

Minutes of the 438th meeting of the County Executive Committee of Lancashire Association of Local Councils held virtually on 28th February 2026 at 10am.

Members present:

Pat Hastings, Broughton Parish Council	Alan Yates, Great Eccleston Parish Council
Keith Martin, Penwortham Town Council	Luke Trevaskis, Morecambe Town Council
Phil Orme, Preesall Town Council	Jacqueline Hampson, Simonstone Parish Council
Darren Cranshaw, Brindle Parish Council	Andrew Bell, Colne Town Council
Gordon Smith, Treales, Roseace & Wharles Parish Council	Peter Collins, Fylde Borough Council
Stephen Houghton, Wiswell Parish Council	Maggy Howells, Salesbury Parish Council
Eunice Houghton, Much Hoole Parish Council	Jack Speight, Westhoughton Town Council

Officers present:

Debra Platt, LALC Chief Officer	Jessica Dibble, LALC Secretary
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1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair, Cllr Pat Hastings, welcomed members to the meeting.

Apologies were received from:

Cllr Jan Finch, Cllr Glyn Stead, Cllr. Graham Jones, Cllr. Mary Thomas and Cllr. Iain Hamilton.

2. Minutes of the 437th Executive Committee meeting held on 13th December circulated to approve

The minutes were circulated prior to the meeting.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2025 be approved as a correct record.

Proposed: Cllr. A Neal

Seconded: Cllr. K Martin

3. Comments on reports received

3.1 Presidents Report – Cllr. A Neal

The President was thanked for his report and update.

Members noted the report.

3.2 Lancashire Offshore Wind Energy Update - Cllr G. Smith

Cllr G. Smith's report was received and noted. Members were updated on ongoing engagement with the NALC Policy Committee and the current position regarding discussions at national level. It was noted that a request had been made for proposed meeting dates, but no response had yet been received.

Cllr Smith also reported on a recent submission to the Ofgem regulator consultation by the Fylde Area Energy Working Group concerning end-to-end grid connections. Developments in Ribble Valley and East Lancashire were discussed, including emerging proposals and related planning matters.

Members also considered a recent legal challenge in Scotland, where an offshore wind application had been successfully challenged on the basis that separate elements of the project should have been assessed together under environmental impact requirements. It was agreed that maintaining a broad and up to date countywide picture of relevant planning applications was essential, and members were asked to notify LALC and Cllr Smith of any significant energy-related developments within their respective areas.

3.3 Chairs report

The Chair reported on the Government consultation regarding Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and outlined the advice received in relation to LALC's proposed response. It was recommended that LALC submit a general response reflecting broad principles rather than supporting any specific structural proposal, and to actively encourage individual parish and town councils to respond directly to the consultation in order to ensure local views are clearly represented.

The Chair emphasised the importance of geography, historic identity and community cohesion in any future arrangements, and highlighted the need to make clear the likely impact of LGR on parish and town councils. Concerns were also raised regarding staff uncertainty and job security during the reorganisation process.

Members further discussed ongoing engagement with Lancashire County Council and Combined Authority structures and the importance of maintaining clear communication channels throughout the transition period.

4. Matters of update

Covered within the Chairs report and subsequent discussions.

5. Officer updates

5.1 Finance Report

The Committee received and considered the Finance Report, together with the accompanying financial statements.

Clarification was provided regarding the increase in NALC membership fees, with members advised that a three-year indexed increase had been agreed nationally. An update was also given on the collection of electoral roll data in preparation for issuing 2026/27 membership invoices.

Members discussed the position regarding Best Kept Village sponsorship and it was clarified that the current agreement relates to payment for engraving and awards upon receipt of invoice. It was noted that future provision for 2026/27 had previously been considered by the Finance and Management Committee. The Finance Report was formally noted.

5.2 Area Support Officer Report

Members noted the progress made during the reporting period and discussed the importance of clearly identifying month-to-month changes in order to demonstrate development and impact.

It was suggested that future reports include a concise summary highlighting key updates, completed actions and new work undertaken since the previous report. This approach was supported in order to provide greater visibility of progress and value.

5.3 Chief Officer Report

The Chief Officer reported that work continues on gathering electoral data and preparing for the annual membership invoicing process. Members were informed that investigation into the implementation of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system is ongoing, with the aim of improving the tracking and coordination of enquiries across officers.

5.4 Secretary Report

The Secretary presented the project update report, including analysis of the recent member survey, which received 33 responses. While the findings were positive, the results identified areas for improvement, particularly in relation to website development, digital accessibility, clarity of training information and overall visibility of LALC services.

Members discussed the feedback concerning feelings of isolation among some clerks, particularly those working alone within smaller councils. It was noted that pressures around meeting schedules, limited opportunities for peer interaction and difficulty taking leave can contribute to professional isolation. The importance of strengthening clerk support and resilience was acknowledged, and potential measures were outlined, including improved communication mechanisms, peer networking opportunities and better coordination of support through a proposed CRM system to ensure consistent handling of enquiries.

The positive impact of the 'Training Tuesdays' initiative was noted, along with the level of interest in CILCA training. Members recognised the work undertaken to improve engagement and agreed that further development of support structures and digital systems would continue as part of ongoing improvement. The report was received and noted.

5.5 Training Coordinator Report

The Training Coordinator's report was received. Members discussed training attendance levels and income generation and expressed caution about increasing course fees to improve financial performance.

It was agreed that offering varied, relevant and well-timed training opportunities would be a more effective way of increasing participation and revenue. Any proposal to amend course fees should first be considered by the Finance and Management Committee before coming back to Executive for decision. The report was noted and members thanked the training coordinator for the report.

6. Membership of Task and Finish Groups

6.1 Membership of Proposed Groups

Members considered the proposed structure and membership of the Task and Finish Groups. It was agreed that the 'How LALC Operates' and 'Fit for Unitaries' groups should be merged into a single group in order to ensure continuity and avoid duplication of effort, particularly in light of Local Government Reorganisation.

It was further agreed that work relating to 'Raising LALC's Profile' should be deferred until clarity is made regarding structural changes. It was further agreed that the proposed 'Highways and Byways@ group should be considered later in the year once current priorities are progressed. Updated membership of the groups were agreed during the meeting.

6.2 Interim Report on Legal Entity - Cllr. J Hampson

Members received the interim update from Cllr Jacqueline Hampson on the 'How LALC Operates' Task and Finish Group. It was proposed that the structural options previously identified in the Governance and Legal Risk Report (December 2025) be progressed and that, within the agreed budget, legal advice be sought on the implications of each option.

Members present agreed with this approach and requested that the group bring a detailed options report to the next Executive meeting to support informed consideration of LALC's future legal entity structure.

7. Ratify the Treasurer specification and the budget as recommended by Finance and

Members considered the recommendation from the Finance and Management Committee regarding the Treasurer role. It was agreed that the position should be advertised externally, rather than being limited to existing LALC members, to ensure a suitably qualified candidate could be appointed.

The Executive noted that Finance and Management had recommended an honorarium with allowance for additional time during the initial onboarding phase.

It was proposed that up to £3,000 be allocated for the first year to cover transition and setup requirements, with an anticipated ongoing annual cost of approximately £2,000 thereafter. Applications will be reviewed by an appropriate panel once the advertisement period has closed.

The recommendation was approved.

8. NALC

8.1 Chairs Report

The Chair provided an update on her recent engagement with NALC, including attendance at policy and standards meetings and the House of Lords reception. Members were advised that national discussions continue around Local Government Reorganisation, standards frameworks and parish sector representation within emerging combined authority structures.

It was noted that LALC's motion regarding offshore wind infrastructure and transmission impacts is progressing through the NALC policy process, with constructive engagement taking place at national level.

8.2 NALC Consultation on LGR Response

Members discussed the ongoing Government consultation and developing position regarding Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). It was reiterated that, parish and town councils are likely to be indirectly impacted through changes to county, district and combined authority arrangements.

The Executive acknowledged that clarity on structural proposals are not expected until later in the year, and that LALC should therefore continue to monitor developments. It was agreed that LALC will maintain communications with Lancashire County Council and other relevant bodies to ensure parish and town council interests are considered during the transition period.

Members also recognised the importance of supporting councils through the uncertainty of the LGR process, including highlighting workforce implications and maintaining communication with the membership as further information becomes available.

9. Review Action List

Members are reminded that the action list is a working document and will be updated and saved in the shared folder for viewing at any time.

10. Reports from representatives on outside bodies

10.1 Forrest of Bowland Report

A report was received from the Bowland National representative, noting that no Joint Advisory Committee meeting had taken place since the previous report. Members were informed that consultation on the new management plan is underway and that representation will continue at the next scheduled meeting.

10.2 Best Kept Village Competition

Discussion then took place regarding the Best Kept Village competition and a proposal relating to LALC's potential future involvement. While members acknowledged the value of the competition, concerns were raised regarding alignment with LALC's core objectives, governance implications and current organisational priorities.

A proposal was put forward that LALC should concentrate on its existing core work programme and not pursue taking over or administering the Best Kept Village competition at this time. Following discussion, the proposal was carried by majority decision.

11. Close

The meeting closed at 12:28

Minutes drafted by: Jessica Dibble
 LALC Secretary
 02/03/2026

Finance & Management Committee Wednesdays at 5pm. (Virtual)	LALC Executive Committee Saturday at 10am Virtual unless indicated
Wednesday 13th May 2026	Saturday 6th June 2026
Wednesday 19th August 2026	Saturday 13th June 2026 – LALC Spring Conference (face to face).
Wednesday 25th November 2026	Saturday 5th September 2026
	Saturday 7th November 2026 – AGM & LCC Conference
	Saturday 12th December 2026