



CORPORATE BUSINESS PLAN

2019-2021

'our vision is to provide specialist services that enable local councils to excel in the performance of their duties.'

Suffolk Association of Local Councils

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past 12 months we have been working hard to review the way we serve members. Following a change in leadership, we took the opportunity to introduce better ways to communicate, advise, engage and represent the local council community across Suffolk. Our short-term strategy published last year has already delivered lots of change and received positive feedback from stakeholders across the County and beyond.

As a Board we have ambitious plans that aim to fulfil our new vision **‘to provide specialist services that enable local councils to excel in the performance of their duties.’** The biggest challenge for us is to ensure we serve all our members adequately, from the smallest parish meeting or council through to medium and large parish and town councils. We recognise that we must protect the networks that engage our members, seek opportunities for collaboration alongside effective communications that reach all parishes across Suffolk.

A major piece of work over recent months has been a roots and branch review of the SALC Constitution and this is updating the way we work. A new logo and key message ‘stronger together’ we believe demonstrates our commitment to our new long-term priorities – **growth, value and representation.** These objectives provide clearer links into the local economy, environment and the health and wellbeing of our communities. We are excited about our new strategic direction and confident it will deliver benefits for communities across Suffolk.

The SALC Board

OVERVIEW

There are approximately 10,000 local councils and 80,000 local councillors across England in a layer of the public sector often referred to as the grass roots of local democracy.

SALC is a not-for-profit member based organisation supporting this important first tier of the public sector and forms part of a national network of 41 county associations. SALC is an associate member of NALC; the only national body catering for the needs of local councils.

In 1950 SALC was set up to:

- assist members in the performance of their duties;
- to protect and promote the interests, rights, functions and privileges of members;
- to promote good local government through advice and training;
- to promote and develop the social, cultural and recreational life of parishes and villages and;
- to promote a widespread and well-informed interest in local government.

Today SALC is recognised as Suffolk's leading advisory service supporting local councils' corporate interests. Whilst these original aims are still relevant today, the local government environment has and will continue to experience major change resulting in reduced public services that have and will continue to impact local communities.

SERVICE DESCRIPTION

Membership of SALC is more than an insurance policy; it provides local councils with specialist independent support through advice, training, information and representation. It is a paid service and subscriptions are calculated based on number of electors and represent approximately 60% of the income needed to run SALC. The balance is achieved through the take up of additional "low cost" paid services and a small grant from Suffolk County Council.

Members access services by phone, email or through our website. Regular advice topics include local council administration, governance, standards and business management. Updates and

news take the form of fortnightly and quarterly digital bulletins that highlight current and emerging local and national topics in the local council sector.

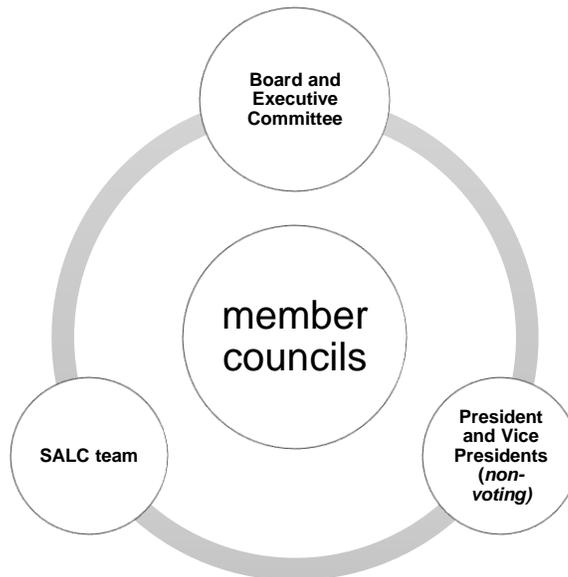
Members are also offered free places to a variety of face to face events such as workshops and conferences alongside networking opportunities. These focus on translating initiatives or highlight legislative changes into the right context; allowing members to assess risks and/or opportunities for their communities. This approach also helps aid local growth and development (including funding options). SALC builds on its highly valued training and guidance and has recently started to introduce online support and updates that compliment policies and procedures, toolkits and legal topic notes. These sector specific products and services are developed locally and in partnership with NALC.

Finally, SALC uses both its local and national reputation to engage and represent members at all levels with all relevant stakeholders. This includes dialogue with NALC, district, borough and county councils in Suffolk, local MPs and other public sector groups and membership bodies such as Community Action Suffolk and the Society of Local Council Clerks. It also includes joint conferences, workshops and the promotion of events in local areas and roles on strategic boards such as most active county and involvement in network groups such as police, crime prevention, safer neighbourhood and speedwatch schemes. The development of partnership working in this way is critical in the public sector to help reduce duplication and unnecessary cost.

As part of its commitment to support the delivery of efficient and effective council services, SALC have developed a suite of very low-cost optional services which offer exceptional value. These include payroll, internal audit, HR support, legal casework and training.

Local councils in membership have a unique opportunity to play an important role in both the strategic direction of SALC and decision-making. Representation on the SALC Board also protects and informs the interests of local councils. There are a number of ways members can engage, such as through the network of area forums that regularly take place in various locations.

SALC has a simple operational structure with a small team (3.4 full time equivalents). The office is based in leasehold premises at Claydon. SALC has a President and 6 Vice Presidents who provide additional support and guidance.



ANALYSIS

Today the roles and responsibilities local councils have in managing delivery of services to its communities has never been more complex or challenging. Suffolk is one of the largest parished counties in England. SALC has a high level of take up of membership (averaging 90%) but wishes to increase this to 100%.

Over the last decade the impact of reduced services and financial constraints has taken its toll; particularly in relation to highways, planning and local policing. These continue to be regular topics for lobbying and causes of frustration in communities.

In April 2019 the democratic landscape in Suffolk changed with the creation of two new district councils (mergers in the east and west) alongside two central Suffolk authorities working more closely.

In October 2018 the SALC Executive Committee considered a selection of tactics in relation to developing a longer-term plan. In addition, operational knowledge and experience was captured using SWOT and PEST business tools. This analysis has been used to identify future priorities.

To evaluate the planned direction of travel, the CEO has visited a number of local town and parish councils to better understand local challenges and the SALC Chairman has attended a variety of area forums.

Finally NALC's prospectus for ultra-localism provides an important link with national issues in the local council sector. This establishes the importance of SALC's role in the network of county associations across England and Wales.

PRIORITIES

SALC's long-term priorities:

VALUE – SALC will

- support delivery of efficient and effective public services
- develop new income streams and revenue plans
- create opportunities to increase member-inclusive services
- increase local, regional and national partnerships
- deliver high-quality services

REPRESENTATION – SALC will

- establish effective processes for local and national lobbying
- promote a diverse and well-informed interest in local government
- seek collaborative opportunities for the benefits of local councils
- modernise to maintain engagement and representation

GROWTH – SALC will

- continue to invest in developing digital solutions
- seek opportunities to expand our in-house service offer

- promote local economic and sustainable growth
- grow membership aiming for 100% of local councils in Suffolk
- support initiatives that promote strong, healthy and resilient communities

COMUNICATION STRATEGY

SALC is committed to promoting its service and consolidating its position as a key player in the public sector arena. The new communication strategy will use the following framework:

workstreams – context – audience/relationships – approach/target audience

Projects will link directly into long-term objectives and build on the refreshed reputable brand.

Key messages will include:

- local council representation.
- Stronger together – one voice.
- Value for money.
- Partnerships and collaboration to benefit public sector.
- Opportunity to influence local sustainable growth.
- Commitment to community development.
- High quality services.
- Innovative and appetite for change.
- Skills development.

Activities will include:

- Branding – promotion of SALC and NALC and benefits of membership.
- Increased media activities that demonstrate expertise, value, innovation, networks, voice.
- Seminars, workshops, conferences, roadshows, e-learning, promotional videos, blogs and news articles.
- Ongoing website development.
- Regional networking.
- Collaboration and partnerships for common goals.
- Raise awareness of the role of councils.
- Promote elections and opportunities from being a councillor.