



**Lancashire Association of Local Councils**

Affiliated to the National Association of Local Councils

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**Minutes of the Finance and Management Committee meeting, held virtually at 5:00pm on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2025.**

**Members present:**

Cllr Pat Hastings (Chair)  
Cllr Keith Martin  
Cllr Alan Neal  
Cllr Phil Orme  
Cllr Iain Hamilton  
Cllr Gordon Smith

Cllr Darren Cranshaw  
Cllr Jacqueline Hampson

**Officers present:**

Debra Platt, Chief Officer  
Jessica Dibble, LALC Secretary

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair, Cllr. Pat. Hastings, called the meeting to order at 17:00. Congratulations were formally recorded to Ian on his appointment as Chair of NALC, with members noting this as a positive. It was noted that no formal apologies had been received prior to the meeting.

**2. To approve the minutes of the Finance and Committee meeting held 1st October 2025**

The minutes of the Finance and Management Committee meeting held on 1st October 2025 were reviewed. It was agreed that, once the apologies from Cllr Hamilton and Cllr Hampson were recorded, the minutes could be approved as a true and accurate record.

Proposed: Cllr. Alan Neal

Seconded: Cllr. Darren Cranshaw

**3. Matters of Update**

Members wished to record a formal thank you to Cllr Smith, for his presentation at the NALC AGM. Members noted that, although the motion had been very well received and clearly understood by those present, there had been no apparent follow-up action from NALC since the AGM. Cllr Smith and Debra reported that they had been in correspondence with Justin at NALC to ask what the next steps would be. It was felt that this needed to be actively chased, particularly given the strength of support at the AGM.

#### **4. Officer updates to be received**

##### **4.1 Finance updates – Bank rec and budget statement circulated**

Debra presented the bank reconciliation and budget monitoring statements, including figures up to November, and invited questions from members. The committee noted that the financial reporting system had improved considerably and that the monitoring statements were now a valuable tool for scrutiny.

Members discussed the presentation of variances and suggested that a simple pro-rata or 'straight-line' projection would help illustrate where income and expenditure might be expected to be at this point in the year, making it easier to differentiate genuine variances from those caused by the timing of annual or one-off payments.

Concerns were raised about the reduction in training income. Debra explained that this was due to a reallocation of income between October and November to correctly separate LALC's core training programme from other training delivered under separate arrangements (such as RPII). The decrease therefore reflected as an accounting adjustment rather than an actual drop in income. It was suggested that a short written or verbal narrative accompanying the financial information would help both the committee and the Executive understand such reallocations, and Debra agreed to provide a written report for the Executive meeting.

Members also discussed how NALC and LALC membership income is presented. While the current approach separates the two to show clearly how much is passed on to NALC and how much remains with LALC, it was felt that including a cumulative total in the notes would improve transparency. Debra agreed to add this as a note rather than merging the income lines, to avoid confusion.

The committee emphasised the need for financial information to be easy to navigate for new members. This led to a broader discussion about the presentation of salary costs. It suggested that it might be helpful to show staff costs broken down by officer role; however, several members expressed concern that this would pose GDPR and privacy risks. It was agreed that further consideration would be needed before making any changes.

Debra also reported that she and Val had completed a detailed review of training activity over the past three years, analysing income, expenditure and staff time for each course. It was noted that this work will support the sustainability of future training provision. Once finalised, the analysis will be shared with the committee, and a clearer breakdown of training finances will be incorporated into future reports.

The committee thanked Debra for her work and accepted the finance updates.

##### **4.2 Area Support Officer Update - Reports previously circulated**

Under this item it was noted that the Area Support Officer update reports, which should have been circulated in advance, had not been made available to members.

Officers present advised that they would circulate the reports before the Executive meeting.

## **5. Budget Planning 2026-2027**

The committee reviewed the draft budget information for 2026 - 2027. The Chair drew attention to the summary showing that, for the current year, the budget would use of approximately £36,000 from reserves. Members noted that projected income and expenditure, including an allocation of around £13,800 for projects, would need to be reviewed carefully to understand the actual likely draw on reserves by the end of the financial year.

Debra confirmed that there was currently around £122,000 in the bank but she had not yet completed a full year-end projection showing the likely closing balance after all known and anticipated expenditure. She advised that she would prepare this projection for the Executive Committee, including a clearer picture of how much of the project budget was actually committed or likely to be spent by year end.

The committee discussed what would be the appropriate level of reserves. Reference was made to common guidance that organisations should hold at least three months' worth of staff and office costs as a minimum reserve, and members agreed that this should be used as a benchmark by the Association. Any expenditure over and above that minimum would need to be justified in terms of benefits from projects and services to members. It was agreed that the Executive would need to decide which projects to prioritise and how comfortable they are drawing on reserves to fund them.

Cllr Phil Orme raised the issue of local government reorganisation (LGR) and reported a recent discussion with a district Chief Executive about unparished areas and the potential creation of new parishes. He suggested that LALC should consider setting aside a small budget for officer time and support to help establish new parish councils, as this can be a complex and time-consuming process. The committee agreed that this was a valuable suggestion and that such work could sit within one of the project streams, particularly the LGR/structural change project. Cllr Smith added that experience from Fylde, which had recently completed work to parish previously unparished areas, could be valuable and might be shared with other districts such as Wyre.

Concern was then raised that some project thinking seemed to be taking shape before the Executive committee had fully set its priorities. The Chair explained that she had gathered around 23 ideas and issues from the AGM and subsequent emails, and had grouped these into logical themes for potential task-and-finish groups. A draft paper setting out these grouped projects, along with indicative budgets, would be circulated to the Executive, who would then decide which projects to adopt, refine or discard. It was noted that this F&M meeting was therefore focused on understanding the current financial position, the scale of reserves, and the potential envelope for project funding, rather than on making final decisions about project priorities.

The role of Treasurer was also discussed under this item. It was recognised that LALC is still without a Treasurer and that much of the workload currently falls on Debra. The Chair confirmed that there had been some informal enquiries and

that, in any case, an honorarium would likely be necessary to attract a suitably qualified person. It was agreed that ideas about the Treasurer role, its responsibilities and remuneration, should be further developed and taken to the Executive committee for further discussion.

**6. Approve the LALC Secretary to have access to the NatWest Bank Account**

The committee considered a proposal that the LALC Secretary be granted access to the NatWest bank account in order to support the administration of banking alongside Debra. It was noted that this access is already reflected in the Secretary's job description, but the bank requires formal confirmation via a minuted decision. The proposal was proposed and seconded and agreed unanimously. This decision will now be forwarded to the bank so that the Secretary's access can be formally set up.

Proposed: Cllr. Phil Orme

Seconded: Cllr. Alan Neal

**7. Agree future meeting dates for Finance & Management Committee**

Members discussed the scheduling of future meetings of the Finance & Management Committee. It was noted that Wednesday at 5pm was suitable for members, and there was general agreement to continue with this arrangement. It was also agreed that the Executive Committee will continue to meet on Saturday mornings at 10am.

The committee also suggested to hold at least one face-to-face meeting each year. Debra suggested that when the annual diary is prepared, one Executive or F&M meeting should be earmarked as an in-person session, spaced sensibly away from both the AGM and the annual conference.

**8. Agree items for the next Finance and Management Committee meeting**

It was agreed that the agenda would focus on more detailed work around the project programme, including scoping and costing the proposed task-and-finish groups and reviewing the financial implications of any decisions taken by the Executive. Cllr Hampson suggested that, if there had been no progress by then, the committee should revisit the Treasurer position for a more structured discussion, including a clearer breakdown of what the role involves, the skills required, and potential honorarium. The Chair agreed that this would be appropriate once feedback had been received from the Executive committee.

**9. Items for Executive Committee meeting 13<sup>th</sup> December 2025**

The committee then discussed items to be taken forward to the Executive Committee on 13th December. Key items identified included: the draft project paper grouping issues raised at the AGM and subsequently; the financial projection to year-end and the draft budget framework for 2026 - 2027; the update on training review and training income/cost breakdown; the issue of support for parish creation and LGR-related work; the question of Treasurer recruitment and role definition; and governance matters arising from the AGM.

Following concerns expressed at the AGM about whether the Chair is properly referred to as Chair of LALC or Chair of the Executive Committee. The Chair reiterated her view that, as the role is elected by the Executive and ratified at the AGM, it is properly described as Chair of LALC, and Cllr Hamilton confirmed that this is consistent with practice at NALC.

**10. Future meetings listed below for your diary**

The Chair thanked members and closed the meeting at 6:10pm, noting that the next key date for the committee would be the Executive meeting on 13th December 2025.

Minutes drafted by: Jessica Dibble  
LALC Secretary  
05/12/2025

Finance & Management Wednesdays at time 5.00pm Virtual	Executive Saturdays at 10am virtual unless indicated
Saturday 13 December 2025	