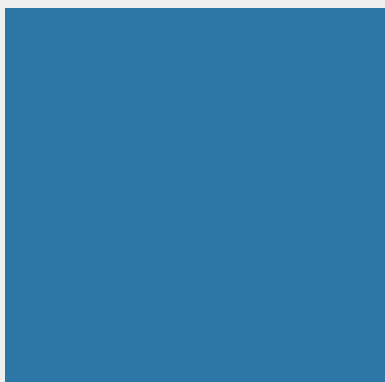


Annual Report



2024-25



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Executive Committee

Chair

Cllr Mike Eldred

Vice - Chair

Cllr Peter Davey

Vice - Chair

Cllr John Gili-Ross

Chair of Finance

Cllr Stephanie Gill

District Representatives

Cllr Jim Devlin, *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 & Clerk, Ms. Beverley Rumsey, *Epping Forest District*

Cllr Abdul Hafiz, *Maldon District*

Cllr Frank Belgrove, & Clerk, Ms. Jennifer Spear, *Tendring District*

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

Cllr Angline Marriott & Cllr Steve May, *Rochford District*

Cllr Alan Acott, *Castlepoint District*

Cllr Bernard Arscott, *Southend District*

President

Mrs. Jennifer Tolhurst, Lord Lieutenant of Essex

Vice Presidents

Mr Mick Page

Mrs Anne Brown

Cllr Sheila Jackman MBE

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 Mike Eldred

Chair of the EALC Executive Committee

It is my privilege to present the Annual Report for the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) for the financial year from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Since assuming the position of Chair in November 2024, I have observed with pride the unwavering commitment, innovation, and professionalism that characterise our organisation's support of Parish and Town Councils across Essex.

National Recognition: Finalist - County Association of the Year 2024

In February 2025, the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) recognised EALC as a finalist in the County Association of the Year category at the Star Council Awards, held at the House of Lords. This significant honour reflects the dedication of our staff and the strength of our membership. I would like to extend my gratitude to everyone whose contributions made this achievement possible.

Our Core Priorities

Our principal mission remains the provision of high-quality training and comprehensive support services for councils. We are continuously enhancing our professional training programmes, equipping councillors, clerks, and stakeholders with essential skills and knowledge. Our sessions, led by qualified experts, cover areas such as technical skills, regulations, leadership, and communication. Based on member feedback, we are expanding our localised training program and will select venues across the county according to registration demand.

Navigating Change: Reorganisation, Devolution, and the Role of Parish and Town Councils

This past year has witnessed considerable developments in central government's approach to local governance. The publication of the English Devolution White Paper and the initiation of an ambitious programme to restructure local government in England, including the proposed abolition of the two-tier system and the transition to unitary authorities, are expected to streamline services, reduce costs, and strengthen accountability.

Nevertheless, these reforms prompt important questions regarding localism and representation. Parish and town councils, which serve as the most direct and accessible point of contact for

Chair's Report



residents, have been largely omitted from core discussions. Despite references to “rewiring” relationships between principal authorities and local councils within the White Paper, specific details remain undefined.

Such ambiguity presents both challenges and opportunities. There are concerns that larger unitary authorities may increase the gap between decision-makers and communities. Reduced numbers of councillors and broader administrative areas could diminish the influence of local voices. Conversely, historical examples such as Cornwall demonstrate that unitarisation can empower parish and town councils, providing them with enhanced responsibilities and influence over local services.

The government’s promotion of Neighbourhood Area Committees (NACs) adds further complexity. Although NACs may include parish representatives, they are not directly elected and lack the democratic accountability fundamental to parish and town councils, raising concerns about democratic deficits and the sustainability of these models.

As we progress, it is critical that parish and town councils continue to play a leading role in community representation. Their capacity for swift, direct engagement and their responsiveness to residents’ needs make them indispensable to any future governance framework. The EALC will persist in advocacy for the sector, ensuring local perspectives shape the evolving landscape of local government.

Due to devolution and local government reform, we must review our strategic and action plans. Once reorganisation is finalised, we will introduce a new business plan and marketing strategy.

Acknowledging Our Team

The accomplishments of EALC are a direct result of the dedication and professionalism demonstrated by Charlene Slade and her team, with a special mention for our Deputy CEO and Financial Controller Stephanie Robinson. Their extensive expertise in training, communications, professional consultancy, and finance has provided significant support to our members. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the EALC Vice-Chairs and Executive Members for their ongoing commitment to effectively representing the interests of all Essex Parish and Town councils and the EALC as a whole.

Continued Commitment

Since assuming the role of Chair in November 2024, I have remained fully committed to supporting our proactive staff and enhancing the delivery of high-quality services to our valued members. I would also like to express gratitude to Essex County Council (ECC) for its continued support during these financially challenging times. The effective management and oversight of various grants on behalf of ECC has enabled this process to benefit a broad range of organisations across the county.

Chair's Report



Our strong partnership with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) Roger Hirst has enabled the effective distribution of comprehensive bulletins and information to our members. I would also like to reaffirm our ongoing support for the emergency services and dedicated individuals who ensure the safety of our county.

Looking ahead, I am assured that the forthcoming year will bring sustained progress, underscored by the introduction of our new Business Plan and Marketing Strategy, the continued evolution of hybrid communications and innovative training programs, and improvements to our digital infrastructure to enhance member / EALC contact interaction made available through effective use of our Customer Relationship Management system.

Thank you for your enduring support.

Kind regards,
Cllr Mike Eldred
Chair, Essex Association of Local Councils

CEO Report– Our Successes



Charlene Slade AATQB CiLCA

EALC Chief Executive Officer

I am pleased to present this year's CEO Report, reflecting on our journey and achievements up to 31st March 2025. This has been a year of both celebration and challenge, and I remain proud of the resilience and dedication shown across our organisation.

Celebrating Success

A key highlight of the year was EALC being named Finalist County Association of the Year at the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Star Council Awards. This national recognition is a testament to the strength of our membership, the quality of our services, and the commitment of our team. Cllr Richard Collins from Braxted Parish Council was announced as winner in the Councillor of the Year category, which was extremely well deserved.

Training Excellence

Our training programme continues to grow in both scope and impact. We have expanded our course offerings, both in-house and online, with new modules developed by our expert tutors. These have supported councillors and clerks in developing essential skills and achieving professional qualifications. Our focus remains on delivering high-quality, relevant training that meets the evolving needs of our sector.

Local Council Award Scheme

We are proud to lead the country in supporting councils through the Local Council Award Scheme, which celebrates excellence in governance, community engagement, and continuous improvement. By March 2025, five member councils successfully completed the accreditation process—earning four Foundation Awards and one Quality Gold Award. These achievements reflect the sector's commitment to high standards and public service.

Looking Ahead

Despite the challenges, our commitment to supporting parish and town councils remains stronger than ever. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our dedicated team whose professionalism and passion continue to drive our work forward. Their roles are pivotal in delivering member services, responding to council enquiries, maintaining training excellence, and ensuring financial stability.

As we look to the future, we remain focused on strengthening our core services, embracing digital transformation, and advocating for the vital role of local councils in shaping resilient, empowered communities.

Thank you,

Charlene Slade, AATQB, CiLCA
Chief Executive Officer

CEO Report



April - June '24

Year at a glance

Introduction of two new finance courses, Treasury Management & Investments and Internal & External Audit.
New courses on VAT and Project Management.
New courses with Breakthrough Communications to focus on Communications & Community Engagement.

New course with Aubergine to focus on Website Accessibility.
The Association has responded to a total of 231 member enquiries to 15th May, in comparison to 189 the previous year.

The Councillor Training Bursary Grant criteria have been reviewed. The income limit has been increased from £25,000 to Councils with an annual budgeted income of under £80,000 now eligible to apply.

July - September '24

EALC became a supporter organisation for White Ribbon Initiative.

The EALC became a member of the Internal Audit Forum.
Member Enquiries reached 565.

Preparations are underway for the AGM and Conference for 2024 with key speakers and exhibitors.

October - December '24

Monitoring of CIF 2023/24 Projects: Oversight and progress tracking of funded projects to ensure compliance and successful delivery.

CIF 2024/25 Application Processing:

- Preparation and distribution of acceptance and rejection letters.
- Coordination of responses from successful applicants.

The Worknest advice service continues to be effective in supporting member councils with HR matters. Their Zoom webinars remain well-attended by Clerks and council members. Efforts are ongoing to encourage broader participation from member councils to further strengthen HR knowledge and support.

Star Council Award - Winner of Category Councillor of the Year for Essex 2024 - Cllr. Richard Collins. 2024 County Association of the Year Finalist.

January - March '25

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 11 awards, personally presented by the Chair and Vice-Chairs.

Chair of Finance Report



Cllr Stephanie M. Gill

Chair of Finance, EALC Sub-Committee

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.

It 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 support and financial commitment given over in 2024-25, enabling services to be delivered to the Parish and Town Sector.

The Association also thanks the PFCC for funds given over in 2024-25 relating to the stipend working partnership.

2024-25 saw further expenditure of £6,664 from restructuring reserves for the next stage in the development of the Subscriber CRM software.

The EALC Councillor Training Bursary, which had been opened up to Councils with a yearly income below £80,000, saw an increase in applications resulting in the awarding of £10,248 in bursaries.

The Association's activities for the year ended 31st March 2025 brought about a surplus of £29,345. As in '23-'24, this figure can be attributed to taking on extra grant administration for ECC in the year.

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

The Financial Statements of the Association's Accounts are presented also.

Working closely with the EALC Financial Controller, the Finance Sub-Committee discusses and monitors the ongoing performance of the Association, including any relating financial implications. It is responsible for delivering reports and recommendations to the Executive Committee. It meets regularly and has the ability to call extra meetings as required.

Risk Review

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

The insurance policy is reviewed annually per the adopted Financial Regulations.

Chair of Finance Report



Auditor

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

It will be proposed at the 2025 Annual General Meeting that Mr. Brown continues as the Auditor of the Association's account for a term of one year.

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 2026 is £5,380.

Moving Forwards

The announcement concerning Greater Essex Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation in November 2024 required the Association to look closely at its financial modelling to ensure that it will be able to continue to support Members with the services they value most, given an insecurity of future grant funding from our current grantors.

The lease for the Great Dunmow offices was due for renewal in August 2025 and it was determined to relocate the offices. As many are aware, the Dunmow offices were not accessible to all, thus it was difficult to bring in any income from the 'dead space' present on certain days. The relocation has also given the Association the opportunity to respond to its Members who had been expressing a preference for training to be delivered in locations across Essex.

The impact on the Association's finances of the required decisions taken will not be seen until the end of the '25-'26 and '26-'27 Financial Years.

Cllr. Stephanie M. Gill

Chair of Finance Sub-Committee

Financial Report



Stephanie Robinson ICAEW CiLCA

Financial Controller

The year ending 31st March 2025 has been a busy and challenging year for the EALC with course income of £126,563 (2024: £136,510) and Grant funding income of £36,549 (2024: £31,701) from the administration of food support funds.

Subscription income increased by just under 4% to £91,939 (2024: £88,463) due to a combination of the agreed increase of 3% and increasing electorate numbers.

There was an overall surplus of £29,345 (2024: £26,214) which was added to reserves

On behalf of Essex County Council, a total of £997,000 (2024: £916,000) of grants have been awarded in the 2024/25 financial year including 55 (2024: 68) micro-grants to the value of £49,173 (2024: £60,980) and Community Initiative Funds to the value of £249,788 (2024: £220,997).

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

£126,563

Funding Administration
Income

£36,549

Financial Report



The financial statements for the year ending 31st March 2025 can be found at pages 27-34. These accounts have been subject to an external audit by Trevor Brown (CPFA) on the 24th January 2025 and on 27th June 2025 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 2025.

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 2025 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.

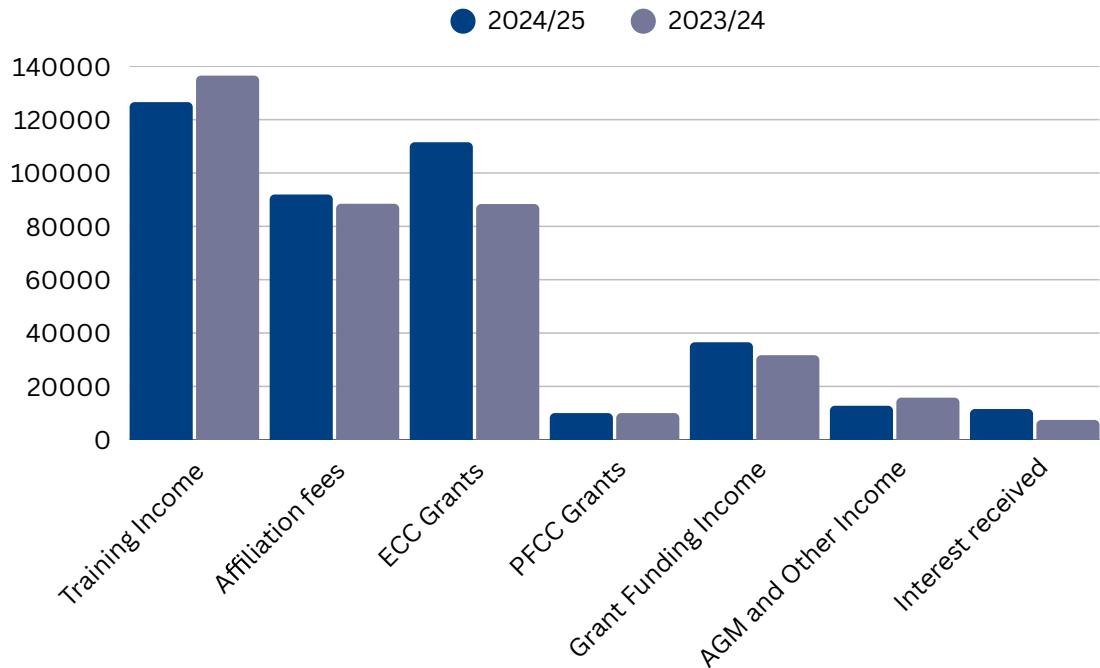
Trevor Brown

Trevor Brown
Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
2nd July 2025

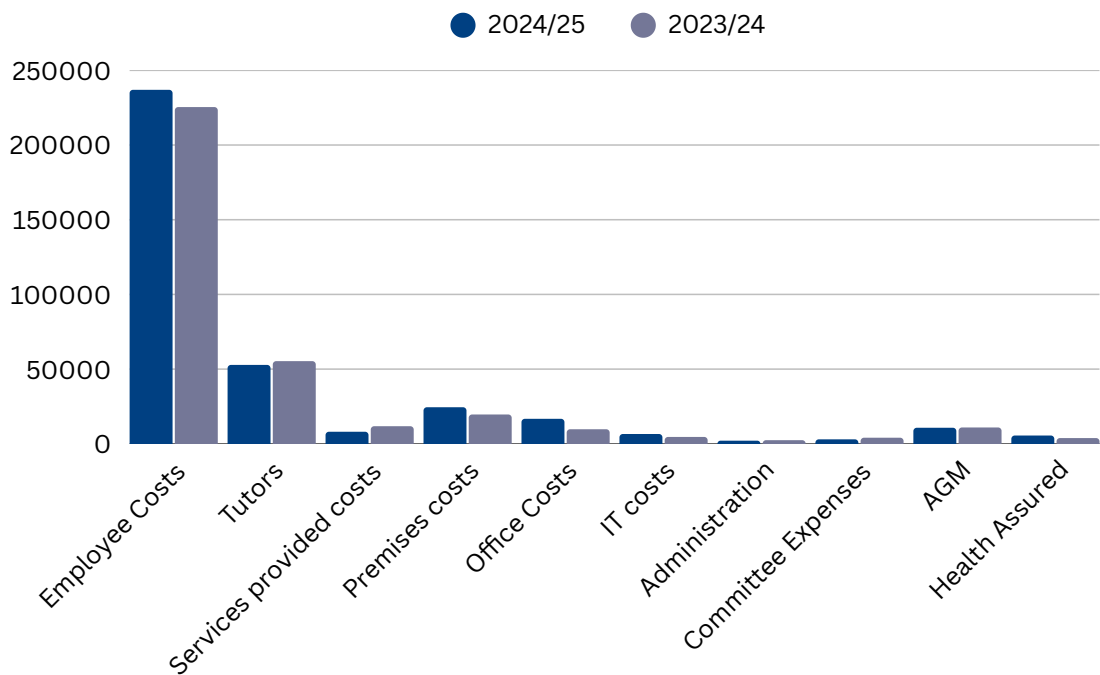
Financial Summary



Income 2024/25 & 2023/24



Expenditure 2024/25 & 2023/24



Training Overview



EALC training remains the Association’s most comprehensive and impactful service, providing essential support and development opportunities for member councils, councillors, and clerks.

Over the reporting period, EALC successfully delivered 85 separate training courses, consisting of 101 separate sessions, both in-house and online. This extensive programme reflects the Association’s commitment to providing high-quality, accessible learning opportunities for member councils, councillors, and clerks. The range and volume of courses offered demonstrate the continued demand for professional development and the value placed on EALC’s training services across Essex.

With a total of 1055 delegates (including multiple attendances) attending training, this is a record achievement for 2024/25.

In addition to this, there are other areas of learning and support, as well as opportunities for networking through workshops, webinars, and online forums.

The Association’s training programme continues to go from strength to strength each year. We work closely with our tutors to identify new course material, develop fresh content, and enhance delivery methods.

Our dedicated tutors are experts in parish and town council operations. They bring a wealth of experience and are paired in training sessions to provide a balanced perspective—covering both Clerk and Councillor or Chair roles.

EALC has established partnerships with sector-specific organisations to deliver high-quality training on key topics essential for managing successful parish and town councils, ultimately benefiting the communities they serve.

COURSE TITLE	DETAILS	SETS DELIVERED
Chairman Training- 3 day course	6 days in total	2
Councillor Training- 2 day course	Includes two set of Advanced Councillor Training- Next Steps (11 days in total)	6
Saturday & Evening Councillor Training	All Modules	12
New Clerks Course	26 new clerks trained	1
CiLCA Courses	16 Clerks & Officers	4
Planning Courses		4
Bespoke Courses	Including Allotments, Village Halls and Cemetery Management	3
Certificated Courses	Includes Playground, First Aid Health Safety	4
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. 2024/2025 saw another 12 clerks & officers successfully passing their qualification. We remain extremely proud of the Association as 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:

- **Marie Snell – Assistant Clerk - Harwich Town Council**
- **Kelly Wilde – Clerk - Galleywood**
- **Amanda Ward – Deputy Clerk - Stanway**
- **Katie Fletcher – Deputy Clerk - Nazeing**
- **Clare Lee – Clerk - Long Melford**
- **Kate Stacey – Clerk - Great Chesterford**
- **Claire Newton – Clerk - Tiptree**
- **Natalie Page – Town Clerk - Waltham Abbey TC**
- **Karen Frett – Town Clerk - Maldon TC**
- **Lynsey Ritchie-Fagg – Clerk - Thorrington**
- **Ruth Jubb - Clerk - Stisted**
- **Hazel Godfrey - Clerk - Rayne**

Community Governance Degree

A big congratulations goes to - Michelle Harper who gained a 1st Class BA Honours degree in Community Governance in March 2025.



COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE

Develop your career, support your council and strengthen your community

Online Training Programme

Our online training programme with Nimble that was launched back in February 2020 has remained popular throughout 2024 & 2025 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



Training and Development Overview

Short Courses

EALC's bespoke short course programme continued to be well-received across parish and town councils. Tutors delivered targeted sessions on planning, council-wide refresher training, and chair-specific courses. Additionally, Councillor Training Days 1 & 2 were provided in selected districts, tailored to meet local council needs.

Essex Clerk's Bursary

The Essex Clerk's Bursary scheme remains open to clerks from councils with a precept under £80,000. It supports attendance at training courses and completion of the CiLCA qualification. Councils are reimbursed 75% of training costs upon successful completion. In 2024/2025, a total of [42] bursaries were awarded. Application forms are available on the EALC website.

Councillor Training Bursary

Launched in November 2023, this scheme supports councillors from councils with an annual budgeted income under £80,000. It covers 75% of training costs, up to £240 per councillor per financial year. The bursary aims to enhance councillor skills and knowledge, contributing to more effective community representation.

Future Training Plans

EALC will continue to offer up-to-date training throughout the week, including evenings and Saturdays. Planned developments include:

- New course introductions
- Refreshed finance training, tailored to council size
- Project Management
- Collaboration with:
 - Breakthrough Communications
 - Aubergine to deliver training on communication strategies
 - WorkNest for specialist Human Resources
 - Networking forums for Clerks and Councillors



Communications Report



Communications Report – Financial Year 2024–2025

Effective communication remains central to the Essex Association of Local Councils' (EALC) mission. It enables the timely sharing of information, best practices, and resources, ensuring our member councils are well-informed, supported, and empowered to serve their communities.

Strengthening Communication Channels

Over the past year, we have continued to enhance our communication strategy to ensure transparency, consistency, and accessibility. Our efforts have focused on improving how we engage with members, partners, and stakeholders across multiple platforms.

Targeted Campaigns and Outreach

We launched several targeted marketing campaigns to promote EALC membership and key events, including the AGM and partnership initiatives. These campaigns were delivered through:

- Regular email updates
- Engaging social media posts
- Informative content on the EALC website
- Custom-designed posters and presentations

These efforts have helped showcase the benefits of membership, such as access to training, networking opportunities, and exclusive resources.

Email Engagement and Analytics

Marking one year of using Mailchimp, we've seen significant progress in our email communications.



Communications Report



In addition to the document templates, targeted marketing campaigns have been used 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, the re-launch of the membership website that serves as a central hub for all member information and resources. The website is built on WordPress, which will enable a Client Relationship Management System (CRM) to be implemented.

This has allowed EALC 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. All staff work closely 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 have reached marketing milestones, and have been able to reflect on the significant progress we've made in utilising this powerful email marketing platform, Mailchimp. 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. There is still more that can be done to improve the service that we offer to members.

Total message count

154

Emails sent

76,869

Open rate

49%

Click rate

9%

Data from period April'24– March '25

Funding Report



During the 2024/25 period, the EALC has continued to manage and deliver a range of grant funding programmes including the Community Initiative Fund on behalf of Essex County Council.

Working closely with Essex County Council (ECC), the EALC continues to act as the administering body for the Community Initiative Fund (CIF) — a vital programme aimed at supporting Essex communities.

In 2024/25, a total of 37 projects were successfully awarded funding through the Community Initiative Fund (CIF), amounting to £249,788.00. These grants supported a diverse range of community-focused initiatives, including the refurbishment and renovation of village halls and community centres, the expansion of community allotments and growing programmes, installation of outdoor gym equipment, and the enhancement of play areas through renewed play equipment. Additional funded projects included afterschool music sessions, footpath widening, a community bike restoration scheme to repurpose unused bicycles, and the creation/expansion of a car park to improve safe access for all users.

In 2024/25, a total of 55 Micro-Grants were awarded, amounting to £49,172.50. This funding stream, which offers smaller grants of up to £1,000, supported a wide variety of grassroots projects across Essex. Funded initiatives included the establishment of a Memory Café, the creation of a toddler group in an underserved area, operation of warm/welcome spaces, the purchase of a defibrillator, provision of hot Christmas meals, dementia-friendly sing-along sessions, development of a community garden, and inclusive dance performances featuring audio descriptions

Throughout the year, three rounds of Foodbank funding were released, totalling £723,230.00, with £698,040.00 awarded. This funding was strictly designated to support food banks, food pantries, community organisations, and voluntary groups in providing food to families and individuals experiencing food insecurity.



Member Support Report



Member Enquiries Summary

EALC is very proud to continue to provide member support to our councils, Councillors and Clerks on a variety of subjects. We work closely with our partner organisations to provide support and advise on a diverse range of topics. We thank the following for the invaluable specialist advice they are able to offer – NALC, Worknest, Essex Legal Services, the Parkinson Partnership, Breakthrough Communications and Aubergine and our Tutors.

Member Enquiries Statistics

From April 2024 to March 2025 we responded to 496 queries which are broken down below. This data will enable us to review the training courses we offer as well as FAQ information in our bulletin. With Governance, HR and Finance questions at an all time high, this determines the focus for further support through workshops and courses.

- Allotments - 6
- Cemeteries - 4
- Devolution - 2
- Finance - 76
- FOI/SAR - 19
- Governance - 235
- Health & Safety - 3
- HR - 101
- Legal - 38
- Planning - 8
- Website - 4



Local Council Awards Scheme Achievements

NALC has launched revised LCAS criteria to support parish and town councils in achieving excellence and continuous improvement. Key updates include:

- Renamed award levels: Bronze, Silver, and Gold (formerly Foundation, Quality, and Quality Gold).
- Civility and respect criteria: New requirements from Bronze level upwards, including pledges and policies promoting respectful conduct.
- Enhanced democratic mandate: Stronger emphasis on promoting elections and councillor engagement across all levels.
- New application process: All assessments from January 2025 must use the updated criteria form.

Local Council Awards Scheme Achievements



EALC continues to champion excellence in local governance through the **Local Council Award Scheme**, which supports councils in their development and celebrates high standards. The scheme provides public assurance of well-run councils and encourages continuous improvement through **Bronze, Silver, and Gold** accreditation levels.

Awards Achieved between April 2024 - March 2025:

Great Maplestead Parish Council - Foundation

South Woodham Ferrers - Foundation

Mistley Parish Council - Gold

Wickford Town Council - Foundation

West Bergholt - Gold

Good Easter Parish Council - Bronze

West Hanningfield Parish Council - Bronze

Wickham St Paul's - Bronze

Writtle Parish Council - Bronze

Good Easter Parish Council - Bronze



Writtle Parish Council - Bronze



Wickham St Paul's - Bronze



Local Council Awards Scheme Achievements



Council Recognition Awards

NALC offers a structured awards framework—Bronze, Silver, and Gold—to recognise excellence in governance, community engagement, and continuous improvement among parish and town councils.

- **Bronze Award:** Demonstrates compliance with essential standards and commitment to lawful operations and councillor/officer training.
- **Silver Award:** Recognises councils that exceed basic requirements, showing leadership and strong community engagement.
- **Gold Award:** Celebrates councils achieving the highest standards in governance, strategic planning, and innovative community leadership.

Setting the Standards

Essex proudly maintains one of the highest numbers of Local Council Award accreditations in the UK. Our Vice-Chair, Cllr. Peter Davey has also been chair of the Essex Accreditation Panel since 2014, with our Chair, Cllr. Mike Eldred along with Vice-Chair, Cllr. John Gili-Ross taking immense pride in personally presenting Bronze, Silver, and 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 2024/25

	Bronze	Silver	Gold
National figures	122	50	51
Essex Figure 24/25	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 & Vice-Chair actively participate 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.

Your membership affiliation fee 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



Strategic Collaborations

EALC has formed new partnerships with key organisations, including the West Essex Health & Care Partnership, Mid and South Essex Integrated Care System, and the NHS, to support local council engagement and keep members informed.

Additionally, EALC collaborates with the Essex Climate Action Commission, Local Nature Partnership, and supports initiatives such as the Carbon Cutting Essex App and Love Essex. These partnerships have fostered dialogue with alliances and organisations across the county, advocating for local council representation in Health, Wellbeing, and Climate initiatives.



Key initiatives and achievements of the EALC include:

- An Employee Assistance Program for all the clerks of all member councils through Health Assured.
- 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.

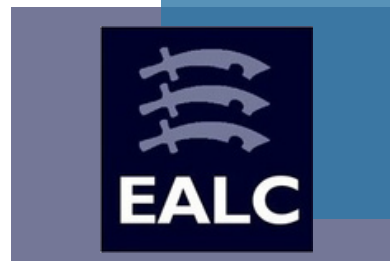
Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner

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 staffing team.

Health Assured

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



The EAP service provides a complete support network that offers expert advice and compassionate guidance 24/7, covering a wide range of issues. They 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.

Health Assured we pride themselves on offering the highest level of service quality, assured through the calibre of people they employ and their exceptional clinical governance infrastructure. Balancing everyday life with the requirements of work and home can create pressures for all . 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, will provide all member Council Clerks with complimentary access to an enhanced Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) to assist them in achieving this balance.

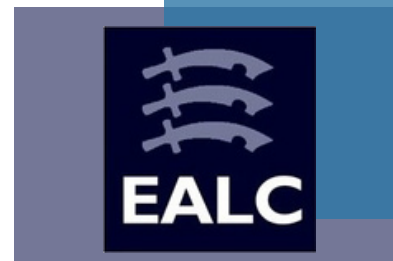
Essex Rural Partnership & Rural Community Council of Essex

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 members 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 2025

	2025	2024
	£	£
Turnover	400,835	378,262
Cost of sales	(322,300)	(312,132)
Gross profit	78,535	66,130
Administrative expenses	(44,641)	(35,576)
Operating (loss)/profit	33,894	30,554
Depreciation	(4,549)	(4,339)
(Loss)/profit before tax	29,345	26,215
(Loss)/profit after tax	29,345	26,215
Retained earnings at the beginning of the year	53,304	31,982
Profit (Loss) for the year	29,345	26,215
Transferred to other reserves		(4,893)
Retained earnings at the end of the year	82,649	53,304

Financial Statements



Balance sheet as at 31 March 2025

		2025	2024
		£	£
Fixed assets	Note		
Tangible assets	2	-	4,549
		<u>-</u>	<u>4,549</u>
Current assets			
Stock	3	720	1,419
Debtors: amounts falling due within one year	4	13,740	11,984
Cash at bank and in hand	5	545,980	373,713
		<u>560,440</u>	<u>387,116</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	6	(7,888)	(38,615)
Net current assets		<u>552,552</u>	<u>348,501</u>
Reserves held on behalf of ECC	7	<u>(265,989)</u>	<u>(74,258)</u>
Net assets		<u>286,563</u>	<u>278,792</u>
Capital and reserves			
Clerks Bursary			
Potential New Councils		11,893	10,093
Restructuring reserve	8	2,493	2,493
Termination reserve	9	52,490	50,492
Repairs & renewals reserve	10	119,000	119,000
Legal expenses reserve	11	0	5,500
Councillor training bursary	12	0	9,625
Councillor training bursary		18,038	28,286
Accumulated fund		82,649	53,303
		<u>286,563</u>	<u>278,792</u>

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Executive committee and were signed on its behalf on 10th July 2025.

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

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2025

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 2025 - contd.

2. Tangible fixed assets

	Fixtures and fittings	Office equipment	Total
Cost or valuation	£	£	£
At 1 April 2024	9,397	21,128	31,525
Additions	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-
At 31 March 2025	9,397	22,128	31,525
Depreciation			
At 1 April 2024	9,397	17,579	26,976
Charge for the year on owned assets	-		
	9,397	4,549	4,549
At 31 March 2025		22,128	31,525
Net book value			
At 31 March 2024	-	4,549	4,549
At 31 March 2025	-	-	-

3. Stock

	2025 £	2024 £
Publications	-	369
Gavels	720	1,050
	720	1,419

Financial Statements



Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2025 - contd.

4. Debtors

	2025 £	2024 £
Trade debtors	4,091	9,504
Other debtors	525	506
Prepayments and accrued income	9,124	1,974
	<u>13,740</u>	<u>11,984</u>

5. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash at bank and in hand	545,980	373,713
	<u>545,980</u>	<u>373,713</u>

At the year end Cash balances held on behalf of Essex County Council were £265,901.65 (2024: £74,264)

6. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year

Trade creditors	2,191	3,318
Other taxation and social security	2,230	3,038
Other creditors	1,214	1,424
Accruals and deferred income	2,253	30,835
	<u>7,888</u>	<u>38,615</u>

7. Reserves held on behalf of Essex County Council

	2025 £	2024 £
Management of Future Funds	32,000	32,000
CIF & Microgrants	229,576	35,121
Ride London	4,197	5,444
Foodbank Funds	216	1,693
Total	<u>265,989</u>	<u>74,258</u>

Financial Statements



Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2025 - contd.

8. Restructuring Reserve

Balance brought forward 2024	50,492
Transfers	6,644
Funds spent in year	<u>(4,646)</u>
Balance carried forward 2025	<u>52,490</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 reserves in the year for the further development of the membership portal. Transfers from Repairs and Renewals and Legal expenses reserves.

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 2024	5,500
Transfers	(2,779)
Funds spent in year	<u>(2,721)</u>
Balance carried forward 2025	<u>0</u>

Earmarked reserves for repairs and renewals. Repairs in year general wear and tear and electrical compliance. Fund transferred to Restructuring reserves.

11. Legal Expenses Reserve

2025
£

Balance brought forward 2024	9,625
Transfers	(3,865)
Funds spent in year	<u>(5,760)</u>
Balance carried forward 2025	<u>0</u>

Earmarked reserves for legal expenses balance transferred to Restructuring reserve. Legal expenditure will be budgeted for in future.

Financial Statements

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



12. Councillor training bursary

Balance brought forward 2024	28,286
Transfers	-
Funds spent in year	<u>(10,248)</u>
Balance carried forward 2025	<u><u>18,038</u></u>

Councillor Training Bursary to assist councils with Councillor training costs

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 2026 is £5,380.

Financial Statements



Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2025 - contd.

Detailed profit and loss account for the year ended 31 March 2025

	Note	2025 £	2024 £
Turnover			
Training Income		126,563	136,510
Affiliation fees		91,939	88,463
ECC Grants		111,525	88,365
PFCC Grants		10,000	10,000
Grant Funding Income		36,549	31,701
AGM and Other Income		12,740	15,785
Interest received		11,519	7,438
Cost of sales		400,835	378,262
Employee Costs		236,953	225,405
Tutors		52,808	55,332
Services provided costs		8,067	11,772
Premises costs		24,472	19,622
		322,300	312,132
Administration expenses			
Office Costs		16,730	9,735
IT costs		6,558	4,591
Subscriptions		525	466
Committee Expenses		2,986	4,070
AGM		10,739	10,927
Auditors' remuneration		1,200	1,550
Professional Services/Employee Assistance		5,539	3,830
Bank charges		364	407
		44,641	35,576

