



Norfolk Association of Local Councils Limited

Annual Report
2020-21

Our organisation

Last September, Norfolk ALC became registered with the [Financial Conduct Authority](#) as a Cooperative Society which provides services to its members.

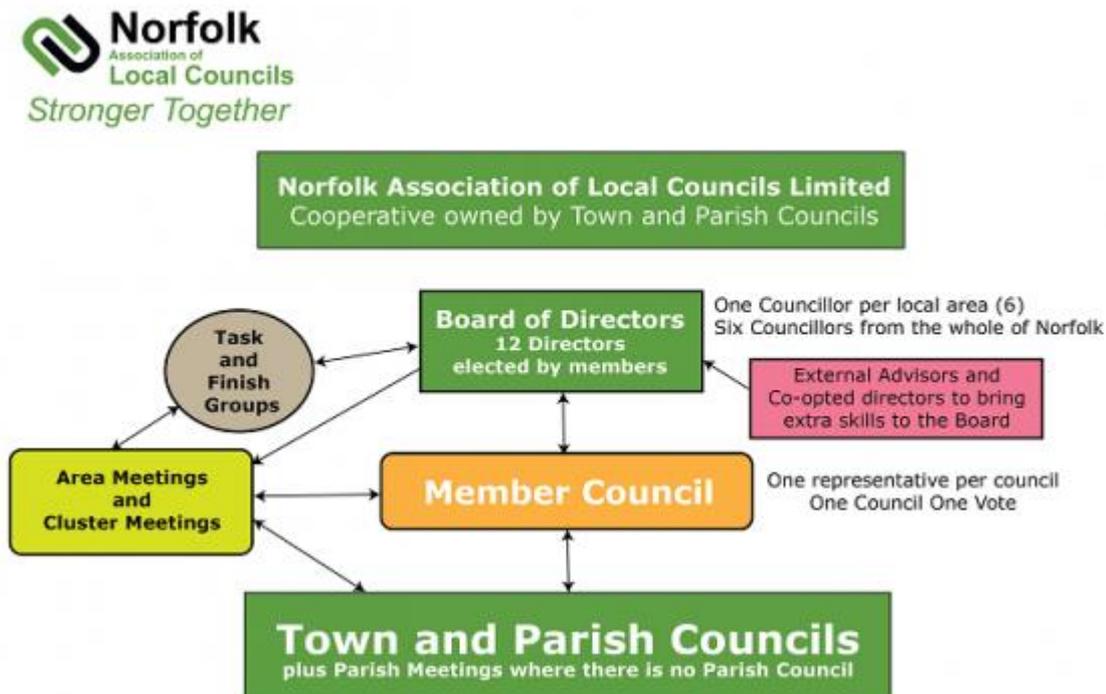
We still remain a 'not for profit' organisation, but are now also a 'properly constituted' organisation which has a number of advantages, including enabling us to successfully apply for grants and also capping member liability to the £1 share that each member council is now awarded.

We have a new Board of Directors, that has replaced our previous Executive, who have been developing their roles since our Board was established in March.

Alongside becoming established as a co-operative organisation, we have also been putting in place robust rules, policies and procedures for our future ways of working.

We still have further work to do – for example, as yet, the role for our nominated Council Representatives has not been fully developed, but plans are being made to do that now our Board is in place.

Our organisational arrangements now are as illustrated below:



Our team

We are honoured to now have a Patron, for the first time, and to have retained our President, as part of the excellent team now working with us:

Our **Patron** - The Lady Dannatt MBE, HM Lord-Lieutenant of Norfolk

Our **President** - Professor Tim O'Riordan OBE DL FBA

Our **Board** members now comprise of: Adrienne Quinlan (Hethersett), Alan Wright (Beighton), David Hewer (Poringland) (our Deputy Chairman), Elaine Rix-Clark (Marham), Terry Gibson (West Winch), Janet Holdom (Fakenham), Kevin Worsley (Long Stratton), Phil Harris (Cromer) (our Chairman), Sue Lintern (Stoke Ferry), Dr. Victoria Holliday (Cley) and Madeleine Ashcroft (Sheringham). John Pennell is now co-opted to the Board, alongside leading our 'wellbeing' activities. We currently have one vacancy to fill, ideally from the Yarmouth or Breckland districts.

Our **Staff**: Over the last year, Norfolk have retained their successful staff team, comprising Russell Reeve (County Officer), Helen Carrier (IT and websites consultant), Gabbie Joyce (Training Officer), Sarah Thorpe (Support/ Advice) and Dan Howes (Finance/ Administration).

Financial outcome for year

The financial outcome for the 2020/21 year is that a surplus was again achieved, both in the 5 months to August, before we became a Co-operative organisation, and also in the 7 months since. We expect to again be given an unqualified audit opinion from our auditor.

Copies of our summary financial statements are available on request.

Services provided – in summary

We are a membership organisation, representing the interests of parish and town councils across Norfolk.

We provide:

- Advice and support for clerks, councillors and councils
- Training and development
- Information on topical issues
- Lobbying on behalf of councils across Norfolk

This includes:

- Advice on law, procedure and good practice, including access to specialist lawyers
- Access to other practitioners and experts, such as for HR advice and charity governance
- Support for provided websites and website management

- Support for recruitment and staff retention
- Loan approval filtering and support (PWLB)
- A range of training and development opportunities for clerks and councillors
- CILCA training delivered by qualified and accredited trainers
- Support for professional standards through the Local Council Award Scheme
- Newsletters and bulletins
- Funding updates
- Legal briefings
- Information on national policy and legislation
- Policy and lobbying support
- Access to the services of the National Association of Local Councils

Highlights from the year

This was an exceptional year, both for us and for everyone involved in town and parish councils across Norfolk.

At Norfolk ALC, we are proud to have been able to support so many of the Town and Parish Councils across the county in playing such an active role in our communities across a year when the Covid epidemic has caused so much upheaval for us all.

Over the year, we worked hard to support our councils by providing regular news/ newsletters, as a timely response to assist councils, both in responding to the issues they have faced, and in also supporting councils in their amazing responses to the challenges posed by the pandemic over this period.

We have been providing a high volume of quality advice and support, and responding to daily queries covering a wide range of issues, ranging from technical topics, such as accounting or governance queries, to those requiring a high degree of sensitive HR input, or relating to councillor conduct matters. Most queries have been responded to and answered within the same day, over this past year.

Our local training programme, led by Gabbie Joyce, has proven highly popular, with multiple courses being run most weeks, of high quality content, all using Zoom during the year, and covering a really wide range of topics, across a spectrum of technical topics to more inter-personal sessions, for which there has been a high demand this year. We ran many courses ourselves, inhouse, but we also have benefited from a select band of excellent presenters who have worked with us – notably Alan Fairchild, Rachel Leggett, Pauline James, Charlotte Stannard, Phil Brown, Michael Rayner and Steve Parkinson.

Across the year, we successfully supported many students through their CilCA studies.

We have also expanded our services provided, with increasing our focus on the mentoring of those Clerks new to the profession, led by Sarah Thorpe, which has been immensely beneficial both for them, and as a result, for their councils.

Helen Carrier has again led our support of over two hundred councils in operating their NALC enabled and supported websites, with some new features this year. This was alongside her enabling the team to introduce a new booking system, and also to update office IT systems, and migrate to cloud data storage.

Our events, mostly run by John Pennell/ the wellbeing team over the last year, have been provided at an average rate of several per month, and have proven immensely popular, with bookings often exceeding our self-imposed maximum attendee limit. Many different topics have been covered, across the wellbeing spectrum, such as in supporting our communities responses to flooding, reducing carbon emissions, several liaison meetings held with the Police, a Norfolk CC budget consultation, tackling cybercrime, promoting the Armed Forces Covenant and a briefing from the Lord Lieutenant and her team, and much more.

Our wellbeing team also have been actively engaged in activities of wider relevance to town and parish councils, ranging from those supporting the well-being of individuals, for example in tackling mental health and loneliness issues, to addressing broader challenges facing our communities, such as reducing energy use and carbon footprint.

During this year, we have been particularly appreciative of the excellent support and encouragement being provided to us by Norfolk County Council, and our many friends

and contacts there, especially in working closely with Councillor Margaret Dewsbury, and our lead officer contact, Ceri Sumner.

Working with National ALC, we have lobbied them on a number of issues affecting local councils this year, such as finally gaining rating exemption for public conveniences and in seeking an improved service from our banks, alongside other topics. We work hard to represent members' interests to the National ALC, who in turn lobby Government on our behalf.

We also increasingly work in partnership now with our other county associations, as well as also across our District/ Borough Councils, Norfolk County Council and the other public service providers within Norfolk, including the Police, Fire and NHS.

We have a number of projects coming up, for example we are looking to update our website this coming year. We also have a number of ideas for improving the ways in which our services and training can be delivered and events can be provided. We will be looking to develop our services further, possibly with further grant funding.

We are also always keen to hear about ways that we can improve what we provide.

In summary, overall, this has been a year in which Norfolk ALC's ability to adapt to changing circumstances has been demonstrated, with some great services and events being delivered, relationships with partners strengthened, further increase in membership levels achieved, training numbers increased and investments being made to securing a bright and sustainable future for our organisation.

Russell Reeve

County Officer, Norfolk Association of Local Councils
Company Secretary, Norfolk Association of Local Councils Limited