



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes
Association of Local Councils

EMPOWERING CLERKS, COUNCILLORS AND COUNCILS DELIVERING FOR THEIR COMMUNITIES

Annual REPORT 2025

2024-2025



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INTRODUCTION

Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils (BMKALC), represents Town and Parish Councils in the geographic county of Buckinghamshire. It encompasses two Unitary Authorities, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. BMKALC is a non profit making association and is funded through subscription and training fees and grants from the two Unitary Authorities. Our Executive Board drawn from our diverse membership, represents the interests of Town and Parish Councils and determines the direction, priorities and budget of the Association.

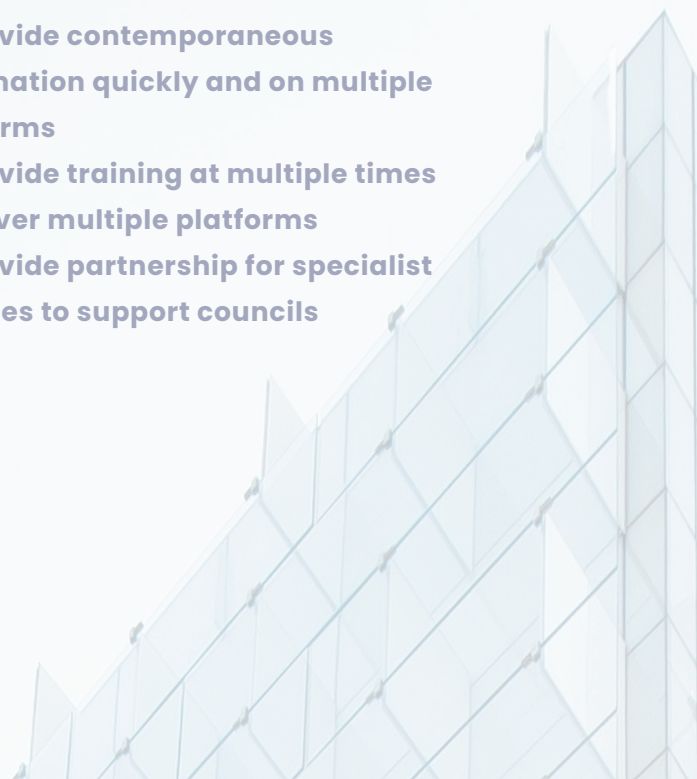
VISION

As a non profit making association, BMKALC is reliant on subscription fees, training income and grants to fund it's activities. Surplus income is ploughed back into developing and supporting member services. The Chief Executive Officer, Mel Woof, is responsible for the the overall development and delivery of service. Lorraine Morton is the Events and Communications Manager.

BMKALC seeks to empower its members councils through support and education in their mission to achieve the very best for their communities, whilst ensuring good governance, compliance, transparency and respect .

ASSOCIATION GOALS

- To achieve and retain 95% of council membership
- to operate within a defined budget
- to invest in easy to access basic governance skills for all councils
- to provide training for new specialist skills to equip councils for todays demand.
- to provide contemporaneous information quickly and on multiple platforms
- to provide training at multiple times and over multiple platforms
- to provide partnership for specialist services to support councils



KEY OBJECTIVES REVIEW FOR 2024 - 25

INTERNAL

Review the resilience and support of the online management system which incorporates both elements of website and customer relationship management. ✓

Undertake a data security review. 

Development of whole council training courses. ✓

COMMUNICATIONS

Attend MK and BC Parish Liaison and continue to develop closer working relationship throughout the County. ✓

Consider the role of AI in operations to ease repetitive comms workload. ✓

Continue The View from our Window weekly update to both Clerks and Councillors ✓

SERVICE OFFERS

Deliver Free Cllr Induction classes in May. ✓

Place Shaping 2025 - our Annual Conference 

Launch Bursary Scheme ✓

ADDITIONALLY

Establishing and maintaining contact with MP's

Joint course delivery with MKCC Legal Team

Working with NALC's Improvement Board – working party on Job Evaluation schemes

Working collaboratively with neighbouring ALC's to deliver cost effective training

Training an additional cohort of CiLCA candidates



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2024 - 2025

BMKALC Annual Review: Year Ending 31 March 2025

From the Chair of the Association – Cllr Des Bray

It is with great pride and gratitude that I present this review of an extraordinary year for our Association and for local councils across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

We began the year under a weakened Conservative government and concluded it with a newly elected Labour administration, whose ambitious agenda has already begun to reshape the landscape of local governance. The publication of the English Devolution White Paper in December 2024 and the subsequent Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) programme have had profound implications for our sector.

Buckinghamshire Council is now five years into its single unitary adventure with a significantly reduced cohort of Ward Councillors following a cull of 50 positions this last May. Milton Keynes continues as a unitary authority as the first fully parished unitary authority in England and is actively exploring regional mayoral opportunities.

The government's proposal to introduce Neighbourhood Area Committees (NACs) as intermediaries between communities and unitary authorities has raised important questions about democratic legitimacy—particularly in areas like Milton Keynes. Many of us rightly ask: Isn't this what parish and town councils already do?

We are pleased that the government confirmed in March 2025 that parish councils must be included in all reorganisation consultations, a recognition of our essential role in local democracy, although details remain sketchy at best.

Planning reforms from the Government have been swift and significant:

- Local Plans must now be completed within 2.5 years, reducing consultation time.
- Mandatory Housing Targets limiting local discretion and increasing development pressure.
- Grey Belt Development threatening rural character.
- Loss of Annual Position Statements weakening our ability to challenge speculative development.
- Design Codes offer a way to preserve local identity but require resources many smaller councils lack.

Milton Keynes City Council has embraced innovation, using digital planning tools such as gamified engagement, AI sentiment analysis, and 3D modelling. Parish councils are encouraged to engage with developers and apply for Section 106 funding and CIL funding, and MKCC has committed to early and ongoing consultation with parishes.



BMKALC Annual Review: Year Ending 31 March 2025 cont/d

Strategic planning in areas in our more urban areas dominate, while rural parishes face increased development pressure. Smaller councils continue to struggle with capacity and expertise.

To meet these challenges, we recommend:

- Forming coalitions to amplify influence.
- Investing in planning expertise.
- Engaging proactively with unitary authorities.
- Using Neighbourhood Plans and Design Codes to shape development.

BMKALC continues to operate with financial support from Buckinghamshire Council and Milton Keynes City Council, and we are grateful for the office and technical facilities provided by BC through the efforts of our Chief Executive Officer.

While we no longer have access to The Dining Room at Judges Lodgings, we remain committed to in-person engagement and will take our meetings and training sessions on the road.

It has now been three years since Melinda Woof took on the role of Chief Executive Officer. Together with Lorraine, they have transformed our operations and services. This year, we continued to add to our catalogue of Good Practice Notes and membership services and our Employee Support Programme continues to grow in popularity.

We are deeply grateful for the support of our President, The Lord Lieutenant, always so generous with her time and interest in our communities and our Executive Board Members who contribute their time and expertise.

Although training revenue was as predicted to be down this year, Mel and Lorraine delivered multiple bespoke course which supported to the normal framework and this bolstered our income. Mel and Lorraine have additionally developed a comprehensive Election Toolkit to support councils and prospective candidates which will be put to the test in the run up to the May 2025 elections.

We extend our sincere thanks to Great Linford Parish Council who at time of writing our NALC's Council of the Year, their efforts in community engagement and support are an exemplar to all councils.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to another successful year. Together, we continue to strengthen local democracy and deliver for our communities.

Warm regards,

Cllr Des Bray

Chair, Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils (BMKALC)



HONORARY TREASURERS REPORT - 2025

Honorary Treasurer's Report

Year Ending 31 March 2025

It is my pleasure to present this brief financial overview for the year ending 31 March 2025.

BMKALC continues to maintain a strong and stable financial position, with total income rising to £177,260, up from £165,453 the previous year. This increase was driven primarily by growth in training revenue, which rose to £35,660, reflecting the success of initiatives such as the Super Saturday induction events and the expansion of our training offer.

Core funding from Buckinghamshire Council (£15,000) and Milton Keynes City Council (£5,000) remains vital to our operations, and we are grateful for their continued support. Subscription income also saw a modest increase, reaching £111,814.

Expenditure for the year totalled £172,451, with the largest outlay being salary costs (£99,204), reflecting our commitment to strengthening the team and expanding member services. Notably, investment in training and events (£15,242) and NALC membership (£41,668) underscores our dedication to professional development and national representation.

The Association achieved a net profit of £4,804, and our net assets now stand at £263,087, supported by reserves of £95,000. This financial resilience positions us well for the planned recruitment of a Finance and Administration Support Officer and a Member Services Officer in the coming year.

As we look ahead, prudent financial management will remain central to our strategy, ensuring we continue to deliver high-quality services while adapting to the evolving needs of our members.

Cllr Isobel Darby

Honorary Treasurer

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils (BMKALC)



CEO REPORT 2024-2025

This has been a year filled with challenges for our members. Turmoil in Westminster and beyond has reverberated around our Towns and Villages, providing both opportunities and alarm, as the grip on Principle Authority purse strings tightened and cuts to local services became a reality.

It is of course, not for the first time we have faced these challenges, and it has been inspiring to see members stepping up to take on new services and projects. These not only fill the gaps left by cuts, but also develop our member councils unique service offering to their community. The evidence from this not simply borne out by our in-box, but by the number, size and ambition of the PWLB applications flowing through our office this year.

We set ourselves several targets for this year. We have been reviewing our online management system and are looking forward to revealing it to you in the next few weeks. Our whole council training courses have gone extremely well, and we also trialled a day long workshop with one of our larger members, producing a vision for council and following a thread to develop a project against their councillors vision.

Leading into the May Elections for 2025 we worked hard to produce our thirty-two-page interactive Elections Toolkit this is available as a public resource available on our website for all potential candidates and councils to access and use. Our thanks to the Electoral Teams and legal teams, at both Milton Keynes City Council and Buckinghamshire Council, who gave their time to review the document pre-publication.

Following the May elections in the Buckinghamshire Council area, we hosted two, free to members, Super Saturday, councillor induction events. Over the course of a 10 day period we trained over 70 councillors and some officers, to enable them to hit the ground running. Following this success we hope to be able to offer the same in Milton Keynes following their election cycle.

In support of May events and our new officer who have joined through out recent months, the team wrote and produced both a twenty three page Clerks Induction Booklet and a twenty page Councillor Induction booklet which was distributed as a bound hard copy to all Super Saturday attendees and Clerks Induction candidates. Both documents remain available to download in our Member Resources Library on our website.

Our bursary system was launched following the green light received at our AGM in November 2024.

We have been working more closely with the Bucks Branch of the SLCC, bringing together our combined skill sets and lobbying skills to support our council members and are planning a joint Clerks seminar day for the first quarter in 2026.



CEO report 2024-2025 cont/d

We were delighted and are grateful for the nomination to the 2024 Star Council Awards in the category of County Association of the Year. We like to think we work very hard at the things that are important to you and, in comparison to our 42 colleagues in England, we consistently punch above our weight. Whilst sadly we were once again pipped to the post, this time by Suffolk ALC, who were worthy winners, we hope that our efforts in the coming year will encourage a nomination for 2025.

Mentioning Suffolk ALC, highlights a challenge that I believe we will face over the next few years, that of National Strategic Infrastructure Projects. Sally and her team worked hard with Suffolk County Council to understand procedures and an agreed protocol to help assess and respond to NSIP's. Something which we desperately need. We will be visiting Sally to understand how they did this and see what we can bring back to Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes authorities.

Having managed with limited staffing resources it is time for some considered and careful expansion and we are looking forward to appointing a Finance and Administration Support officer as well as a Member Services Officer to meet the current demand for our support and to develop further member services.

Kind regards,

Mel Woof

CEO Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils (BMKALC)

NALC REPORT - 2025

The past year has been challenging for all of us with many changes occurring both locally and nationally, NALC has been involved in lobbying in many of the new bills and changes to Local Government. We as an organisation have been working with the other bodies involved in Local Government such as the LGA and SSLC to get our message to Ministers and Civil Servants, and there have been meetings with both the larger and smaller committees with the relevant departments.

Going forward AI poses many challenges and there has been work going on in the background to make NALC website will soon be adding AI to the website to make it easier to search for relevant subjects such as legal notes with the hope it speeds up finding Information, remember any member councillor can create an account, I would suggest using your council email address when prompted.

This year also saw the Star Awards going from strength to strength with a new category for climate/green projects, and it should also be noted that BMKALC were short listed along with Great Linford Council – deserved winner of Best Council – there is still time to nominate for the awards including Young Councillor (open to under 30's).

This years Best Practice visit built on recent years and is returning to pre-covid levels of engagement, next years Council has yet to be announced due to changes at the last election. Whilst the visit is usually to a large council the visit is open to any councillors to attend if they wish.

I note that this year's meeting is before the National AGM however I believe the current proposal on fees is in line with inflation as a guide. There are plans to review the current system going forward and there will be consultations with County Associations and Councils when the process begins, there is no current timeline on this so please be patient.

I would like at this point to thank Mel and Lorraine for their sterling work both for our Association and engaging with NALC at many levels – hopefully if we get short listed, we can go one better and win Best CALC!

And finally, I hope you continue to engage with your MPs and keep reminding them what a great job we do for very little expense to our electorate.

Cllr Paul Harvey
BMKALC – NALC Representative



2025 – 2026 Key Objectives

INTERNAL

Deliver the online management system which incorporates both elements of website and customer relationship management.

Undertake a data security review.

Review and deliver a best practice guide and Decision Tree for Procurement

To continue the drive for a 100% membership rate for the ALC

COMMUNICATIONS

Attend MK and BC Parish Liaison and continue to develop closer working relationship throughout the County.

Develop the role of AI in operations to ease repetitive comms workload.

Continue The View from our Window weekly update to both Clerks and Councillors



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - 2024 - 2025

Accountants' Report to Bucks and Milton Keynes
Association of Local Councils

In accordance with instructions given to us, we have prepared without carrying out an audit the annexed financial statements from the accounting records and from information and explanations supplied to us. As a practising member firm of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, we are subject to its ethical and other professional requirements which are detailed at www.accaglobal.com/en/member/professional-standards/rules-standards/acca-rulebook.html.

The report is made solely to you, in accordance with the terms of our engagement. Our work has been undertaken solely to prepare for your approval the accounts and state those matters that we have agreed to state to you in this report in accordance with the requirements of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants as detailed at www.accaglobal.com/content/dam/ACCA_Global/Technical/fact/technical-factsheet-163.pdf. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the proprietor of the business for our work or for this report.

We have not verified the accuracy or completeness of the accounting records or information and explanations you have given to us and we do not, therefore, express any opinion on the accounts.

APS Accountancy Limited
Chartered Certified Accountants
4 Cromwell Court
New Street
Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire
HP20 2PB

Detailed Profit and Loss Account
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

	2025		2024	
	£	£	£	£
Income				
Subscriptions	111,814		108,392	
Sales of Publications	-		411	
Training	35,660		25,894	
County Council Grant	15,000		15,000	
MK Grant	5,000		5,000	
Other Income	2,300		3,425	
		169,774		158,122
Other income				
Deposit account interest		7,486		7,331
		177,260		165,453
Expenditure				
Salary Costs	99,204		91,956	
Staff Training	144		-	
Conference, Committee & AGM	1,627		6,592	
NALC	41,668		37,805	
Other Publications	-		369	
Office Equipment	3,574		257	
Accountancy Fees	1,410		1,020	
Website	-		4,790	
Insurance	837		814	
Training & Events	15,242		8,564	
Other Expenses	1,279		1,499	
Depreciation	2,247		2,269	
Membership Support	5,065		4,118	
Bad debts	154		-	
		172,451		160,053
		4,809		5,400
Finance costs				
Bank charges		5		9
NET PROFIT		4,804		5,391

Bucks and Milton Keynes
Association of Local Councils

Balance Sheet
31 March 2025

	Notes	2025 £	2024 £
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible assets	1	<u>4,493</u>	<u>6,740</u>
CURRENT ASSETS			
Trade debtors		4,857	5,330
Bank account no. 1		124,639	103,112
Bank account no. 2		150,000	150,000
		<u>279,496</u>	<u>258,442</u>
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade creditors		(20,692)	(6,689)
Other creditors		(210)	(210)
		<u>(20,902)</u>	<u>(6,899)</u>
		<u>258,594</u>	<u>251,543</u>
NET ASSETS		<u><u>263,087</u></u>	<u><u>258,283</u></u>
FINANCED BY			
RESERVES AND FUNDS			
Reserves	2	95,000	95,000
Capital account	3	168,087	163,283
		<u>263,087</u>	<u>258,283</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

1. **TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS**

	Computer equipment £
COST	
At 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025	<u>15,102</u>
DEPRECIATION	
At 1 April 2024	8,362
Charge for year	<u>2,247</u>
At 31 March 2025	<u>10,609</u>
NET BOOK VALUE	
At 31 March 2025	<u>4,493</u>
At 31 March 2024	<u>6,740</u>

2. **RESERVES**

	Other reserves £
At 1 April 2024	<u>95,000</u>
At 31 March 2025	<u>95,000</u>

3. **CAPITAL ACCOUNT**

	2025 £	2024 £
Profit and Loss account b/fwd	258,283	252,892
Add		
Net profit	4,804	5,391
	<u>263,087</u>	<u>258,283</u>