



AGM Thursday 31 October 2024

Attendees: Henry Clark, Penny Bryant, Diane Lane, Libby White **Parish Councils:** Bottisham, Carlton-cum-Willingham, Colne, Fulbourn, Girton, Ginton, Haddenham, Hail Weston, Harlton, Hemingford Abbots, Holme, Holywell-cum-Needlingworth, Little Gransden, Meldreth, Peakirk, Shudy Camps, Spaldwick, Swaffham Bulbeck, Wansford, West Wratting, Witcham and Yaxley

Apologies: Abbotsley, Bluntisham, Brampton, Burwell, Easton, Fowlmere, Ickleton, Kirtling and Upend, Perry, Swavesey, Willingham, Wimblington and Northstowe Town Council

Summary

The meeting began with a discussion of organisational developments and strategic initiatives. Henry reported on improved relationships with key stakeholders including Cambridge Acre's new chief executive and collaboration with the combined authority particularly regarding rural bus consultations.

Penny provided a comprehensive update on member services and operational activities detailing the specialised consultancy services available to members including GDPR Data Protection Officer support through Priviness UK (£50/year), financial advice through Parkinson Partnership and HR services via Worknest. The internal audit service has expanded to six auditors, though capacity remains limited.

Training services have seen significant growth with delegate numbers increasing from 463 in 2023 to 571 in 2024. Penny attributed this growth to the return of face-to-face training sessions. CAPALC maintains regular liaison with NALC and continues to explore opportunities to enhance membership benefits.

Financial discussions revealed healthy reserves of approximately £100,000 with interest earnings of £5,181. Training costs were notably high at £17,000 attributed to increased use of external training companies and return to in-person events. The budget for 2025-26 was presented as balanced with no planned increase in affiliation fees despite inflation concerns.

The meeting concluded with a discussion about director recruitment, with Henry noting the need for additional board members, particularly a treasurer. The current board consists of seven directors with meetings held quarterly online and one annual in-person strategy meeting.

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Organisational Updates and Strategic Direction

Henry outlined improved stakeholder relationships and future priorities including member support, financial sustainability and engagement with new MPs. Discussion centred on maintaining service quality while managing costs and strengthening relationships with key partners.

Member Services and Training Update

Penny presented comprehensive details on member services including specialised consultancy offerings, internal audit capabilities and training programs. Notable growth in training participation was highlighted with emphasis on the transition back to face-to-face sessions.

Financial Review and Budget Planning

Discussion of annual accounts showed healthy financial position with substantial reserves. Debate over affiliation fees and budget planning for 2025-26 with decision to maintain current fee structure despite inflation concerns.

Governance and Director Recruitment

Final segment focused on the need for additional directors, particularly a treasurer. Discussion of time commitments and geographical representation on the board, with emphasis on finding qualified candidates.

Action Items

- ☐ Penny to investigate simplification of NALC model contract for small councils.
- ☐ Board to organise meetings with local MPs for member councils.
- ☐ Penny to develop communication materials explaining parish council roles and responsibilities.
- ☐ Board to conduct strategy meeting in new year to discuss future directions.
- ☐ Organisation to implement new membership notice period requirement for resignations.
- ☐ Penny to expand training portfolio and continue face-to-face sessions in 2025.

Topics

- Cambridge Acre's new chief executive and improved collaboration
- Financial sustainability and VAT registration considerations
- Training portfolio and member support services
- Communication with local MPs and council engagement
- Budget and affiliation fees for 2025-26
- Director recruitment and board composition

Review

- Henry reported on strengthening relationships with key organisations
- Penny presented comprehensive overview of member services and training programs
- Financial performance review showed healthy surplus and stable reserves
- Discussion of current governance structure and director positions

Progress

- Member Support Services
- Implementation of new website and membership login system
- Organisation of quarterly pop-up cafes and online drop-in sessions

Issues

1. Limited locum clerk availability.
Solution: Actively recruiting qualified clerks for locum service
2. Complex NALC model contract for small councils
Solution: Proposal to develop simplified version for small parish councils
3. Membership resignation process lacking structure
Solution: Reinstatement of formal notice period requirement by December 31st

Decisions

- Zero increase in affiliation fees for 2025-26 approved due to healthy reserves
- Implementation of formal membership resignation notice period
- Transition to in-person training courses for 2025-26
- Investment in communication and engagement project including new website
- Exploration of additional director recruitment strategies