



**MINUTES OF THE 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF THE ESSEX CLERKS' ASSOCIATION
HELD REMOTELY ON ZOOM**

DATE: Tuesday 23 April 2024

TIME: 5.00pm

Executive Committee present:

Chris Orme (Vice-Chair)	Wendy Newton (Acting Secretary)
Peter Bates (Membership Secretary)	Lorraine Cross
Angela Fuller (Communications Officer)	Charmaine Scott
Marion Myers (Treasurer)	

Members present (21):

Iwona Bainbridge, Kerry Clark, Jo Claydon, Jennifer Connolly, Carole Day, Sarah Green, Sarah Hale, Justine Higgins, Alison Hills, Caroline Humphrey, Chris Kitchin, Steve Marshall, Michelle Murray, Helen Radnor, Karen Redmond, Sharon Riley, Tracy Rubery, Janet Sherwin, Carolyn Thomas, Louisa Usherwood, Lucy Wright

Apologies:

Sue Leek (ECA Minutes Secretary), Laura Patterson (ECA Exec Member),
Emma Simmons (ECA Exec Member), Karen Willis (ECA Exec Member)

Attendees were informed that the meeting was to be recorded and would be posted on the ECA website in due course. Attendees gave electronic approval on Zoom this action.

1. Chris Orme, Vice Chair of the ECA, opened by advising of the recent unexpected resignation of Tina Weavers, current Chair of the ECA, and that in her absence he would be chairing the meeting.

Item 1 – Apologies for Absence

2. Apologies for absence were accepted from Sue Leek, Laura Patterson and Karen Willis.

Item 2 – Chair's Report on the Year's Progress

3. The Vice Chair stated that the ECA had continued to undertake its usual activities, with termly briefings and a successful conference in 2023. Individual queries from clerks had been answered as and when they were received. The biggest issue arising for the ECA had been the recent loss of the Chair, Tina Weavers, and this matter was to be covered later in the meeting.

Item 3 – Presentation of the Accounts – 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

4. The annual accounts for 2023-24 were received and summarised by the Treasurer. One typographic date error in the accounts was verbally corrected.

- a) Subscriptions for 2023-24 showed a reduction of 37% from previous years and were the only source of income for the Association.
- b) Expenditure totalled £3,584, details of which were explained in full.
- c) Annual income totalled £1,335 and annual expenditure totalled £3,584.82, giving an in-year deficit of -£2,249.82.
- d) The deposit account had a start of year balance of £18,055.42 and the current account had a start of year balance of £3,663.63. With the income less expenditure deficit, this gave a total end of year balance of £19,469.23.
- e) The accounts were at present un-audited.

Item 4 – Minutes of Last Year's Annual General Meeting

5. The minutes from the meeting held on 18 April 2023 were **agreed** as a correct record.

Item 5 – The Future of the ECA

6. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the future of the ECA. The Executive Committee had serious concerns over the viability of the Association following the departure of the Chair and the retirement of other Executive Committee Members. The Vice Chair himself was standing down immediately after the AGM. The meeting discussed the continuation of the ECA, and in what form, alongside the need for new members of the Executive Committee and the ability to provide the termly Clerks' Briefings. If the ECA was to continue, a new Chair would also be required.

- a) The results of the recent ECA survey on membership participation were queried. There had been around 30 replies, over 20 of which had given an indication that they would be attending the AGM and ECA Conference. Five people had volunteered to join the Executive Committee, including one volunteer for the role of Chair. The positive survey results suggested that there was support from the general membership for the ECA to continue. All members present at the AGM confirmed that they wished the ECA to continue via a Zoom chat poll.
- b) The provision of the termly Clerks' Briefings was a major issue. The current members of the Executive Committee did not have enough professional clerking knowledge or time to present the Clerks' Briefings. It was noted that it was not necessary for the ECA Chair to undertake the briefings. Other ways of providing information to clerks were put forward and discussed, including paying an external professional to give the briefings or simply putting relevant information on the ECA website. It was noted that some

clerks did not have access to other information sources such as The Key and the NGA.

- c) A query was raised on the size of the general ECA membership. It was stated that subscriptions and newsletter emails were sent to around 250 different clerk addresses but that only 89 schools/clerks subscribed. It was reported that MATs often only pay one subscription irrespective of the number of schools under their control. The actual AGM attendance being around 10% of all those invited was considered disappointing in light of the important subject being discussed,
- d) It was stated that the termly briefings were invaluable and found to be very useful with the limited resources available for clerks. The benefits of in-person events for networking by clerks was also stressed. The timing of the termly briefings was also discussed in relation to getting better attendance.
- e) It was confirmed that 8 members of the current Executive Committee were still happy to continue but that additional volunteers were required in light of resignations arising in the near future. The work involved in being on the Committee was summarised. It was **agreed** that any member willing to volunteer to join the Executive Committee should communicate their interest via the ECA website contact page.
- f) The overall feeling of those present was that there was a need for the ECA to continue, at least in the short-term, and therefore a new Chair was required. A suggestion was made that it would be more prudent to wait until the new volunteers had formally joined the current Executive Committee before any roles were decided. Michelle Murray volunteered for the role of Chair. (**Clerk's Note:** Michelle Murray's offer was withdrawn post AGM due to increased work commitments).
- g) Iwona Bainbridge volunteered to assist with presenting the termly Clerk's Briefings in the short-term until an alternative was found.
- h) It was **agreed** that an ECA Executive Committee meeting would be arranged with all new volunteers to decide a way forward and to formally allocate Committee roles.
- i) The viability of holding the ECA Conference on Thursday 13 June 2024 was raised. It was suggested that in light of the current circumstances, rather than having a formal conference a face-to-face networking lunch may be more suitable and of greater benefit to ECA members. It was **agreed** that this was a more suitable style of event and should proceed.

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7. The Vice Chair summarised that it had **agreed** that (1) the ECA should continue, (2) an Executive Committee meeting with new volunteers would be held to formalise new roles, and (3) that the ECA Conference event would proceed but in the form of a more casual networking lunch. The Vice Chair thanked everyone for attending the AGM and



for their input into the meeting.

Item 6 – Any Other Business

8. Chris Orme was thanked for chairing the meeting and for his dedicated work on the ECA over many years. Chris was wished a very happy retirement. The work of Tina Weaver and Karen Willis on the ECA Executive Committee was also highlighted and thanked.

9. The date and time of the next meeting would be distributed in due course.

The meeting closed at 5.59pm

These draft minutes were approved by the ECA Executive Committee on 16th May 2024. Formal approval of the minutes would follow at the next AGM.