SERVING LOCAL COUNCILS IN SHROPSHIRE AND TELFORD & WREKIN

Affiliated to the National Association of Local Councils

Celebrating over 75 Years serving Parish and Town Councils in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin

ANNUAL REPORT AND AUDITED ACCOUNTS 2025-26

The President, Katrina Baker MBE



Can you believe that another year has passed, where do the weeks go?

Your association has had another very busy year, not only because of the pro-active work of the Executive and Officers, but also we have noticed how busy all our Member Councils are.

There are so many amazing projects and outstanding work within our parish & town councils – all the Clerks, Councillors, Officers and Volunteers do an amazing job, supporting and representing our communities.

Our work with partners and stakeholders has proved to be very effective and we value all the help, support and guidance that we are then able to share with you all.

I would like to extend my thanks to Chris and Gail and to the Executive – to Sylvia (as Chairman) and to Allan and Rosemary (as Vice Chairmen), the members who represent the Area Committees from Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin and other members of the Executive.

As our Association gets bigger, and offers more services, the workload also increases – and I am very grateful for the time given to attend the meetings, working groups and to those who represent us on various outside bodies and organisations. I believe that SALC offers a significant service to our members, over and above that support which is available by other County Associations – members of SALC are fortunate to get this additional information and guidance at no extra cost.

However, my personal thanks also go to our members – Clerks and Councillors. Your support for our work is much appreciated, and we value your feedback on the services, training and guidance that we are able to offer you. Thank you for the invitations I have received to attend some of your meetings and events – I am very fortunate to be able to attend to represent our Association and to see the work of local council clerks and councillors which I very much enjoy. When I am unable to make a specific date, I am always grateful to my Vice Presidents who often step in to represent us – this is always appreciated.

We are in both changing and challenging times – the outcome of Community Governance Reviews, the changes to the NPPF, our work to support and encourage sustainability in all we do, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and so much more – these will bring with them new and exciting roles and responsibilities, but also different ways of working and possibly higher expectations from our communities.

I do believe that the important work undertaken by volunteers within parish & town councils is not only very much appreciated but also vital – within many projects, the volunteer work is essential for the local councils to achieve their aims and objectives within their strategic plans.

My final thank-yous go to The Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire, Anna Turner, West Mercia Police, Community Resource, Society of Local Council Clerks, NALC, Middle Marches Community Land Trust, Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council – your support for our work continues to be important to us and we are always very grateful.

Katrina Baker, MBE

President

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The Chairman, Cllr Sylvia Pledger

It does not seem possible that the end of 2026 is so close, and that I am approaching the end of my first year as your chairman.

As some of you know, this has been a difficult year health wise for me, as I had the two new strains of COVID in October 2025. This has been followed by months of side effects and culminating in being diagnosed with 'long COVID'.

Because of this I have not attended as many of the Area Committees, as I would liked to have done.

I and our vice-chairmen have met regularly with the Leaders of Shropshire Council, every two months. These meetings have been invaluable in building a good working relationship and mutual respect. Many topics, from potholes, metal signs left on the roadside, to village wardens and flags are discussed, and many have been resolved.

We also have meetings with Telford Leaders and are hopeful of these becoming bimonthly.

SALC is a member of the WMCALC and meets every three months in Birmingham. I have attended all of these in 2026, supported by vice chairman Cllr Allan Wilson and our Chief Officer. It is good to meet and discuss what our priorities are for all of these. We do not always agree with each other, but it has highlighted how much good work Shropshire has and is doing to support our residents. I was chairman for the last meeting, as we change chairman for each meeting.

Another really useful group we have is the Joint Working Group with Shropshire Council. This has participants from a varied section of voluntary groups, Council and organisations within Shropshire. We meet every two months.

As all Parish and Town Council chairmen will know, we have an on-line meeting every two months for the chairmen and the SALC chairman. These are informal meetings and an opportunity to share information and raise any issue of concern. Chairmen can speak about anything at these meetings in a safe environment.

A new experience for me, was being asked to read at Church Services celebrating Shropshire Day on the 22nd of February. There was a reader representing Shropshire and one representing Telford and Wrekin, so I read in a T&W Church and a member from T&W read in a Shropshire Church. It was a lovely event, and I was honoured to have been asked to represent SALC.

On the 24th of February, I attended The Star Council Awards in London. Listening to what Councils throughout England have been doing and how much difference some of this work has made for communities and individuals, made me think that we should apply for this award. Shropshire was able to celebrate Oswestry Town Council being named as Council of the Year and Shrewsbury Town Councillor, Cllr Alex Wagner was shortlisted as a finalist for Young Councillor of the Year. We do so much. So, the Executive committee agreed that, yes, let's apply for this award. We submitted our bid in September and are now hoping that we might at least be shortlisted. Thank you to members who helped put together our bid. We have to wait until February for the results.

In June, Cllr Allan Wilson & I attended NALC's annual conference in London. This was well attended and a very useful day, including a session with the Minister. I was fortunate enough to be able to ask the Minister a question on the absence of a new standards framework for parish & town councils from the King's Speech. The Minister was sympathetic to the need for a new framework and said the Government remained committed to its introduction in due course.

I was asked to be a member of an Assessment Panel, to help shortlist for the new Chief Executive of Shropshire Council. There were members of the Fire and Rescue Service, Social Workers, Voluntary Groups, Education, Police and many more. I and Shrewsbury Town Council Clerk, Helen Ball, represented SALC.

Our Executive Committee continues to meet regularly. A major topic we discussed was the Terrorism Act, known as Martyn's Law. This will be a legal requirement from April 2027, for events and venues who hold any events. There are different levels of what has to be done. We decided that we could put on a Training event, to publicise and educate Councillors, Clerks and Chief Officers. After much hard work, working with Shrewsbury Town Clerk, Helen Ball, we held a Conference at Shrewsbury Football Club on the 2nd of June. This was attended by delegates from all over England, as far as Truro and Durham. Over 80 delegates attended on the day.

NALC is currently carrying out a strategic review of its relationship with county associations. The outcome will be known by the end of the current calendar year. Whilst some themes are emerging the final outcome is not yet known.

Telford & Wrekin Council completed its community governance review during the year, and local Councils are currently working through the changes ready for going live on 1st April next year.

I have to thank Cllr Allan Wilson for all the work he has done and continues to do, as our Local Nature Recovery lead. Last year working with Middle Marches Community Land Trust, SALC organised its second LNRS Conference in Ellesmere. It was a very wet day but so many people attended, and it was a brilliant event. Following on from this success, we have two events this November, one in the Shropshire area at Norbury and one in the Telford and Wrekin at High Ercall. The work Allan does has inspired some Councils to start rewilding roadside verges. We must thank Shropshire Council for agreeing to this.

My thanks go to both Cllr Rosemary Abbiss and Cllr Allan Wlison, SALC's vice chairmen for all their help and support during the last year and to our President, Katrina Baker, MBE, for the work she does to support the Association and raise our profile across the county.

Thank you also to all our members who make what we do possible.

Thank you to our deputy CO, Gail Power, for all the help and advice and for ensuring that we are a financially stable organisation. Dianne Dorrell has given so much to this organisation over many years, and I am so pleased that she still supports us in her role as a vice-President.

Lastly, I must thank our Chief Officer for his work and commitment. I am delighted to have Chris Mellings as our Chief Officer. Chris is very professional in everything he does and has the ability to work well with everyone. Thank you, Chris, for your help and patience while I have struggled with health issues this year.

Thank you to you our Councils and Parish Meetings for all the work you do across your communities. So much great work is carried out across Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin which makes our sector what it is.

Cllr Sylvia Pledger

Chairman

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Chief Officer's Report

Well, here we are again, with another Annual Report and our 2026 AGM almost upon us!

It has certainly been an interesting, varied and challenging twelve months. It has also been a pleasure to meet many of our members and external partners during the year. Despite the challenges facing the sector, our member councils & parish meetings continue to undertake some fantastic work and make a real difference to their communities. From our engagement nationally, it is clear that councils & parish meetings across Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin are punching above their weight, with much that can be shared as good practice elsewhere. Thank you for everything that you do for your communities.

The past year has also been one of considerable change for parish & town councils and parish meetings Alongside our day-to-day support for members, SALC has continued to develop its role as the representative voice of the sector, increasingly acting as a bridge between our members, the two principal authorities and NALC. This has been particularly important as councils respond to significant changes in devolution, service delivery, governance, planning, financial accountability and technology.

We continue to enjoy nearly 100% membership across Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, something of which we should be enormously proud. We cannot, however, take that support for granted. We must continue to listen to our members, demonstrate the value of a strong county association and continually look for ways to improve the support, representation and advocacy we provide.

Supporting our members

Providing appropriate guidance, support, information and training remains at the heart of our work. Demand for advice has continued to grow and throughout the year we have provided regular briefings containing information, events,

resources and signposting, alongside sharing examples of good practice and innovative projects undertaken by member councils & parish meetings.

Our training programme has continued to develop, covering subjects including governance, finance, planning, project management, cyber security and artificial intelligence. Members also benefit through their NALC subscription from additional training, advice and support. We continue to review the programme in response to the changing needs of the sector and have been working with regional colleagues to advocate appropriate mandatory training for parish councillors. My thanks go to Gail for her hard work in developing and managing our training programme. We also arrange periodic online briefings for members on topics of interest such as the hospital transformation project, broadband / mobile phone connectivity and BT's digital switch over.

A particular highlight in the last 12 months was our Martyn's Law conference, which attracted councils and organisations from across England, providing an important opportunity both to prepare for the new legislation and to share learning beyond Shropshire. Our particular thanks go to Helen Ball, Town Clerk, Shrewsbury Town Council, for the hard work and support she provided in delivering the conference. Helen is actively involved nationally in preparing for Martyn's Law and as an Association we are fortunate to benefit from her expertise. We have also supported councils in preparing for changes in financial governance, including AGAR Assertion 10 and the forthcoming move towards digital AGAR submissions.

Representing the sector

During the year we have placed particular emphasis on strengthening our relationships with both principal councils. We appreciate the dialogue we have developed at political and officer level and the opportunity this provides to understand the challenges facing our partners, while representing the interests of our members, stressing the importance of our sector as a key partner and, where necessary, acting as a constructive critical friend. We have supported members through attendance at the Clerks meetings with Telford & Wrekin Council and the Executive's Joint Working Group with Shropshire Council.

Devolution and the changing relationship with Shropshire Council have been a major focus. SALC has engaged closely as proposals for greater local delivery of

services have developed, including the street-scene pilots and subsequent discussions with councils participating in the Memorandum of Understanding. Our priority is to ensure parish and town councils are fully involved in decisions affecting their communities and are appropriately supported where they choose to take on additional responsibilities.

In Telford & Wrekin, where appropriate we have supported the sector through the Community Governance Review and preparations for the new arrangements taking effect in April 2027, including the establishment of five shadow councils. At the same time, attention is increasingly turning towards the May 2027 local council elections and the challenge of encouraging more people to stand for election and participate in local government.

These local developments sit within a much wider national debate about devolution, strategic authorities and neighbourhood governance. SALC will continue to ensure that the implications for parish & town councils and parish meetings are understood and that our sector has a voice as these arrangements develop.

Responding to emerging issues

Planning has become an increasingly important part of our work. SALC has responded to consultations and represented members' concerns about changes to planning arrangements, while considering the implications of national planning reforms for neighbourhood planning and the ability of parish and town councils to influence development in their communities. We have also facilitated the opportunity for members to hear first-hand on developments relating to Shropshire's Local Plan and will continue to remain engaged throughout the process to support our members and local communities.

Through our Vice Chairman and lead member, Cllr Allan Wilson, and working in partnership with Shropshire Council and the Middle Marches Community Land Trust, SALC has also continued to support development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy across Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. Later in November we are holding two LNRS conferences to highlight projects to date and further support our members and local communities. Our thanks go to Allan and particularly to Edgton Parish Clerk Janet Cobb for their hard work, commitment and leadership. Supporting parishes to develop their own local response to

nature recovery will remain a priority for the Association. and we look forward to working with and encouraging parishes to develop their own local response.

Through discussions with Shropshire Council, we have also sought to try and ensure that communities hosting major solar developments receive meaningful and continuing community benefits. Our Joint Working Group with Shropshire Council has also looked at a wide range of issues affecting our members and local communities.

Technology is another area where change is happening rapidly. We have begun exploring both the opportunities and challenges associated with artificial intelligence, including incorporating AI into our training programme. A number of Shropshire councils also assisted NALC in testing its new NORA online resource assistant, demonstrating once again the willingness of our members to contribute to innovation across the national sector.

Strong and effective local councils

SALC continues to promote the **Civility and Respect** agenda. We believe civility and respect are fundamental to effective local governance, constructive debate and maintaining public confidence. The SALC Executive has signed the pledge, and we encourage member councils that have not already done so to consider making the same commitment.

Our Area Committees remain an important part of the Association. During the year we have continued to attend meetings and provide regular reports on SALC's work and current issues. We are also reviewing their structure and operation to identify what works well, where improvements can be made, how we can better support their work and strengthen engagement with our members.

We have maintained our strong relationship with NALC, contributed to its Project Keystone strategic review and encouraged greater engagement by councillors and officers with the resources available nationally.

It was particularly pleasing to see Shropshire recognised nationally through the NALC Star Council Awards, with Oswestry Town Council named Council of the Year and Cllr Alex Wagner of Shrewsbury Town Council a finalist for Young Councillor of the Year. Our congratulations to them both and again is indicative of the strength of our sector across Shropshire.

Oswestry's subsequent selection to host the 2027 NALC Study Tour will provide a further opportunity to showcase the strength and innovation of our sector here in Shropshire.

Looking ahead

The environment in which parish &town councils and parish meetings operate is changing rapidly. Devolution, evolving neighbourhood governance, the Governments plans for Re-Wiring the State, planning reform, local plans, greater expectations around local service delivery, financial accountability, technological change and the 2027 elections will all bring both challenges and opportunities.

SALC's role is therefore increasingly about more than responding to individual requests for guidance and support. We need to anticipate change, influence its implementation, build capacity and resilience within our sector and ensure the collective voice of parish & town councils and parish meetings is heard locally, regionally and nationally.

There will always be more we can do. If there are areas where members believe we can improve our services, training or advocacy, please let us know.

Finally, I would like to thank Shropshire Council for its continued support in providing SALC with office accommodation, IT and audit services. I also want to thank our President, Chairman, Vice Chairmen and Vice Presidents for the phenomenal amount of work they undertake on behalf of the Association. We are extremely fortunate to have their commitment. My thanks also go to our Executive Committee for its work, support and valuable advice throughout the year.

Most importantly, thank you to all our member councils & parish meetings, councillors, clerks and officers for the work you undertake on behalf of your communities.

We look forward to continuing to work with, representing and support you throughout 2027.

Chris Mellings
Chief Officer

Finance

Using Scribe accounting software, our accounts are recorded on a Receipts and Payments basis. The Auditor quoted, once again, that the maintenance of the accounts is of a good standard. The statement of financial activities shows that for the financial year 2025/26 total income was £182,629.79 and total expenditure was £174,824.59, resulting in a surplus for the year of £7,805.20.

The overall balance was £120,053.21; this includes £36,290.51 Public Sector Deposit Fund Shares and £7.40 Reserve Account.

This money is kept as a contingency fund should this be required.

Our thanks again to Shropshire Council for their continued support in providing audit services, and serviced office accommodation.

Gail Power
Deputy Chief Officer & Responsible Finance Officer

SHROPSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (SALC)
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT
FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL 2025 TO 31ST MARCH 2026

	2025/26		2024/25	
	£	£	£	£
Balances Brought Forward				
Cash at Bank - Current Account	77,411.23		85,166.52	
Cash at Bank - Reserve Account	7.28		8,595.86	
Public Sector Deposit Fund	34,829.50		25,000.00	
		112,248.01		**118,762.38**
Receipts				
ALC Affiliation Fees	128,760.66		115,956.63	
NALC Affiliation Fees	29,397.00		27,696.66	
Training	20,074.00		8,703.50	
Bank Interest - Public Sector Deposit / Reserve	1,461.13		1,587.63	
AGM	750.00		1,000.00	
Ad Hoc Services	-		536.53	
Area Committee Fees	780.00		225.00	
Conference	1,407.00		70.00	
Publications	-		11.40	
		182,629.79		**155,787.35**
Payments				
Salaries	121,317.22		116,170.26	
NALC Affiliation Fees	29,497.79		27,660.89	
Training	9,755.40		5,942.08	
Pension Fund Deficit	3,500.00		3,300.00	
AGM	1,795.30		1,522.34	
ALC Affiliation Fees	10.00		1,199.03	
Travel Expenses	1,093.50		603.80	
Insurance	767.83		596.36	
Ad Hoc Services	-		536.53	
Chairman's Allowance	500.00		500.00	
Area Committee Fees	990.00		417.08	
Office Expenses	996.18		250.98	
Website	288.55		246.24	
Bank Charges	257.70		212.45	
Executive Committee Meetings	224.99		194.25	
Conferences	2,146.40		1,463.10	
Payroll Service	1,296.37		992.57	
Regional Support	387.36		447.36	
Civic Expenses	-		46.40	
		174,824.59		**162,301.72**
		120,053.21		**112,248.01**
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year		**7,805.20**		**(6,514.37)**
Balances Carried Forward				
Cash at Bank - Current Account	83,755.30		77,411.23	
Cash at Bank - Reserve Account	7.40		7.28	
Public Sector Deposit Fund	36,290.51		34,829.50	
		120,053.21		**112,248.01**
		120,053.21		**112,248.01**

Note to the Accounts: The prior year figures have been restated to reflect the accurate position.