

Jim McMahon MP
Minister for Local Government, Devolution and Regional Growth
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Via email: Ministerial.Correspondence@communities.gov.uk

19 August 2026

Dear Secretary of State,

Re: Congratulations and invitation to meet with NALC

On behalf of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), congratulations on your appointment as Minister for Local Government, Devolution and Regional Growth. We are particularly pleased that your ministerial responsibilities explicitly include parish and town councils.

This is a significant and welcome recognition of the contribution made by England's 10,000 parish and town councils and the increasingly important role they play in local democracy and community leadership. As the tier of local government closest to communities, parish and town councils should be central to the Government's ambitions for devolution and democratic renewal. We therefore look forward to working closely with you to ensure the sector is fully engaged in shaping and delivering that agenda.

NALC, as the body representing 10,000 parish and town councils across England, welcomes the Government's commitment to local governance and devolution. We look forward to working with you to deliver on the Prime Minister's pledge to devolve power away from central government, deliver good growth in every postcode, and ensure communities have a stronger voice in shaping their future.

We have been particularly pleased to see the Government's recognition and support for parish and town councils reflected through the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act. With implementation now progressing, parish and town councils must remain an integral part of the devolution settlement, ensuring that power reaches every city, town and village, including those communities that are too often overlooked, including our rural and coastal areas. They are uniquely placed to help deliver the Government's ambitions, strengthen democratic participation and improve local outcomes.

The Government's vision for rewiring the state and returning power from Westminster to people and places gives parish and town councils an important role to play. They are uniquely placed to support a more place-based approach to growth, public service reform and democratic accountability. While strategic authorities will be central to the Government's plans, devolution will be strongest when it reaches every neighbourhood, town and village.

Given the vital role our sector plays, we look forward to discussing the implementation of the Act and the development of new neighbourhood governance guidance, as well as updating guidance on Community Governance Reviews. We also stand ready to support the Government's wider programme of democratic renewal, including opportunities within the Representation of the People Bill to strengthen citizen engagement and participation at the most local level.

We are particularly keen to work with you on modernising local democracy through reforms to remote meetings and the standards regime. NALC welcomed the White Paper commitment to provide councils with the flexibility to hold remote meetings and to strengthen standards arrangements. These are important reforms for which NALC has campaigned consistently for several years, and we welcomed both the Government's commitment in principle and the subsequent consultations, which rightly recognised that decisions about how meetings are conducted are often best made locally.

However, we remain disappointed that legislation has yet to be brought forward to deliver these commitments. The omission of remote meetings and standards reform from the Government's legislative programme represents a missed opportunity to modernise local democracy and remove unnecessary barriers to public service. Remote and hybrid meetings proved highly effective during the pandemic and would provide parish and town councils with the flexibility to operate in ways that best meet local needs. They can improve accessibility, increase participation, and make it easier for councillors to balance public service with work, caring responsibilities or disabilities. They would also help councils attract and retain a more diverse range of representatives and ensure local government reflects the communities it serves.

Likewise, reform of the standards regime remains essential. Parish and town councils continue to operate within a framework that lacks sufficient powers to deal effectively with misconduct and protect councillors and staff from unacceptable behaviour. Stronger and more consistent standards arrangements, including more effective sanctions where appropriate, would improve public confidence, strengthen accountability, and help rebuild trust in local democracy.

Together, these reforms would provide councils with a modern legislative framework that reflects the realities of contemporary public service and supports strong, transparent and inclusive local governance. We therefore urge the Government to bring forward both reforms as matter of urgency.

The previous ministerial team had kindly agreed to meet with NALC, and we would welcome the opportunity to continue that conversation with you. A meeting would provide an opportunity to discuss the Government's devolution agenda, implementation of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act, and reforms to remote meetings and the standards regime. I would be grateful if your office could contact nalc@connectpa.co.uk to arrange a meeting at your convenience (reference: MC2026/14145).

Congratulations again on your appointment. We wish you every success in your new role and look forward to working with you.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Iain Hamilton,
NALC chair