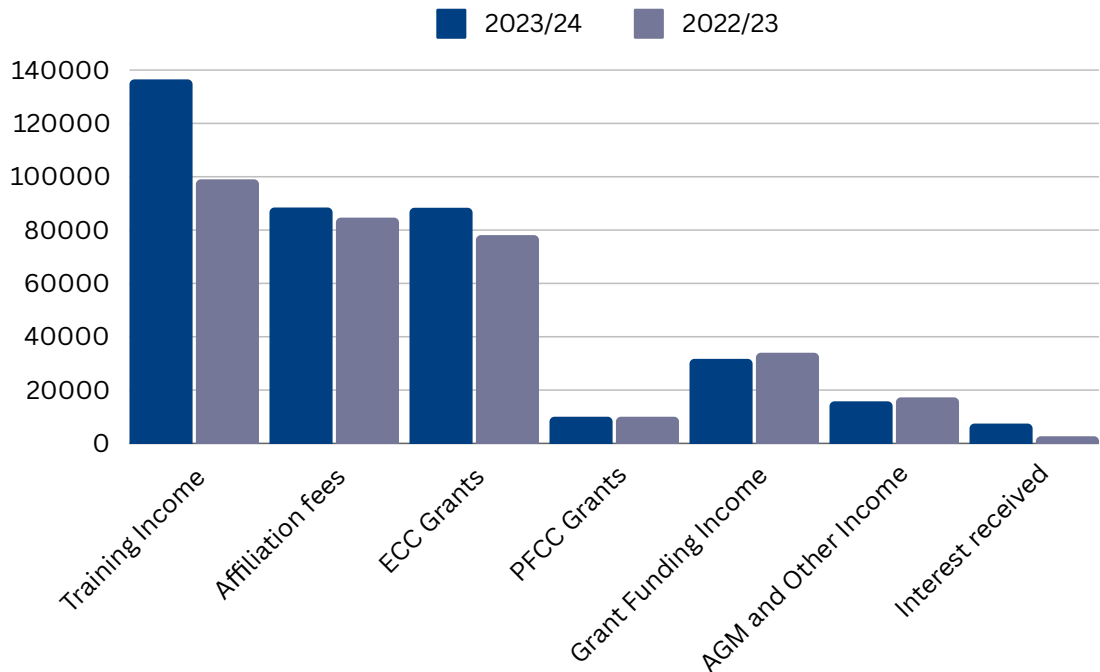
Trevor Brown
Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

30 June 2024

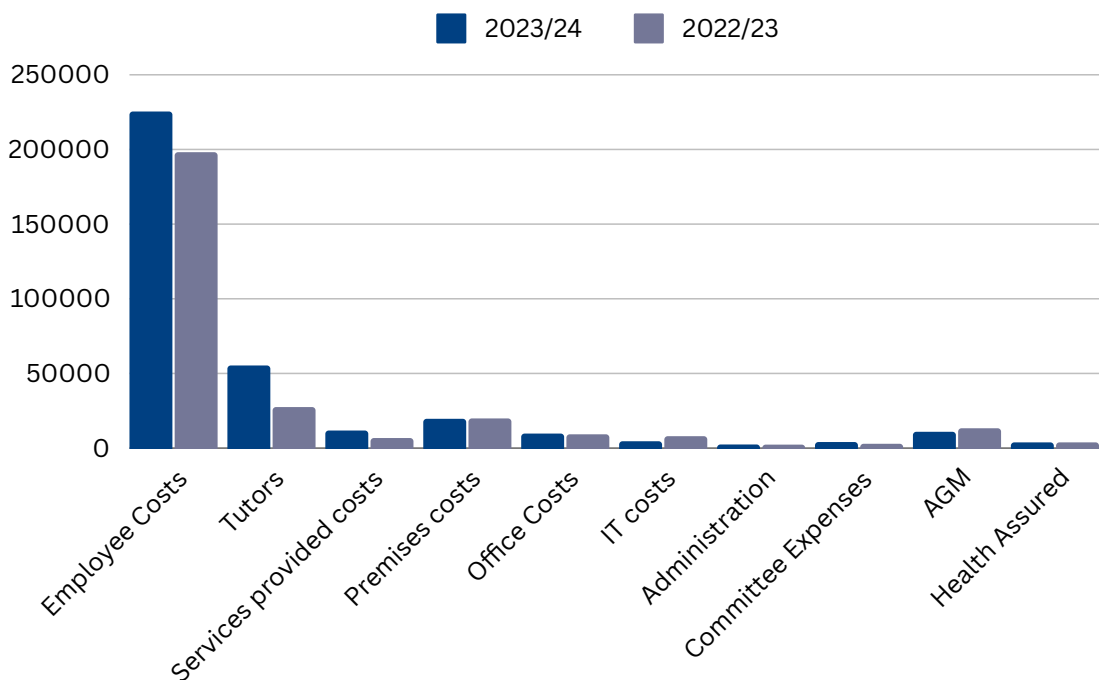
Financial Summary



Income 2023/24 & 2022/23



Expenditure 2023/24 & 2022/23



Training Report



Pearl Willcox CiLCA

EALC Executive County Training Officer

EALC training still remains the most comprehensive service that the association runs to support & benefit its member councils, councillors and clerks.

In 2023/2024, the Association continued to deliver our comprehensive & high standard of courses, workshops & modules to the Membership. We continued to deliver our courses both in house & virtually. This year saw an introduction of several new finance courses, Clerk & Councillor Refresher courses along with a War Memorials course, two courses delivered by The Open Spaces Society & a set of HR courses delivered by our partners WorkNest as well as the introduction of our Evening Councillor Training Modules.

Throughout 2023/2024 we trained over 900 Clerks, Deputy & Assistant Clerks, Mayors, Chairs, Vice - Chairs, Councillors and Parish Council Staff on core, certificated, Clerk, Councillor & Chairman training courses. This is in addition to the other areas of training & support we have provided in workshops, webinars & online courses.

I remain extremely proud that the association's training programme goes from strength to strength every year. We are only able to achieve this level of training thanks to the 18 tutors & working partners that deliver our courses with passion & knowledge of the area of training they are delivering.

COURSE TITLE	DETAILS	SETS DELIVERED
Chairman Training- 3 day course	6 days in total	2
Councillor Training- 2 day course	Includes one set of Advanced Councillor Training- Next Steps (18 days in total)	9
Saturday & Evening Councillor Training	Modules 1-4, July & November 2023; February 2024	3
New Clerks Course	35 new clerks trained	3
CiLCA Courses	16 Clerks & Officers	3
Planning Courses		3
Bespoke Courses	Including Allotments, Village Halls and Cemetary Management	3
Certificated Courses	Includes Playground, First Aid Health Safety	5
Other	Includes Core Courses, Worknest HR modules & Online Briefings	60

Training Report



CiLCA – Certificate in Local Council Administration

Our CiLCA courses have continued to run virtually throughout the year. 2023/2024 saw another 5 clerks & officers successfully passing their qualification. We remain extremely proud at the association that Essex continues to lead the whole of the country with the highest CiLCA passes for an Association.

Congratulations to the following Clerks, Assistant & Deputy Clerks & Officers-

- Nicola Harding – Clerk, Hullbridge Parish Council
- Georgia Arnold – Committees Clerk, Saffron Walden Town Council
- Kaaren Berry – Clerk, Toppesfield Parish Council
- Carol Harback – Clerk, Langham Parish Council
- Lorraine Ellis – Clerk, Nazeing Parish Council

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE

Develop your career, support your council and strengthen your community

Community Governance Degree

A big congratulations goes to Lisa Courtney, Town Clerk of Saffron Walden Town Council who was awarded her Community Governance Degree in March 2024 with First Class Honours.



Online Training Programme

Our online training programme with Nimble that was launched back in February 2020 has remained popular throughout 2023 & 2024 as clerks, officers & councillors were able to continue to access & complete training in their own time. We now have a total of 22 online introductory courses available.

Training Report



Short Courses

Our bespoke short course programme to parish & town councils proved popular during 2023/2024 with our tutors going out to deliver planning, and refresher courses for the whole council & chair training courses. Our councillor training tutors also went out to certain Districts in the County and delivered bespoke councillor Training Days 1 & 2 to Councils.

Essex Clerk's Bursary

Our Essex Clerk's Bursary scheme remains eligible to all clerks with a parish council precept of below £80,000. The bursary scheme enables & supports the smaller council clerks to attend training courses & to also complete their CiLCA qualification. 75% of the training costs are then refunded back to the council upon completion of courses. During 2023 & 2024 we awarded a total of 42 bursaries. Bursary application forms can be found on the EALC website & for all inquiries please contact Pearl Willcox for more information.

Councillor Bursary

The association's Councillor Training Bursary Scheme was launched in November 2023. The bursary limit is 75% of the cost of the training course, to a limit of £240 in any one financial year per councillor. Councillors from councils with an annual budgeted income of under £80,000 are now eligible to apply.

The Councillor Training Bursary is a scheme that aims to support councillors in their professional development and training. The purpose of the bursary is to help councillors cover the costs of attending training that can enhance their skills and knowledge in their role as elected representatives.

The Councillor Training Bursary is an excellent way for councils to support their elected representatives in developing their skills and knowledge, which can ultimately benefit the community they serve.

What have we planned for training in 2024/2025

As always our aim will be to provide & make available the most up-to-date training for our membership during the week, evenings & Saturdays. This coming year will see the introduction of new courses. We are currently in the process of refreshing more of our finance courses. This will enable us to offer more finance courses depending on the size of the council. A Project Management course is also being prepared. We will also be working with Breakthrough Communications & Aubergine providing valuable training and insights to our membership on communication strategies.

Pearl Willcox CiLCA
Executive County Training Officer

Communications Report



Sophie Wolker BScHons

Office and Communications Co-ordinator

Effective communication is crucial to the Association's success, as it enables the sharing of information, best practices, and resources to our member councils.

By facilitating open and transparent communication, the association can provide timely support and guidance to its member councils, helping them to stay up-to-date with changes in legislation, policy, and best practice. This enables local councils to make informed decisions, improve their services, and better serve their communities. Additionally, effective communication helps to build trust and confidence among member councils, ensuring that they feel supported and valued by the association.

Re-branding

As Office and Communications Co-ordinator, my targeted achievement for 2023/24 was the implementation of a re-branding initiative to refresh and modernise our association's image. This project involved a range of components, including designing and developing a new brand style guide with the aim of creating a consistent tone across all communications.

One of the key aspects of this effort was creating new document templates. I used my background in marketing and IT to develop a range of templates through Canva to showcase our new visual style, including business letters, reports, and other documents. These templates have been widely adopted across the organisation, ensuring consistency and professionalism in all internal and external communications. These have enhanced our professional image and help make us more recognisable to our members, partners, and the wider community.

Communications Report



In addition to the document templates, I also developed targeted marketing campaigns to promote EALC membership, including posters and powerpoint presentations. Other campaigns included our AGM and partnership initiatives via regular email updates, social media posts and the EALC website. Through these efforts, we have been able to showcase the benefits of membership, including access to training and development opportunities, networking events, and exclusive resources.



New EALC Website

To further enhance member experience, I have re-launched the membership website that serves as a central hub for all member information and resources. The website is built on WordPress, which I learned through self-directed learning.

This has allowed me to customise the site's design and features. This has included a continually updated news section, event calendars and resource pages linked to our main partners such as Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and Essex County Council. This will allow members to make it easier to find what they need on various topics. I also work closely with other members of staff across the organisation to make sure information is kept up-to-date and relevant, keeping members engaged and informed about EALC's initiatives.

Mailchimp Analytics

As we had marked the one-year anniversary of our Association's adoption of Mailchimp, we have been able to reflect on the significant progress we've made in utilising this powerful email marketing platform. Over the past 12 months, we have leveraged Mailchimp's robust features to build relationships with our audience, streamline our communication efforts, and drive engagement. Our journey with Mailchimp has allowed us to collect valuable insights into our subscribers' preferences, behaviours, and demographics, providing us with a collection of data that can inform and optimise our communication strategies.

Total message count

134

Emails sent

44,709

Open rate

54%

Click rate

13%

Data from period July '23– March '24

Communications Report



Personal Development

As part of my ongoing commitment to professional development at the Association, I am pleased to announce that I am undertaking the CiLCA (Certificate in Local Council Administration) qualification. In addition, I have also attended regular training sessions on a range of topics with the support of our Executive County Training Officer, Pearl and therefore been able to apply theoretical knowledge to real-life scenarios in my work. I am committed to staying up-to-date with the latest developments in local government and continuing to provide high-quality support in my role at the Association.

Future Focus

As I reflect on my role within the Essex Association of Local Councils, I am excited to contribute to the implementation of a new CRM system that will revolutionise our data management and security. In the coming months, I plan to research and secure an organisation to develop CRM system that leverages advanced analytics and reporting capabilities to inform our decision-making and enhance our overall operations. Additionally, we will launch a user-friendly membership portal that provides online booking capabilities and easy access to valuable resources, empowering our members to engage more effectively with our organisation.

As we approach the EALC's 80th AGM and Conference, I am proud to be playing a key role in ensuring its success. With attention to detail, I will coordinate logistics, work with keynote speakers and exhibitors, and develop and distribute effective communications to ensure a memorable and impactful event. As we celebrate this significant milestone, I am confident that our collective efforts will set the stage for continued growth and success for the EALC.



Funding Report



Throughout 2023/24 the EALC have continued to administrate various Grant Funding and Community Initiatives funding streams on behalf of Essex County Council.

The EALC, in close collaboration with Essex County Council (ECC), continues to serve as the administering agent for grant funding. This critical initiative addresses the challenges faced by Essex communities and residents during the current cost of living crisis.

In 2023/24 314 (2023: 459) successful applicants were awarded a total of £915,970 (2023: £797,703.50). The funding continued to support community groups, charities, organisations, parish and town councils to continue to deliver new services into the area in which they operate across Essex.

68 (2023: 128) Micro-Grants applications were awarded in 2023/24 to the value of £60,980 (2023: £59,705). In a change from previous years, there was just a single Microgrant fund available with awards increased to a maximum award of £1,000 (up from £500). Successful projects included IT upgrades, cookery workshops, provision of a freezer for a community hub, community center refurbishment, raised bed in allotments to help with disabilities, a repair cafe, YOGA walk talk sessions, community engagement project.

There were 34 (2023: 27) successful applicants to the Community Initiative Fund (CIF) awarded in 2023/24 to the value of £220,997 (2023: £170,908). The successful projects included refurbishments & renovations to a village hall, provision of cookery courses, drama and theatre projects, creating community hubs, installation of solar panels on the village hall, a community minibus, Telling Tales - A Storytelling Festival in Libraries, Schools & Community Settings in Tendring.

2 (2023: 3) CIF Emergency grants awarded to the value of £7,642 (2023: £19,690). Grants are awarded on an exceptional basis on the grounds of extreme urgency. These grants have helped organisations with various urgent costs. Successful applications include funding towards providing a replacement van for a community food bank, a replacement outside shelter at a therapy center and a boiler replacement.

A total of 188 (2023: 269) applicants were awarded Food support and winter warmth funding of £596,525 (2023: £532,403). The funding went towards projects aimed at supporting those who have been adversely impacted by cost of living rises. Assisting food banks, food pantries, community organisations and voluntary groups in providing vital food support and winter warmth essentials packages to those most in need.



The EALC administrated the funding for Ride London-Essex. £29,825 (2023: £14,997) was awarded to 22 (2023: 32) applicants to assist in supporting the event and riders.



Member Enquiries Report

Ann Wood LLB(Hons) CertHe Local Policy DMS

Head of Member Enquiries

I joined the EALC team in November 2022 as the Head of Member Enquiries, having been a clerk for over 25 years and also serving as an elected member on the parish council in my home village for 10 years. I deal with enquiries from the members, which cover many subjects and issues and since starting in the office, there has been a steady flow of enquiries from member councils and their clerks. We re-introduced and have continued the Legal E.Bulletin, which has been very well received.

Legal Summary

EALC is very proud to continue to provide member council support to clerks and councillors on varied subjects across the sector, on a daily basis. Mapping the data has enabled us to understand where member councils need the support most. This means that EALC can work closely with our partners Worknest, Essex Legal Services, the Parkinson Partnership, Breakthrough Communications and Aubergine and our tutors, to ensure advice is available on specialist subjects, such as HR, VAT, Data Protection and Freedom of Information and that new courses are introduced into the training programme. New courses have been created this year as a direct outcome of capturing data delivering specific training on HR, clerk drop in sessions, Data Protection and Freedom of Information and website accessibility.

Legal Statistics

Between the 1st of April 2023 and 31st of March 2024, we responded to our members giving support and guidance over the telephone and by e-mail, supporting enquiries with Legal Topic Notes and other documentation.

Total amount of legal enquiries: 502 (2022-23 – 426)

Of these:

444 were resolved by the EALC (88%)
20 were referred to NALC Legal team (4%)
27 were referred to Worknest (5%)
4 were referred to Essex Legal Services (1%)
3 were referred to The Parkinson Partnership (1%)
4 were referred to Breakthrough Communications (1%)

Basildon	15 (6)	Epping	65 (52)
Braintree	83 (59)	Maldon	40 (44)
Brentwood	14 (16)	Rochford	16 (17)
Castlepoint	0 (0)	Southend	8 (0)
Chelmsford	42 (39)	Tendring	61 (28)
Colchester	86 (58)	Uttlesford	66 (107)

Local Council Awards Scheme Achievements



The EALC continues to support parish and town councils in their development and improvement efforts. We recognise that local councils are at the heart of their communities, giving neighborhoods a voice and involving residents in decisions that affect them. The Local Council Award Scheme provides assurance to residents that their council is well-run, and the EALC encourages all councils to consider this accreditation.

The Local Council Award Scheme celebrates the successes of the best local councils and provides a framework to support all councils in reaching their full potential. This scheme allows councils to demonstrate that they meet sector standards, as assessed by their peers, and to establish conditions for ongoing improvement. Councils can apply for accreditation at the Foundation, Quality, or Quality Gold level.

Congratulations to the following councils who have achieved this prestigious award. We understand the significant effort involved in attaining this accreditation, particularly the hard work of the clerk to the council. Well done!

Awards Achieved between April 2023 - March 2024:

Great Maplestead Parish Council - Foundation



Great Waltham Parish Council - Foundation

Hullbridge Parish Council - Foundation



Local Council Awards Scheme Achievements



Saffron Walden Town Council - Quality Gold



Woodham Walter Parish Council - Foundation

Setting the Standards

Essex proudly maintains one of the highest numbers of Local Council Award accreditations in the UK. Our Chair has also been chair of the Essex Accreditation Panel since 2014, with the Vice-Chairs taking immense pride in personally presenting Foundation, Quality, and Quality Gold certificates to councils throughout the county. This recognition celebrates the excellent work undertaken by our local councils.

Members who have registered for a renewal of a Local Council Award application. Once the full application has been accessed by the NALC triage team, it will be assessed by the Essex Accreditation Panel.

NALC Figures 2023/24

	Foundation	Quality	Quality Gold
National figures (May 2024)	122	50	51
Essex Figure 23/24	6	0	2



Health & Wellbeing and Climate Action



Our commitment to addressing the Climate Emergency and promoting Health & Wellbeing remains steadfast. ECC's funding has enabled us to offer an Employee Assistance Programme through Health Assured to provide confidential professional or personal wellbeing support for all member councils.

The EALC Chair actively participates in the ECC Health & Wellbeing Board and the Independent Climate Commission, advocating for comprehensive initiatives in these vital areas in order to support our membership.

The Health, Wellbeing & Climate movement is fundamental to Essex County Council's strategic plan. For this movement to succeed, local councils must engage in their activities. By involving the closest level of government with the citizenry, Health & Wellbeing can have a real, positive impact on people's lives.

The EALC therefore, enthusiastically supports initiatives of local government which encourage residents to understand the benefits of Health, Wellbeing & Climate. Town & parish councils need to support their communities by providing information and signposting. Our new website has dedicated pages full of resources for both Health, Wellbeing, and Climate support.

Part of your member affiliation for 2023/24 includes access to Health Assured for the clerks of all our member councils. Health Assured is an employee assistance program that provides compassionate care and support to over 15 million lives across 50,000 organisations. The EALC is committed to providing Health and Wellbeing support across the sector and this program helps us to deliver this.

The EALC has championed and supported the excellent work being done by our parish and town councils, particularly in integrating Health and Wellbeing into their budgeting and precept planning. It is essential to consider each proposal not only in terms of climate efficiency but also in health, as these aspects are intrinsically linked.



Health & Wellbeing and Climate Action



The EALC sought to form a new collaborative and has partnered with key organisations, in the NHS including the West Essex Health & Care Partnership, Mid and South Essex Integrated Care System, and has been part of the NHS Community Assembly Co-Production Steering Group. EALC also partners with The Essex Climate Action Commission and the Local Nature Partnership and has supported other initiatives such as the Carbon Cutting Essex App and Love Essex. This collaboration has opened a dialogue with Alliances and other Health, Wellbeing & Climate Organisations across the county, advocating for Local Council representation.



Key initiatives and achievements of the EALC include:

- An Employee Assistance Program for all the clerks of all member councils through Health Assured.
- Collaborating with Alliances and Integrated Care Services to ensure local council representation and influence from the ground up.
- Promoting best practices for local councils to use as examples.
- Offering free partner training.
- Household support fund administered on behalf of Essex County Council.
- Webinars on Local Nature Recovery on behalf of County.
- Through these efforts, the EALC continues to support and encourage local councils to engage with Health, Wellbeing & Climate initiatives, ensuring a healthier and more sustainable future for our communities.

Partnerships



Networking and collaboration for Member Councils

National Association of Local Councils

The Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) is affiliated with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), which works on behalf of Essex councils to provide essential services and support.

This includes legal advice, training, and referrals for desktop advice. Legal topic notes and briefings are also available through the NALC website, professionally provided by NALC solicitors.

The development team is dedicated to lobbying the government on policy matters and influencing ministers to achieve the best outcomes for the sector. The strong leadership of the NALC National Assembly and the Chief Executive Officer ensures that the needs, wants, and aspirations of our local communities are met.



Essex County Council

For many years, Essex County Council has fostered a strong working relationship with the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) and the town, parish, village, and community councils of Essex. This partnership continues to flourish with new initiatives, and the EALC is playing an increasingly significant role in developing new schemes and ideas.

Their financial sponsorship and various forms of support have been invaluable to the sector. The EALC wishes to express its gratitude for this continued partnership. Together, we can make a real difference in our local communities.



Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner

Since the introduction of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner (PFCC) into Essex's policing family, a strong and supportive partnership has developed between the EALC and the PFCC. Policing and fire and rescue are crucial services that ensure the safety of Essex residents and significantly impact community and individual well-being.



The EALC is proud to facilitate connections between the PFCC and Essex communities through its communications infrastructure. The EALC fully supports the efforts of the PFCC, the Chief Constable, and the Chief Fire Officer in their vital work.

Essex Legal Services

The EALC collaborates with Essex Legal Services to make referrals on behalf of member councils. This partnership allows Essex councils to commission work that requires a solicitor to act on their behalf. These services have been utilised over the past year, and councils are encouraged to request a quotation. Please note that this is a paid service, affiliation with the EALC secures a reduced fee.



Partnerships



WorkNest

The EALC has partnered with WorkNest to provide support with Employment Law, HR and Health & Safety expertise, supporting our members to build safe, legally-compliant and productive teams.



WorkNest offers proactive and personalised services that include responsive advice and innovative digital solutions, all delivered by a dedicated and motivated team. Their services are tailored to help you tackle challenges, ensure compliance with regulations, and meet objectives.

To refer to WorkNest, please reach out to the EALC via email at legal@ealc.gov.uk.

Health Assured

An EAP is a confidential employee benefit designed to help you deal with personal and professional problems that could be affecting your home life or work life, health and general wellbeing.



Our EAP service provides a complete support network that offers expert advice and compassionate guidance 24/7, covering a wide range of issues. We strongly believe in providing an EAP service that offers not only reactive support when someone needs it but also proactive and preventative support to deliver the best possible outcomes.

At Health Assured we pride ourselves on offering the highest level of service quality, assured through the calibre of people we employ and our exceptional clinical governance infrastructure. Balancing everyday life with the requirements of work and home can create pressures for all of us. Work is a large part of people's lives. With increasing working hours as well as technological developments to support remote working, it is vital to ensure that there's a productive, healthy environment that is conducive to a healthy lifestyle.

Health Assured, in partnership with Essex Association of Local Councils, to provide all member council Clerks with complimentary access to an enhanced Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) to assist you in achieving this balance.

Essex Rural Partnership & Rural Community Council of Essex

The RCCE is an independent charity helping people and communities throughout rural Essex build a sustainable future. They manage the ERP which brings together strategic partnerships in the public, private and voluntary sectors to co-ordinate action on the major economic, social and environmental issues facing rural Essex.



Established in 2002 in the wake of the Foot & Mouth crisis, the ERP provides a forum to exchange information to encourage a collaborative response to important policy issues. It is one of 17 member's of DEFRA's National, Rural & Farming Network, which it has used to engage directly with Government.

Financial Statements



ACCOUNTS

Statement of Income and retained Earnings for year ended 31 March
2024

	2024	2023
	£	£
Turnover	378,262	325,744
Cost of sales	(312,132)	(252,256)
Gross profit	66,130	73,488
Administrative expenses	(35,577)	(39,566)
Operating (loss)/profit	30,553	33,922
Depreciation	(4,339)	(4,309)
(Loss)/profit before tax	26,214	29,613
(Loss)/profit after tax	26,214	29,613
Retained earnings at the beginning of the year	31,982	35,123
Profit (Loss) for the year	26,214	29,613
Transferred to other reserves	(4,893)	(32,754)
Retained earnings at the end of the year	53,303	31,982

Financial Statements



Balance sheet as at 31 March 2024

		2024	2023
	Note	£	£
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	2	4,549	8,618
		<u>4,549</u>	<u>8,618</u>
Current assets			
Stock	3	1,419	5,674
Debtors: amounts falling due within one year	4	11,984	13,746
Cash at bank and in hand	5	373,713	426,512
		<u>387,116</u>	<u>445,932</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	6	(70,615)	(73,520)
Net current assets		<u>316,501</u>	<u>372,412</u>
Reserves held on behalf of ECC	7	<u>(54,844)</u>	<u>(111,584)</u>
Net assets		<u>266,206</u>	<u>269,446</u>
Capital and reserves			
Restructuring reserve	8	50,492	72,964
Termination reserve	9	119,000	119,000
Repairs & renewals reserve	10	5,500	5,500
Legal expenses reserve	11	9,625	10,000
Councillor training bursary	12	28,286	30,000
Accumulated fund		53,303	31,982
		<u>266,206</u>	<u>269,446</u>

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Executive committee and were signed on its behalf on 23rd May 2024.

The notes on pages 29 to 34 form part of these financial statements.

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024

1. Accounting policies

1.1 Basis of preparation of financial statements The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention unless otherwise specified within these accounting policies. The presentation currency is pounds sterling. The following principal accounting policies have been applied:

1.2 Revenue recognition Revenue is the amount derived from ordinary activities and is measured at fair value of the consideration receivable. Revenue is reduced for issued credit notes and is stated net of vat. Revenue from affiliation fees is recognised when all the conditions are satisfied.

- The amount of revenue can be measured reliably
- It is probable that economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the Association
- Costs incurred in respect of the transaction can be measured reliably.
- Association retains managerial involvement to the degree usually associated with services provided in respect of Subscription sold.
- Revenue from sale of publications and training are recognised when the invoice is raised.
- Revenue from funding administration is recognized on receipt.
- Revenue from grants awarded by ECC is recognised on receipt of their purchase order.

1.3 Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets under the cost model are stated at historical cost less accumulated depreciation and any accumulated impairment losses.

Historical cost includes expenditure that is directly attributable to bringing the asset to the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management.

Depreciation is charged so as to allocate the cost of assets less their residual value over their estimated useful lives, using the straight-line method.

Depreciation is provided on the following basis:

Fixtures and fittings	-5 years on a straight line basis
Office equipment	- 3 years on a straight line basis

The assets' residual values, useful lives and depreciation methods are reviewed, and adjusted prospectively if appropriate, or if there is an indication of a significant change since the last reporting date.

Gains and losses on disposals are determined by comparing the proceeds with the carrying amount and are recognised in profit or loss.

1.4 Debtors

Short-term debtors are measured at transaction price, less any impairment.

1.5 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash is represented by cash in hand and deposits with financial institutions repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours.

1.6 Creditors

Short-term creditors are measured at the transaction price.

1.7 Taxation

The Association is exempt from income tax on its income under section 838 of the Income Tax Act 2007 and from corporation tax under section 984 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010.

Financial Statements



Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 - contd.

2. Tangible fixed assets

	Fixtures and fittings	Office equipment	Total
Cost or valuation	£	£	£
At 1 April 2023	9,397	21,858	31,255
Additions	-	270	270
Disposals	-	-	-
At 31 March 2024	9,397	22,128	31,525
Depreciation			
At 1 April 2023	9,397	13,240	22,637
Charge for the year on owned assets	-		
At 31 March 2024	9,397	4,339	4,339
		17,579	26,976
Net book value			
At 31 March 2024	-	4,549	4,549
At 31 March 2023	-	8,618	8,618

3. Stock	2024 £	2023 £
Publications	369	3,844
Gavels	1,050	1,830
	1,419	5,674

Financial Statements



Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 - contd.

4. Debtors

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade debtors	9,504	9,906
Other debtors	506	580
Prepayments and accrued income	1,974	3,260
	<u>11,984</u>	<u>13,746</u>

5. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash at bank and in hand	373,713	426,512
	<u>373,713</u>	<u>426,512</u>

At the year end Cash balances held on behalf of Essex County Council were £74,264 (2023: £129,744)

6. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year

Trade creditors	3,318	2,782
Other taxation and social security	3,038	3,695
Other creditors	1,424	1,291
Accruals and deferred income	62,835	65,752
	<u>70,615</u>	<u>73,520</u>

7. Reserves held on behalf of Essex County Council

	2024 £	2023 £
Clerks Bursary Reserve	10,093	14,934
Potential New Councils	2,493	2,493
Maldon Bursary Reserve	-	13
CIF & Microgrants	35,121	31,594
Ride London	5,444	35,020
Foodbank Funds	1,693	4,443
Winter Warmth & Welcome	<u>-</u>	<u>23,087</u>
Total	<u>54,844</u>	<u>111,584</u>

Financial Statements

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 - contd.



8. Restructuring Reserve

Balance brought forward 2023	72,964
Transfers	-
Funds spent in year	<u>(22,472)</u>
Balance carried forward 2024	<u>50,492</u>

Earmarked reserves for the costs of restructuring the EALC as an organisation and a premises to meet evolving market needs such as hybrid training. Release of reserve in the year for the installation of new audio/visual equipment in the training room and the first installment on Subscriber CRM software.

9. Termination Reserve

Termination reserve created in 2020/21. Earmarked reserve to cover costs of redundancy should the EALC cease to trade.

10. Repairs & Renewals Reserve

Balance brought forward 2023	5,500
Transfers	4,906
Funds spent in year	<u>(4,906)</u>
Balance carried forward 2024	<u>5,500</u>

Earmarked reserves for repairs and renewals. Repairs in year to boiler and replacement of blinds.

11. Legal Expenses Reserve

	2024 £
Balance brought forward 2023	10,000
Transfers	-
Funds spent in year	<u>(375)</u>
Balance carried forward 2024	<u>9,625</u>

Financial Statements

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 - contd.



12. Councillor training bursary

Balance brought forward 2023	30,000
Transfers	-
Funds spent in year	<u>(1,714)</u>
Balance carried forward 2024	<u><u>28,286</u></u>

13. Pension scheme

EALC participates in two pension schemes, administered by the Essex Pension Fund and by Nest, on behalf of its employees- the EALC Pension Scheme is administered by the Essex Pension Fund and is part of the Local Government Pension Scheme. The smoothed market asset valuation of the fund as at 31 March 2022, the latest available valuation was £8.1bn. Liabilities were valued at £7.92bn leaving a surplus of £182m in the Fund at the valuation date. The surplus of £182m represents a funding level of 102%. However, if the EALC funding position was considered on a cessation basis, it would show a funding deficit. Recovery of this deficit is targeted in line with the Fund's FSS and is projected to be fully funded after a recovery period length of no more than 18 years from 1st April 2023. This matter is being addressed and additional annual contributions are being made to extinguish the deficit. The contribution required for the coming year to 31 March 2025 is £5,180.

Financial Statements



Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 - contd.

Detailed profit and loss account for the year ended 31 March 2024

	Note	2024 £	2023 £
Turnover			
Training Income		136,510	99,032
Affiliation fees		88,463	84,670
ECC Grants		88,365	78,105
PFCC Grants		10,000	10,000
Grant Funding Income		31,701	34,000
AGM and Other Income		15,785	17,261
Interest received		7,438	2,676
		<u>378,262</u>	<u>325,744</u>
Cost of sales			
Employee Costs		225,405	198,163
Tutors		55,332	27,481
Services provided costs		11,773	6,744
Premises costs		19,622	19,868
		<u>312,132</u>	<u>252,256</u>
Administration expenses			
Office Costs		9,735	9,238
IT costs		4,591	7,976
Subscriptions		466	425
Committee Expenses		4,070	2,894
AGM		10,927	13,286
Auditors' remuneration		1,550	1,600
Employee Assistance		3,830	3,840
Bank charges		408	307
		<u>35,577</u>	<u>39,566</u>

EA (2013) Ltd



EA (2013) Ltd Statement of Income & Expenditure as at 31 March 2024

Note	31/03/2024	31/03/2023
No. Income		
EALC contribution to rent	7,500.00	7,250.00
ECC contribution to rent	21,000.00	21,000.00
1 EALC re-imbursement (for bank charges)	72.00	72.00
	<u>28,572.00</u>	<u>28,322.00</u>
TOTAL NET INCOME	<u>£28,572.00</u>	<u>£28,322.00</u>
Expenditure		
Rent	28,500.00	28,250.00
Bank Charges (service charge)	72.00	72.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>28,572.00</u>	<u>28,322.00</u>
	<u><u>£28,572.00</u></u>	<u><u>£28,322.00</u></u>
SURPLUS / DEFICIT	<u><u>£0.00</u></u>	<u><u>£0.00</u></u>

EA (2013) Ltd Statement of Financial Position at 31 March 2024

Note	31/03/2024	31/03/2023
No. Current Assets		
2 Debtors	56.00	72.00
3 Payments in Advance	7,125.00	7,125.00
Bank Account	44.00	28.00
	<u>7,225.00</u>	<u>7,225.00</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>£7,225.00</u>	<u>£7,225.00</u>
Current Liabilities		
4 Receipts in Advance	7,125.00	7,125.00
	<u>7,125.00</u>	<u>7,125.00</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES	<u>7,125.00</u>	<u>7,125.00</u>
NET ASSETS	<u><u>100.00</u></u>	<u><u>100.00</u></u>
SHAREHOLDERS FUNDS		
Balance brought forward	100.00	100.00
	<u><u>£100.00</u></u>	<u><u>£100.00</u></u>

EA (2013) Ltd Notes to accompany the EA (2013) Ltd Year End Accounts

No.

- Bank Charges for re-imbursement £72 from 203/24 Debtor - is EALC bank charges to be re-imbursed of £56 Receipts in advance - comprising ECC rent grant of £5250, EALC contribution to rent in advance of £1875. Total sum of £7125
- Payment in advance - comprising rent on 42B High Street

