

## **Draft Service Level Agreement (SLA)**

### **Between Lancashire Association of Local Councils (LALC)**

**and**

### **Member Council**

This SLA sets out the services, standards, and mutual commitments between the Lancashire Association of Local Councils (“LALC”) and the Member Council.

It clarifies the benefits of membership, service levels, escalation routes, and terms of notice.

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1 LALC is a membership body that provides advisory, training, and representational services to parish and town councils across Lancashire, Merseyside, and Greater Manchester.
- 1.2 The Council wishes to benefit from those services as part of its membership, subject to the terms of this Agreement.

#### **2. Service Provision**

LALC shall provide the following services to the Council:

- 2.1 Advisory support on local government law, governance, HR, finance, audit, data protection, planning, FOI and ethics.
- 2.2 Access to specialist partners, including VAT and financial advisers, HR & H&S consultants.
- 2.3 Access to NALC membership benefits, including legal topic notes, model documents, template policies, news bulletins, updates, sector booklets and more, through signing up for a website accessible account.
- 2.4 Training and qualifications: including training promoted on both the LALC & NALC websites, bespoke sessions, CiLCA mentoring and other sector related courses. Councils should check each course for any additional costs.
- 2.5 Representation at regional and national levels, including NALC.
- 2.6 Networking opportunities through Area Committees, the Annual General Meeting, and any conferences, networking or events arranged.
- 2.7 Dissemination of policy updates, newsletters, and circulars including best practice notes, recommendation lists for services such as insurance and audit.

#### **3. Service Standards**

LALC shall use reasonable endeavours to:

- 3.1 Maintain office hours of 09:00 to 17:00 Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays.
- 3.2 Acknowledge queries within two (2) working days.

- 3.3 Provide a substantive response within five (5) working days, or otherwise agree a plan with the Council.
- 3.4 Where matters are escalated to NALC or other partners, seek to ensure responses within fifteen (15) working days and forward such responses to the Council within one (1) working day of receipt.
- 3.5 Provide same-day triage where statutory deadlines fall within three (3) working days.

#### **4. Communications and Updates**

- 4.1 LALC will provide regular communications to member councils, including newsletters, sector updates, training opportunities, and compliance alerts.
- 4.2 Such communications will be distributed by email to the Council's nominated contact(s). It is the Council's responsibility to ensure LALC has the correct and current contact details.
- 4.3 Examples of such communications are set out in **Schedule 2** (Communications & Updates).

#### **5. Commencement and Termination**

- 5.1 The Agreement shall automatically renew for successive periods of twelve (12) months aligned with LALC's membership year, unless terminated.
- 5.2 Email the resignation to office@lalc.org.uk by the 30th September of any year; that resignation to be accompanied by a copy of the Minute recording the resolution of the Council. The resignation shall become effective on the 1st April following. Failure to issue notice of resignation will render each council liable for the subscription for the following year.
- 5.3 LALC may terminate this Agreement on thirty (30) days' written notice where the Council is in material breach and fails to remedy such breach within that period, or for persistent non-payment of membership fees.
- 5.4 LALC may, at its discretion, allow early exit on pro-rata fee terms in cases of local government reorganisation, amalgamation, or dissolution of the Council.

#### **6. Council Responsibilities**

The Council agrees to:

- 6.1 Keep contact details of its Clerk, RFO, and Chair updated with LALC.
- 6.2 Route advice requests through the Clerk, RFO, or Chair as much as possible.
- 6.3 Provide documents and information in a timely manner.
- 6.4 Ensure all dealings with LALC staff are courteous.
- 6.5 Share LALC updates and training opportunities with councillors and officers.
- 6.6 Circulate all newsletters, bulletins and circulars to all members of the Council, ensuring that both Councillors and the Clerk are kept up to date with the information distributed by LALC.

- 6.7 At the Annual Council Meeting include on the agenda the appointment of representatives to attend LALC Area Committee meetings, so that the Council has a nominated representative to participate and to collate and disseminate information received.
  - 6.8 Encourage participation in training events, whether attending new subject sessions or refresher sessions.
  - 6.9 Encourage all members of the Council to register for a NALC “My Account” and to receive NALC’s email communications.
  - 6.10 Utilise the template documents provided by NALC, such as Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Clerk contracts, and other resources, to ensure best practice.
  - 6.11 Undertake research or seek advice on new or complex situations the Council encounters, making use of LALC and NALC resources.
  - 6.12 Read and consider the advice, updates, and guidance provided by LALC and NALC to ensure the Council remains compliant and up to date.
- 7. Data Protection & Confidentiality**
- 7.1 Each party is a data controller in respect of its own processing.
  - 7.2 LALC shall process any Council data in accordance with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.
  - 7.3 Information shared shall remain confidential except where disclosure is required by law or to specialist partners (who shall be bound by equivalent confidentiality).
- 8. Governance**
- 8.1 The Agreement shall be reviewed annually by the Executive Committee.
  - 8.2 The AGM shall be held each November.
- 9. Complaints**
- 9.1 If the Council is dissatisfied with the handling of a query, it may escalate as follows:
    - Stage 1: LALC Adviser/Officer;
    - Stage 2: Chief Executive;
    - Stage 3: LALC Executive Committee representative.
  - 9.2 Complaints shall be addressed in writing in the first instance to LALC Officer.
  - 9.3 If unresolved, they shall be escalated to the Chief Executive within ten (10) working days.
  - 9.4 A final stage appeal may be made to an independent panel of the LALC Executive Committee within twenty (20) working days

## **10. Force Majeure**

Neither party shall be liable for delay or failure to perform caused by events beyond reasonable control.

## **11. Limitation of Liability**

The services provided by LALC under this Agreement are advisory in nature and are intended for the benefit of the Council as a corporate body, not for individual councillors or officers.

While LALC shall use reasonable skill and care in providing advice and information, LALC shall not be liable for any loss, cost, expense, or damage arising from reliance on such advice, whether direct, indirect, or consequential.

In particular, the Council acknowledges that any legal, financial, or other costs (including professional fees) incurred by the Council in acting on LALC's advice shall be the sole responsibility of the Council.

Schedule 1 below

## Schedule 1 – Glossary of Terms

**AGM** – Annual General Meeting of LALC.

**CiLCA** – Certificate in Local Council Administration.

**Clerk/RFO** – Clerk or Responsible Financial Officer of the Council.

**Executive Committee** – The governing committee of LALC elected by Area Committees.

**Fair Use Threshold** – The limit of routine support (five staff hours per issue per quarter).

**Internal Audit** – Audit services offered by LALC or appointed auditors under this Agreement.

**NALC** – National Association of Local Councils.

**Specialist Partners** – Third-party advisers retained by LALC to provide VAT, HR, audit, or legal support and others as they are retained.

## Schedule 2 – Communications & Updates

Examples of the types of updates provided to members include (but are not limited to):

- **Newsletter** – e.g. “LALC Update”. If a Council is not receiving such communications, they should check contact details with the LALC office.
- **Annual Meeting of the Council reminder** – Nomination of Council representatives to Area Committees. Engagement with Area Committees is strongly recommended, particularly in the context of Government’s devolution agenda.
- **Pay & sector news** – e.g. NJC Pay Award announcements.
- **Compliance guidance** – updates such as the Practitioners’ Guide (formerly JPAG / now SAPPP) changes circulated annually, highlighting issues.
- **Segregation of duties:** The Chair of the council or finance committee must not also serve as Clerk or RFO.
- **Digital and data compliance requirements:**
  - Email management
  - Website legal requirements and accessibility
  - FOI and GDPR compliance
  - Transparency code publication
  - Requirement for a Council IT Policy
- **NALC resources (via member login):**
  - Data Protection Policy guidance
  - Council email address guidance
  - Freedom of Information guidance
  - IT Policy guidelines
  - Transparency Code
  - Website accessibility and publishing guidance
- **Website resource (private login area)**

This feature is being worked on in 2026 and will be introduced soon.