



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes
Association of Local Councils

EMPOWERING CLERKS, COUNCILLORS AND COUNCILS DELIVERING FOR THEIR COMMUNITIES



ANNUAL REPORT 2023 - 2024



INTRODUCTION

Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils (BMKALC), represents Town and Parish Councils in the geographic county of Buckinghamshire. It encompasses two Unitary Authorities, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. BMKALC is a non profit making association and is funded through subscription and training fees and grants from the two Unitary Authorities. Our Executive Board drawn from the diverse membership represents the interests of Town and Parish Councils and determines the direction, priorities and budget of the Association.

VISION

As a non profit making association BMKALC is reliant on subscription fees, training income and grants fund it's activities. Surplus income is ploughed back into developing and supporting member services. The Chief Executive Officer, Mel Woof, is responsible for the the overall development and delivery of service. Lorraine Morton is the Events and Communications Manager. BMKALC seeks to empower its members councils through support and education in their mission to achieve the very best for their communities, whilst ensuring good governance, compliance, transparency and respect .

ASSOCIATION GOALS

- To achieve and retain 95% of council membership
- to operate within a defined budget
- to invest in easy to access basic governance skills for all councils
- to provide training for new specialist skills to equip councils for todays demand.
- to provide contemporaneous information quickly and on multiple platforms
- to provide training at multiple times and over multiple platforms
- to provide partnership for specialist services to support councils



2023 – 24 Key Targets Review

INTERNAL

Continue ongoing development of the online management system incorporating both elements of website and customer relationship management. ✓ 

Deliver an elections toolkit for all councils ✓

To establish BMKALC and it's membership as stakeholders in Local Nature Recovery Schemes ✓

Conclude negotiations for 4 year grant funding from BC ✓

COMMUNICATIONS

Fortnightly meetings with County Liaison Officers continues with great success ✓

Secured a Parish Focus Group with Bucks Council ✓

Attend MK Parish Liaison and continue to develop closer working relationship throughout the County 

The View from our Window weekly update ✓

SERVICE OFFERS

Free Cllr Induction delivered ✓

Two subsidised seminar days, and Bio Diversity ✓

Member Services expanded to include 2nd HR and Planning Partners ✓

Employee Assistance Programme extended to include Councillors. ✓



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - 2024

Our thanks to Haddenham Parish Council for the use of this wonderful venue demonstrating both ambition and how Developers Funds can be put to use.

The Association continues to operate with financial support from both Buckinghamshire Council and Milton Keynes City Council with office and technical facilities provided from BC through the efforts of the County Officer. The Association have maintained our Judges Lodgings offices although sadly The Dining Room will no longer be available to us from 2026 and the Association will need to take to the road for meetings and in-person training sessions.

It's been 3 years since Mel took the role of County Officer and together with Lorraine, operations and services for our membership have improved exponentially. This year we added a second HR and planning advice partners and extended our Employee Support Programme to cover Councillors too. This system is operated on a cost recovery basis and continues to grow in popularity as more councils sign up.

The support of Cllr Isobel Darby as Honorary Treasurer, Cllr Paul Harvey as my Deputy Chair, Cllr Sue Smith, our former Chairwoman and other Executive Board Members who step in to support the team is essential, providing a wealth of experience.

Training revenue, as expected, was down this year but with the forthcoming Buckinghamshire elections this should return to a higher level next year. Mel and Lorraine have put a lot of hard work in election tool kit to help you and prospective candidates in the coming months. NALC has an updated website which you are all encouraged to register access, as it carries of a wide range of important information for example a new section on Community Safety.

We are also greatly encouraged that the government is consulting on remote attendance at meetings and published a consultation paper, which closes on 19 December 2024. Let's get as many responses in as we can!

I also encourage you log onto the BMKALC website, it will show you the extensive range of services, templates and training opportunities now available. Thank you both Mel and Lorraine.

Cllr Des Bray
Chairman



HONORARY TREASURERS REPORT - 2024

I am pleased to report that we are now well and truly "up and running" with Quick Books. Thanks to many hours put in by Mel and APS Accountancy all our legacy anomalies have been sorted out. We are now engaging them to assist Mel on a regular basis in keeping things up to date, dealing with any queries as they arise, rather than looking back at the end of the year.

APS have also independently examined our accounts for the year ended 31st March 2024 which are before you this evening for acceptance

Our internet banking continues to prove invaluable, enabling payments to be set up and approved remotely, saving many hours of travel back and forth to Aylesbury, although we do miss popping in to see the team and enjoying their welcoming coffee!

Subscription income is slightly higher than last year and we continue, for now, to benefit from financial support from our Principal Authorities. These grants whilst modest, make a significant difference to us and for we are forever grateful for their support.

We continue to enjoy the provision of office facilities from Buckinghamshire Council together with access to IT infrastructure, at no charge. We are aware that this may not continue indefinitely and have healthy reserves should the time come when we need to pay rent and fit out an office.

As previously requested, we have created a policy regarding the level of our reserves. Given the uncertainty over our current office accommodation, it is important that we have sufficient funds on hand to react should we find ourselves in a situation where we need alternative accommodation and IT equipment and services.

Training income showed a tail off this year which is not unexpected, given the fact we are in the last year of the electoral cycle. We expect a surge of interest after the elections in May 2025. Other County Associations have reported the same trend and we are not overly concerned. We continue to keep a careful eye on all aspects of our finances.

Cllr Isobel Darby
BMKALC
1st November 2024



CEO REPORT 2023-2024

We started the year with great ambition and specific objectives. I'm delighted that most were met and, with great success. Others proved not to be as promising and were reviewed accordingly, some delayed, some abandoned and new ones emerged along the way according to the needs of our members.

Key Highlights included extending our Employee Assistance Programme for serving Councillors of our member councils. Establishing a Parishes Focus Group for Bucks Members. Launching free Councillor Induction Courses and publishing our Elections Toolkit in conjunction with the Electoral Officers of both Authorities.

There have been many engagement opportunities and it is always hard to pin the rosette on only one. For me this year the Bio Diversity Event in Sept, filled me with hope as delegates shared their ambitions and steps to redress the effects of climate change.

We continue to build on the Training Foundations which we laid out in 2021 and the process of reviewing and extending training is on-going. Whole council training is incredibly valuable and we have again worked with partners to achieve the strongest outcomes for councils. We continue to work closely with our neighbouring Associations sharing intelligence, concepts and training opportunities.

New Topics and needs will continue to emerge. In 2025 all of our Bucks members face ordinary elections and we are looking to put a programme of induction training in place to support our new councillors.

We remain nimble, open to new ideas and I hope you will agree, good value.

Kind regards

Mel Woof
Chief Executive Officer

NALC REPORT - 2024

The last 12 months have seen some changes within NALC, as the move to temporary premises has been complete, with the move to 10 Bloomsbury Street, which has allowed for some in person meetings to take place there.

On personnel front Steve Walker has retired from his post in Financial support and Charlotte Eisenhart is leaving to become CEO at ADSO, they will both be missed by many.

NALC has worked closely with other sector organisations over the last year and are currently involved with changes at SAAA and with the LGA on campaigns that affect our sector. Our Chair has been meeting with members of the new Government to lobby for better recognition of both our importance at a local level and the value for money that we give to our residents. I would like to ask all of you to engage with your MP's as many of them are new and may not always understand about Parishes (there are a few!) With the boundary changes most of us have a new MP.

The new website for NALC was launched in October and has a new look and a new way to register to log on, for member councils it is just a short form to fill in and allows access to some of the new features, with easier to find areas of interest and minutes of meetings from the various Committees. There has been a slight change to the Scrutiny Committee to separate the finance roll to prevent conflicts of interest.

The regular web seminars continue to grow and run usually around lunch times – see the website to book on! NALC continues to offer advice and training along with partner organisations, many in conjunction with County Associations, along with HR and Legal advice.

Over the coming months we hope to engage with many MPs and Civil servants on such things as planning and devolution and with a possible move to more Unitary Councils we are actively encouraging the Parish model. In June there is to be an In-Person conference held at the America Square conference centre on the 23rd, it's a very short walk from the nearest tube, and is open to all Councillors, Clerks and CALCs, the theme will be announced shortly and there will be limited tickets, with cost kept to a minimum.

In sadder news we have lost some current and former members of the National Assembly this year most recently Cllr Richard Parry of Sevenoaks Council, Richard was a long serving member of many of the committees notable the Larger Council committee, were we first met, while we may not have agreed on politics we both agreed that Parish Councils were a power for good and a much ignored sector by government, and he introduced me to many MPs without telling them which party I belonged to as it was not an issue to him but getting my voice heard was, he will be missed.

The next year looks to be a very busy one with many challenges for us all, may I wish all those standing for election this coming year good luck and hope to see you back on the other side of them. For those not standing I hope you will support us during that period and keep doing the great work that you do.

Cllr Paul Harvey



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - 2023 - 2024

Accountants' Report to Bucks and Milton Keynes
Association of Local Councils

In accordance with instructions given to us, we have prepared without carrying out an audit the annexed financial statements from the accounting records and from information and explanations supplied to us. As a practising member firm of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, we are subject to its ethical and other professional requirements which are detailed at www.accaglobal.com/en/member/professional-standards/rules-standards/acca-rulebook.html.

The report is made solely to you, in accordance with the terms of our engagement. Our work has been undertaken solely to prepare for your approval the accounts and state those matters that we have agreed to state to you in this report in accordance with the requirements of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants as detailed at www.accaglobal.com/content/dam/ACCA_Global/Technical/fact/technical-factsheet-163.pdf. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the proprietor of the business for our work or for this report.

We have not verified the accuracy or completeness of the accounting records or information and explanations you have given to us and we do not, therefore, express any opinion on the accounts.

APS Accountancy Limited
Chartered Certified Accountants
4 Cromwell Court
New Street
Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire
HP20 2PB

Bucks and Milton Keynes
Association of Local Councils
Detailed Profit and Loss Account
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

	2024		2023	
	£	£	£	£
Income				
Subscriptions	108,392		102,832	
Sales of Publications	411		3,119	
Training	25,894		40,811	
County Council Grant	15,000		15,000	
MK Grant	5,000		5,000	
Other Income	3,425		5,380	
		158,122		172,142
Other income				
Deposit account interest		7,331		2,805
		165,453		174,947
Expenditure				
Salary Costs	91,956		95,840	
Staff Expenses	-		137	
Staff Training	-		1,234	
Conference, Committee & AGM	6,592		4,829	
NALC	37,804		36,798	
Other Publications	369		3,197	
Office Equipment	257		1,413	
Stationery	1		51	
Accountancy Fees	1,020		910	
Website	4,790		6,509	
Insurance	814		767	
Training & Events	8,564		15,008	
Other Expenses	1,499		1,472	
Adverts	-		67	
Depreciation	2,269		7	
Membership Support	4,118		3,341	
		160,053		171,580
		5,400		3,367
Finance costs				
Bank charges		9		7
NET PROFIT		5,391		3,360

Bucks and Milton Keynes
Association of Local Councils
Balance Sheet
31 March 2024

	Notes	2024 £	2023 £
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible assets	1	6,740	22
CURRENT ASSETS		-	
Stocks			
Trade debtors		5,330	132 5,324
Bank account no. 1		103,112	109,611
Bank account no. 2		150,000	150,000
		258,442	265,067
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade creditors		(6,689)	(12,197)
Other creditors		(210)	-
		(6,899)	(12,197)
		251,543	252,870
NET ASSETS		258,283	252,892
FINANCED BY			
RESERVES AND FUNDS			
Reserves	2	95,000	95,000
Capital account	3	163,283	157,892
		258,283	252,892

Bucks and Milton Keynes
Association of Local Councils

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

1. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

Computer
equipment
£

COST

At 1 April 2023 Additions

6,115

At 31 March 2024

8,987

15,102

DEPRECIATION

At 1 April 2023

6,093

2,269

8,362

Charge for year

At 31 March 2024 NET BOOK VALUE

6,740

At 31 March 2024

22

At 31 March 2023

2. RESERVES

Other reserves

£

At 1 April 2023

95,000

At 31 March 2024

95,000

3. CAPITAL ACCOUNT

2024

2023

£

£

Profit and Loss account b/fwd

252,892

249,532

Add

5,391

3,360

Net profit

258,283

252,892



KEY OBJECTIVES FOR 2024 - 25

INTERNAL

Review the resilience and support of the online management system which incorporates both elements of website and customer relationship management.

Undertake a data security review.

Development of whole council training courses.

COMMUNICATIONS

Attend MK and BC Parish Liaison and continue to develop closer working relationship throughout the County.

Consider the role of AI in operations to ease repetitive comms workload.

Continue The View from our Window weekly update to both Clerks and Councillors

SERVICE OFFERS

Deliver Free Cllr Induction classes in May.

Place Shaping 2024 – our Annual Conference

Launch Bursary Scheme



Training, Events & Members Services Report 2023/2024

Training, Events & Members Benefits Report 2023 – 2024

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

883

Bookings received
throughout the year

143

Attended Free January
sessions

62

Training and events

DEVELOPMENT SNAPSHOT

3

New Members Services
partner

- Optima EAP Programme
- WorkNest
- Parish Online

2

New Key Events

- 75th Anniversary
Excellence Awards and
Celebration
- Youth Councils
Contribution Awards

4

New Tools & Resources

- Elections Toolkit &
Media Resources
- FAQ Page Internal
- Auditor Register
- Locum Register

PROJECTS

DETAILS

OUTCOME

Website

To continue the development of the website application capability as a business management system for the organisation. Improved functionality across the Expert Partner Support Programme, EAP Programme. Creation of registration and referral for locum services.

New advanced and improved functions:

- Internal Auditor Registration and referral
- Locum Registration and referral
- Improved forms functionality
- Improved reporting functionality
- EAP Programme registration and management
- FAQ page

Conference 2023 Communities: Enrichment & Resilience

Our first Peer to Peer conference including speakers and workshops led by officers and members. Achieving Key Sponsorship uptake and participation from both MKCC and BC. Working with Youth Councils from both MK & Buckinghamshire who participated as outstanding closing key note address speakers and hosted post event engagement sessions for councilors and officers.

- Attendance was very good.
- Feedback from delegates and sponsors was excellent.
- Our mission, vision and values were carried across the event and throughout the promotion.

75th Anniversary Celebration and Excellence Awards

To mark the 75th Anniversary of the association undertook a temporary re branding exercise across all mediums and platforms.

- A celebration Cream Tea and Excellence Awards ceremony was held, hosting 75 distinguished guests. Among them the President of SLCC, Cabinet Members from BC and MKCC, NALC Executives, and award recipients.
- Framed certificates were awarded to founding members, officers/members long service awards and community volunteers for outstanding contribution

Free January

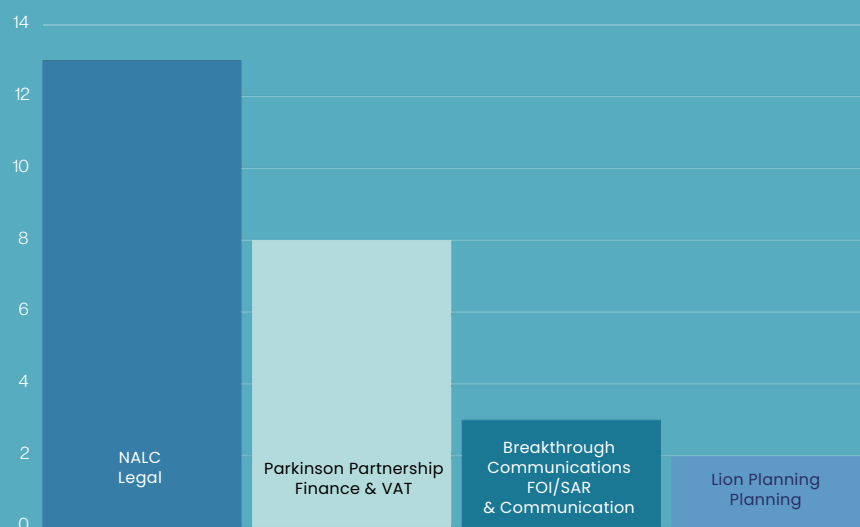
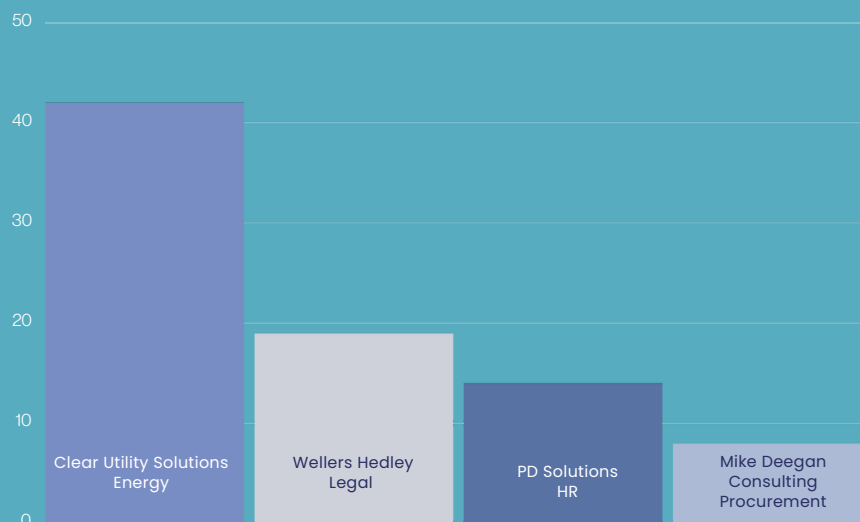
Continuing to improve the wider offering of 'real value' training and information free opportunities for members

- We delivered 13 training and information sessions developed and delivered in 5 weeks. The mix was good including Peer To Peer learning opportunities and engagement sessions with parish, town and community council officers and members from the youth councils from across MK and Buckinghamshire. The Feedback was excellent.

Members Services Analysis

Page 1

Expert Partner Referrals



Members Services Analysis

Page 2

EAP Programme

22 member council signed up with 149 employees/members accessing the service

Website contact

374 online enquiries

Website visits

700 – 800 unique users per month

A unique visitor is a term used in marketing analytics which refers to a person who has visited the website at least once and is counted only once in the reporting time period. So if the user visits the web more than once, it counts as one visitor only. It's also called a "Unique User".

Website engagement

Average engagement time BMKALC site – 1m 21s

A good Average Engagement Time is 49 seconds, according to data from Google Analytics, the average engagement times per user between 0:20–1:33, for an average of 49 seconds on any given website.

Training Observations & Trends

Downward trend nationally in training and development uptake for CALCS across the board in 2023 a 40% drop off measured for Buckinghamshire.

With an aim to improving data collection and the quality of the data collected, In 2023 we introduced a revision and improvement of the feedback forms through our website and the inclusion of additional data to the monitoring report (e.g., response rates and ranking).

Feedback Analysis

- A consistently high 95% and above, overall satisfaction rate
- Above 95% of the participants said the training had contributed to their professional knowledge, skills and/or growth.

Training & Events 2023 - To Date

KKNOWLEDGE BITES

(Learning at Lunchtime sessions)

New! Knowledge Bites – Annual Parish Meeting
New! Knowledge Bites – Preparing for AGAR
New! Knowledge Bites – Domain Names Explained
New! Knowledge Bites – Code of Conduct
New! Knowledge Bites – Financial Regulations
New! Knowledge Bites – Standing Orders

FREE JANUARY

Woughton Community Council – If Not Us Then Who
Great Linford Parish Council – Community Partnerships
New! AI & Your Councils Communications
Future Nature – Providing ecological and community engagement advice
New! NALC Legal Update with Jane Moore Senior Solicitor and Legal Manager
New! Empowering and Engaging With Young People In Your Community
New! Locality – The Future Of Neighbourhood Planning
New! What's Your Interest
ONH – Effective Design Coding For Town & Parish Councils
New! Day to Day Tips for Keeping Your Website Accessible and Compliant
New! Interactive Self Guided Tours
New! Community Enrichment
Councillor Training
Councillor Training For Town & Parish Councils
Agendas And Minutes for Town & Parish Councils
CiLCA Introduction
CiLCA Training
Chairing Skills
New! Councilor Recruitment Induction & Retention
The Planning Framework
Freedom Of Information Essentials For Local Councils
Advanced Social Media for Local Councils Across Multiple Platforms
P2P – Woughton Community Council – 'If not us, then who?'
HR Essentials For Councils, Staffing Committees & Councillors
New! Improving Internal Council Communications
Internal Auditor Training
New! Introduction To VAT For local councils
Managing People & Teams Effectively (For Officers)
Member Engagement
Addressing Conflict Between Employees & Members
Allotment Management
Audit & Local Councils
New! Budgeting & Financial Management
New! Code of Conduct & Interests – Your Responsibilities
Funding: Generate External Funding & Write More Successful Bids
HR Essentials
Planning Application Responses
Writing Grant Applications & Sourcing Local Council Funding Opportunities

Training & Events 2022 - To Date

The Planning Framework
Report Writing for Local Councils
Planning Demystified Workshop
Property Law for Town & Parish Councils
New! Quotes, Tenders & Contract Management
Data Protection for Councils: Dealing With Data Subject Rights & Information Security
Freedom Of Information For Parish, Town & Community Councils
Property Law For Town, Parish & Community Councils
Civility & Respect For Town, Parish & Community Councils
Practical Compliance for CCTV
S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) training
The Essentials of being a Good Employer
Transparency and Publication

NEWLY DEVELOPED

New! How To Review Your Neighbourhood Plan Planning Policies
New! Project Management
New! Resolving & Dealing Effectively With Challenging Situations
New! 2023 Councillor Recruitment Seminar
New! Resolving & Dealing Effectively With Challenging Situations
New! 2023 Code Of Conduct – Civility & Respect Seminar
New! 2023 Data Protection for Councils: Dealing with Data Subject Rights and Information Security
New! 2023 Action Plans
New! 2023 Civility & Respect For Town, Parish & Community Councils
New! 2023 Canva Skills 1 – Creating Engaging Content
New! Mastering Customer Service For Local Councils
New! Remit & Philosophy Of Town And Parish Councils
New! Promoting Projects To Realise Financial & Community Value From Local Council Property Assets
New! Canva Skills 1 – Creating Engaging Content
New! Ensuring Site Proposals Embrace Green Infrastructure
New! A.I. For Council Communications
New! Chat GPT & AI As Efficiency Tools For Local Councils
New! Developing an Action Plan for Town, Parish & Community Councils
New! Finance for Councillors
New! Events Risk Assessment (including Martyn's Law Update)
New! Effective Design Coding
New! Managing Projects & Major Programmes of Work
New! Elections Toolkit Explained

Training budgets across the sector should be increased to support the building of organisational capacity within local councils. All local councils should dedicate resources to training and skills development for councillors and for their workforce - The Future Of Local Councils 2022 SLCC



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes
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