

**Background papers for the meeting of Langley with Hardley Parish Council meeting 6 June 2023.**

**ITEM 6 To discuss Councillor training and costs and agree on a course of action.**

Langley with Hardley Parish Council subscribe to the Norfolk Association of Local Councils (Norfolk ALC). Norfolk ALC can offer the following (e-mail from the Training Officer);

There are two options: Zoom or on-site.

I can come to your council for a one-day training course which will be £180 + VAT (normally this would be £360 + VAT but is discounted for this financial year only). I am available Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays for on-site training.

Alternatively, councillors can be booked on a Zoom course at £30 + VAT per person per course.

Zoom courses can be booked at <https://bookwhen.com/norfolkalc> and on-site courses are booked through myself.

Yours

Jimmy Miller  
Training Officer,  
Norfolk Association of Local Councils.

There is a second provider of training to Councillors in Norfolk. Norfolk Parish Training and Support. Details are available on their website [norfolkpts.org](http://norfolkpts.org). Langley with Hardley Parish Council does not subscribe to Norfolk PTS so the full fee would be payable. This is £60 for zoom course.

**The Clerk recommends that Councillors book with Norfolk ALC- either in person or Zoom training.**

**ITEM 7 To discuss joining the Norfolk ALC .gov.uk pilot scheme and agree on a course of action.**

Further details can be found here (e-mail from IT Officer);

You either signed up to our original Gov.uk email pilot scheme or asked to be kept updated on the project. Please see the below announcement from our email newsletter yesterday.

I have re-sent this information to you as you may not be subscribed to our newsletter. We will not email you again about this unless you sign up for the new pilot linked at the bottom of this email.

Thanks,

Kevin

In November 2022 we invited Councils to express an interest in a pilot scheme to be run with the Government's Digital Cabinet Office to provide Councils in Norfolk with [.gov.uk](#) domain names and email addresses for all staff and councillors. It was very popular and a lot of you signed up, thank you.

A [.gov.uk](#) domain name used by your council:

- Shows your services are from a trusted UK public sector organisation
- Helps to build trust, credibility and visibly demonstrates authenticity
- Your website and service will show up higher in search results
- Provide official email accounts for your councillors as well as for your Clerk and other staff.
- Ability to control email accounts by removing staff when they leave
- Emails are more likely to be cleared by security/spam filters
- Increases transparency of smaller organisations when public servants use corporate email accounts instead of personal email accounts for official government business
- Fulfils best practice guidelines as outlined in the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners' Guide 2021

Unfortunately we received no answers from the Government when we reported these results and it has been very difficult to communicate with them due to various delays their end. When we did establish contact it soon became clear the pilot on offer from them was not what we'd been led to believe and was sadly not suitable for us. The Government is currently looking to work with 10 councils (and their existing domain name registrars) throughout the UK and is not looking to provide email directly. We have raised our disappointment about this with local MPs.

We feel providing [.gov.uk](#) domain names is important so we decided to look elsewhere and investigate other ways to provide them.

We are **pleased to announce** that we will be running our own pilot scheme to provide your council with a [gov.uk](#) domain name, email accounts for all staff and councillors and a website - spaces will be limited. This will be managed by us and use a reliable domain host who have been established 15 years and whom already host 400+ local councils and are also used by other County Associations.

Your council will need to pay for the following:

- [.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) domain name registration - £112 + VAT every two years (this is a standard cost and term, set by the Government)
- Management and administration fee - emails and website - £70 per year

As this new pilot is different from the original we felt it best to ask you to express your interest again, please do so below by **July 1st 2023**.

After the 6 week period we will select **15** local councils and invite them to join the pilot service with further invites to follow in future.

Please note the following:

- This pilot is offered to Norfolk ALC **members only**
- Only councils who do not use a [.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) domain name at present are eligible
- Our service does not provide Microsoft 365 (though you can use the email account within Outlook if you purchase the software separately)
- If you have an existing Norfolk Parishes website it can be moved to this new service

**[Express your interest now](#)**

Kevin Bacon

IT Officer,

Norfolk Association of Local Councils

County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2UF

[www.norfolcalc.gov.uk](http://www.norfolcalc.gov.uk)

**The Clerk recommends that Councillors joins this pilot scheme.**

**ITEM 9 To discuss the purchase of replacement reference books and agree on a course of action.**

Councillors are asked to consider purchasing replacement reference books, specifically the Clerk's Manual and the Arnold Baker book. A member of the public who has done some research into this after noticing the Arnold Baker book was removed from the Council's asset register has suggested the Council would benefit from owning a copy, a view shared by the Clerk. The Arnold Baker Book on Local Council Administration is described as;

*“Arnold-Baker on Local Council Administration has long been established as the guide to this specialist field of local government law. Among local councillors it is often referred to as ‘the bible’. It is a complete statement of the law relating to parish and community councils through an extensive, though succinct, narrative accompanied by relevant statutory materials.”*

The book is published by Lexis Nexis Butterworth and priced at £164.99. It is available through the Society of Local Council Clerks, of which the Clerk is a member, for £137.00. The current edition is 13. Whilst previous editions are available at a cheaper price, this is not recommended as the book is about government law and needs to be up to date.

The Clerk’s Manual held by the Parish was published in 2000. It is an excellent resource for the Clerk – a manual of what needs to be done in the Clerk’s year, when and how. It is published by the Society of Local Council Clerks and the 2023 edition is priced at £52.30 including postage. The Clerk considers this text essential to the role.

**The Clerk recommends that Councillors purchase both suggested texts and whilst the books are used by the Clerk that they remain the property of the Parish Council, not any one individual.**

**Item 10. To receive an outline paper on the provision of banking by Unity Bank. This is for information only at this stage.**

If, in the future, the Council decides to move away from Barclays Business Banking in order to receive a better level of customer service, be able to make more agile payments and to seek a bank account set up for Parish Councils (rather than a Business), Unity, part of the Prudential Group, provides a service which would be suitable and is already used by many Norfolk Parish Councils. It is an account set up especially for Council’s, not business. The corporate marketing can be found here: [Parish Council Funding | Socially Responsible, Ethical Banking \(unity.co.uk\)](https://www.unity.co.uk/parish-council-funding-socially-responsible-ethical-banking)

The Clerk has asked other users of Unity Bank in Norfolk to provide their own comments on service, which I hope will be useful;

“I have to say we use Unity and they are brilliant. Mandate changes are quick and easy, access to account with Internet banking is brilliant, you can apply for a multipay card for £3 per month charge. We pay £72 a year for our main services and since using them I have moved the other 2 councils from Barclays to them. Oh and they do it all for you with their switch service”

“Unity are so stress free. Any cheques that need paying in can also be posted to them for free. A cheque book is included and they answer the phone in seconds (not like an hour with Barclays). The forms are easy to fill in and they will transfer all your standing orders and direct debits if you have the same remaining signatures with your previous bank.”

“Mandate changes are super easy, and Unity are giving the best interest at the moment at over 2% on deposit accounts. <> It’s £6 a month and worth every penny.”

Interestingly there were no negative comments.

**The Clerk recommends that Councillors look at and note the banking service offered by Unity bank.**

**ITEM 13 To consider matters arising from the Internal Auditor report and agree on a course of action.**

The recommendations of the Internal Auditor that can be actioned are;

The Internal Control Policy was last reviewed May 2019, this should be reviewed annually and should be accompanied by a Statement of Internal Control, detail what actions the Council takes to detect and deter fraud.

The contact details for the Council need updating on the Information Commissioners Office register, they still show the former Clerk’s address.

A claim has not yet been made for the £142.86 VAT due under VAT126 claim for 2021/22, this should be claimed within 3 years of the VAT being incurred. A claim of £269.73 is in progress for 2022/23.

I note that discussion of the General Reserve Policy has been scheduled for the June 2023 meeting.

\*I have been advised that the outstanding HMRC payment for the previous Clerk’s last three payments is to be discussed, with a view to engaging a specialist to advise on this.

**The Clerk recommends that Councillors discuss each item in turn and decides on a course of action.**

*\* The Clerk would be happy to take on up to 6 extra hours work resolving the missing HMRC payments (and potential associated fines) that happened before her employment if this is authorised by Full Council. If after 6 hours additional work (at usual hourly rate) it is not resolved (and the likelihood is that it would be) then a payroll/accountancy specialist would need to be engaged.*

**ITEM 14 To discuss appointing Norfolk ALC as payroll provider and agree on a course of action.**

As noted in the Internal Auditor report above mistakes or inaccuracies with HMRC payroll can subject the Council to risk – in both time and additional cost. To protect the Parish Council from the same errors happening again a payroll provider can be instructed to undertake all payroll functions. It is not recommended best practise that the Clerk is responsible for their own payroll, and payroll services have been used by Langley with Hardley Parish Council in the past, prior to the former clerk. The current system, HMRC Basic Tools, is specialist software that is not very user friendly – there are also so many variables in payroll that a Clerk will not be aware of unless especially trained; it can also be a

source of stress and anxiety to 'get it right'. Norfolk ALC provide a payroll service, details, including costs, below;

[Norfolk ALC payroll information.docx](#)

[Norfolk SLC Payroll Employer questions.docx](#)

**The Clerk recommends that Councillors agree to use Norfolk ALC payroll service.**