



BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

Introduction

Avon Local Councils Association (ALCA) is a not for profit membership organisation, supporting Local (parish and town) Councils across the West of England (Avon) area. Local Councils are the grass roots and most important level of local government. ALCA is run by the Local Councils, for the Local Councils in the Avon area. This document sets out what we do, how we do it, the services we provide and the benefits that membership of the Association brings.

ALCA supports Local Councils to provide positive outcomes for the people in the parished areas of Bath & North East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire in partnership with the respective Unitary Authorities and other public and third sector organisations.

ALCA provides member councils with advice, training, information, advocacy and networking services. We do this by understanding the needs of member councils and developing resources locally and nationally to meet those needs. Unlike other organisations we work exclusively with Local Councils and after forty seven years in operation we have a membership of 94% in the Avon area.

Funding is obtained through annual membership subscriptions and through our own earned income streams, notably the Training & Development. Unlike other County Associations ALCA does not receive grant funding from the unitary authorities.

Member councils can turn to ALCA for support, advice and representation whether it is in developing a community project or finding a way through a local difficulty. ALCA aims to provide a friendly, professional and supportive service at all times.

Our relationship with the national body.



There is a county association in each county, unitary authority (or group of unitary authorities) in England and each one is independent from, but affiliated to, the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) based in London. County Associations of Local Councils are representative bodies for Local Councils (parish and town) in their area and play a key role in the work of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and are the first point of call. NALC supports the County Associations to provide the best and most up-to-date information and guidance.

ALCA's members are the Local (parish and town) Councils and parish meetings in Bath & North East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. Our members range from the smallest parish meetings with less than one hundred electors to the biggest town councils with more than twenty thousand electors. The diversity of the sector is its greatest strength because Local Councils are the level of local government closest to the people they serve.

Internal organisation

ALCA is run and managed by a Regional Committee of elected representatives from the membership - 4 Parish Councillors from each of the Unitary Authority (UA) areas, two non-voting special interest co-opted representatives and an Honorary Treasurer. 15 Members.

The Regional Committee meets 4 times a year to manage and administrate the organisation and raise issues from their contact with the membership Local Councils that need to be addressed at a national level by NALC. ALCA elects a Regional Committee member to represent them at a national level at NALC committee meetings.

The Chairman of the Regional Committee, the NALC Representative and the County Officer also work at a South West level. The Conference of Local Council Associations is a working partnership between Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Avon, Somerset, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall Associations.

There are 2 self-administrating UA Area Groups, operating in North Somerset and Bath & North East Somerset, who strive to work in partnership with their principal authority. There is currently not a UA Group in South Gloucestershire, but we do hold an AGM to select the representatives for the Regional Committee for that area.

Website

Email – avoncalc@gmail.com

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Not all of the Avon area has the privilege of local representation by a Local Council. The whole of the City of Bristol, the city of Bath and 4 wards of South Gloucestershire are currently unparished – ALCA is committed to developing local councils in those areas that currently lack local representation and the support a local council provides.

Benefits and Services

Being a member of ALCA is like having an extra person on your council team. Knowledgeable and experienced, there isn't much that we haven't seen before. And on the rare occasions that we cannot help we'll know someone that can. We offer face to face, telephone and e-mail support to all member councils through:

- Member Enquiry Service (MES) for straightforward, generic queries
- Free at the point of use advisory service for complex or council-specific enquiries
- Human Resources advice, from recruitment through personnel management to handling the end of the employment relationship
- Financial advice, including audit, governance and accountability
- Funding advice, including how to access external grant funding and administration of borrowing approval applications
- Free access to the Legal Team at NALC for "first instance" advice on legal matters

"It's like having an extra member of staff, but at much less cost and no management responsibility!"

Patchway Town Councillor

Training & Development

Membership allows access to events, briefings and seminars at member rates (doubled for non-members):

- Basic training courses for clerks and councillors
- Planning training
- Advanced training for those wanting to push their skills or develop specialist knowledge
- Formal qualifications, including the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA)
- Bespoke in-house training sessions so that the whole council learns together
- One-off briefings and seminars on topics of particular interest

The feedback from the training was really positive. Everyone found it really informative and helpful and learnt a lot from it.

Thank you for coming out to us

Best Wishes

Clerk Stanton Drew Parish Council

Information

Member councils rely on ALCA to keep them abreast of all the issues, legislation and developments affecting the sector so that they don't have to spend their own valuable time and resources doing so.

The information service includes:

- Regular e-mail briefings on topical issues
- Timely e-mail alerts on significant developments
- The monthly "InShort", e-mailed directly to the council's inbox
- The Association's web site, with an exclusive Members Only library area for key documents and templates
- Access to NALC bulletins, Legal Topic Notes and Legal Briefings

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Loan applications

ALCA is the body responsible for the checking and submission of Loan Sanction Approvals by all parish and town councils to the Secretary of State. In Avon we:

- will ensure that current criteria and implementation information is available to all councils
- advise Local Councils on the submission of loan sanction applications.
- check applications for compliance with government requirements.
- submit applications directly to the Ministry of Housing for Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for approval.

Voice & Representation

ALCA provides a framework for consultation and arrangements for the effective representation and promotion of local councils at local, regional and national levels. We work to maintain relationships with local government and community organisations to further the aims of Local Councils.

We do this through:

- Regular meetings with county, district and borough council officers and elected members
- Representing parish and town councils on boards and panels whose work impacts on our member councils
- As representatives to various outside bodies
- Responding to local, regional and national consultations that affect member councils
- Gathering member councils' views through the Area Group meetings, seminars and conferences, giving a direct voice to parish and town councillors and ensuring that the diverse nature of member councils is represented
- Representing parish and town councils in Avon at South West Conference of Local County Associations
- Lobbying the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) for policy and legislative changes to benefit member councils.

General

ALCA employs a County Officer - Deborah White. Subscription fees are currently well below the average when compared to other County Associations whilst services are ranked as good. ALCA consistently "bats above its weight" at national level. ALCA also collects the NALC subscription as a single cost to the council.

Post 2014 ALCA had no County Officer for the 3 preceding years and despite only having very modest increases to membership subscriptions rates in the last six years the organisation has grown markedly and has become independent, autonomous and fit for purpose



Parish and town councils are stronger together, and by collectively supporting ALCA are assured of quality services, value for money and a strong voice.

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