



**nalc**

Information  
**Quarterly**  
summary report

**National Association  
of Local Councils**

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## INTRODUCTION

This report covers the period October – December 2022.

The report sets out progress delivering NALC's strategic plan including information on important internal issues, progress with our parliamentary and government affairs work, events, media coverage and publications and legal advice. The report will be largely work around the aims set out in the strategic plan and how we are working to achieve those aims.

## CHIEF EXECUTIVE UPDATE

Firstly, a happy new year to you all!

It's the time of year for resolutions and new year statements.

- So, setting politics aside it was good to hear both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition set out their support for communities. With Rishi Sunak stressing the need for strong communities and the importance of pride in place:
- Kier Starmer supporting stronger communities, more devolution, and further powers for communities.
- Supporting communities is at the heart of what our sector does as our chair Keith Stevens set out in his recent open letter. And, with additional support, we can do more and be at the heart of levelling up too as set out in our briefing on the levelling up and regeneration bill which enters the House of Lords on the 17 January.
- If the sector is to play its full part councils need to demonstrate that they are well run and effective, which councils can do through accreditation under the local council award scheme; and I'm pleased that dozens received the prestigious national award at the end of 2022. If you haven't looked at the scheme before, please make it a resolution for 2023. Link to LCAS news story.
- And another new year resolution for you to consider, join the 900 councils that have signed our civility and respect pledge. link to pledge And do consider attending our first face-to-face conference for some time- Standards Matter - on 3 March 2023.
- NALC will be busy internally over the next few months on changes to the way it works including new phone and IT systems, website and vacating our HQ building.

## POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS

- **Engaging with the government/Parliament** - NALC's chair, Cllr Keith Stevens, held an introductory meeting with Lee Rowley MP, local government minister. Responses to policy consultations and announcements included on rural proofing, independent review of net zero, inquiry on levelling up funding, the

Autumn Statement, and Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2023-24. Government officials attended the meeting of the Larger Councils Committee to hear views from councils on business improvement districts. NALC worked with the Society of Local Council Clerks on a new Early Day Motion on standards which was tabled by Dr Julian Lewis MP.

- **Bills and legislation** - The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill completed its passage through the House of Commons where amendments on some of NALC's priority issues such as remote meetings, standards and planning right of appeal were debated but opposed by the government. Ahead of House of Lords second reading on 17 January, Peers were sent NALC's parliamentary briefing on the Bill and invited to an online briefing on 11 January.
- **Campaigns/big themes** - Local elections on 5 May will include over 6,000 local councils in 34 county association areas, and we have updated Make a Change campaign materials for local councils and county associations, and engaged with a range of organisations including the media to raise awareness. We published our annual analysis of local precepting authorities' council tax levels including local councils, report on the 2022 local elections and updated resources on the Sustainable Communities Act.
- **Sharing good practice** - The winners of NALC's Star Council Awards 2022 were announced at an online ceremony where Alcester Town Council in Warwickshire and West Midlands were crowned Council of the Year. Due to industrial action our hybrid Empowering Communities conference on 7 November was held online only and included the first speech by the new local government minister, Lee Rowley MP. Online events on communication strategies and community outreach. We announced the return of the study tour for larger local councils which will take place at Newport Pagnell Town Council on 27/28 June. Blog posts on the NALC website included by CCLA on the cost of living crisis, Co-operative Councils Innovation Network on cost of living crisis, Centre for Sustainable Energy on the climate emergency, Geosphere on planning applications and digital mapping, BHIB Councils Insurance on cyber security, Eden Project Communities on The Big Lunch at Christmas, Utility Aid on energy consumption, WorkNest on employer support with cost of living, and Congleton Town Council on White Ribbon accreditation. We also published Points of Light 2022 and a special last ever e-edition of LCR magazine.

#### **Next quarter's objectives:**

- House of Lords stages of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and meetings of the All Party-Parliamentary Group on local democracy.
- Respond to the Provisional and Final Local Government Finance Settlement 2023-24, consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework and publication of headline council tax statistics.
- In person event on 3 March in London and online events on 25 January on community engagement and 22 February on social isolation and loneliness.
- Meetings of the NALC National Networks for LGBT+ councillors, climate emergency, super councils, young councillors and coastal emergency.
- Promotion of Make a Change campaign ahead of local elections on 5 May.

- Launch NALC Star Council Awards 2023.

## MEMBER SERVICES

- **Legal queries** – The legal team in October, November and December, received 67 formal enquiries, as well as an additional 136 enquiries that were not logged formally. In the same period, the team also updated and reissued 3 Legal Topic Notes (LTN). In this period the team also updated and reissued several Legal Topic Notes (LTN). LTN 9E (Handling complaints (England)), LTN 5E (Parish council meetings (England)), LTN 54 (Protection of ownerless common land), LTN 13 (Policing your area). Legal bulletins with updates for county officers were issued in October and December detailing changes to legislation and of advice of note we provided to councils. In October Jane Moore, senior solicitor, and legal services manager, attended the Wiltshire AGM and delivered a legal update and update on the Civility and Respect project. In October Gary Barker also attended a meeting of larger councils for Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, delivering a legal update.
- **HR and employment guidance and advisory services** – This new service in partnership with WorkNest was launched in November 2022 and in the first month of there have been 17 cases from six county associations. Feedback received so far has been mostly positive and we will continue to closely monitor and evaluate the service while it is in its early days.
- **Review of financial guidance and advisory services** – An invitation to express interest in partnering with NALC on the delivery of our financial guidance and advisory services was posted on the NALC website in July. Several submissions were received, and a shortlisted number of organisations have been invited to submit proposals by the end of January.
- **Local Council Award Scheme** – Panel meetings for application round three in 2022 took place in November and December, with results sent to councils by mid-December. A total of 21 applications were received with 13 accredited so far and 8 currently pending more information from the council. Application round one for the current year commenced on 6th January and we've received a total of 21 applications so far. All applications will be taken to panels for final assessment in mid-March.
- **Civility and Respect Project** - 820 councils have signed the civility and respect pledge (at time of writing). Training delivery has continued throughout the quarter and has been enhanced with a recruitment guide and series of podcasts to support councillors in their responsibilities as employers. Additional governance support has included a member-officer protocol, roles and responsibilities and a respectful social media guide.
- **Working with county officers** – Fortnightly Zoom meetings have continued with a mix of guest speakers from partner organisations and updates from NALC staff and county officers.

### **Next quarter's objectives:**

- **Website review** – The previous stage of the website review consisted of a series of workshops to explore issues such as membership access, content, data, and finances. This quarter will see us working to take that learning to plan the development of a new website.
- **Workforce strategy** – The new national employment strategy advisory group was established last year. With a membership drawn from NALC, county officers and SLCC it will be working with colleagues from the Local Government Association (LGA) to conduct a workforce survey of local councils to help inform a new national employment strategy for the sector. The group will also support the update to the good councillor's guide to employment which will be launched before local elections in May.
- **Civility and Respect Project** – With the first phase of this project due to be completed by March 2023, the focus on this quarter will be the completion of the final set of deliverables alongside planning the next phase of the project.
- **Corporate peer challenge for town councils** – Following November's peer challenge in Cirencester the next peer challenge will take place in Morecambe early this year.

### **FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

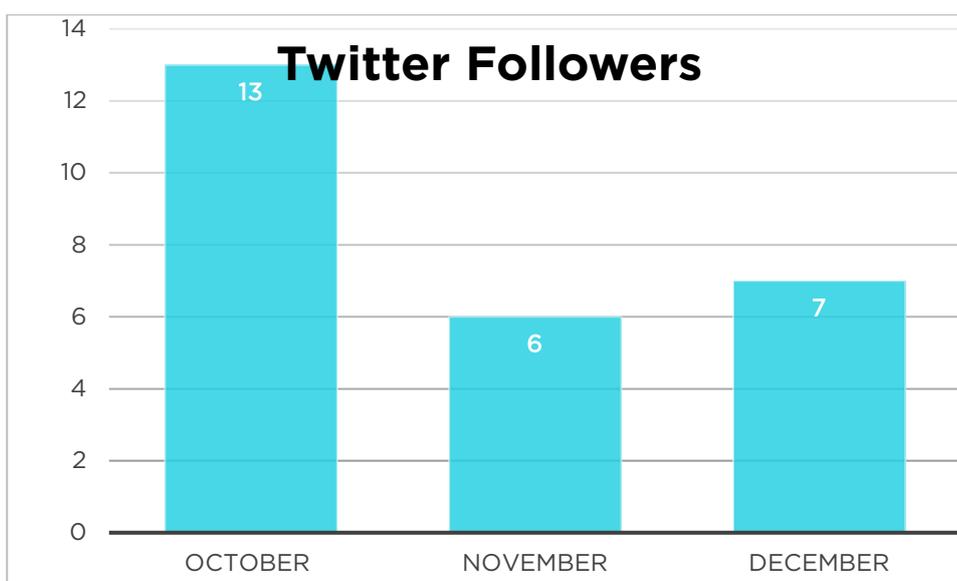
- **Governance and remote meetings** – NALC governance continues to successfully operate both remotely but with a return to some hybrid meetings.
- **Building management 109** – A decision has been made to vacate 109 therefore the team are setting out a project plan to ensure that the building is vacated. with the building on sale therefore the team.
- **Events** – We continue to deliver the administration support and process payments for numerous online events.
- **Upgrading NALC systems IT** – We continue to work with our IT partner - Cloudy IT - to further explore use of the Microsoft 365 products. A training programme is being created to ensure staff are supported through these changes and to help us gain the most value from the products available.
- **Mobile phones** – All staff have been issued with mobile phones on the EE platform.
- **Employee Assistance Programme** – We reported that this programme has been re-launched recently covering all NALC staff and staff at county associations. We continue to review this programme and whether it is effective and useful to colleagues.
- **HR support** – On-going provision of HR support with support from WorkNest to NALC staff including contracts to new staff members, and management of other personnel matters including appraisals and recruitment.

### Next quarters objectives:

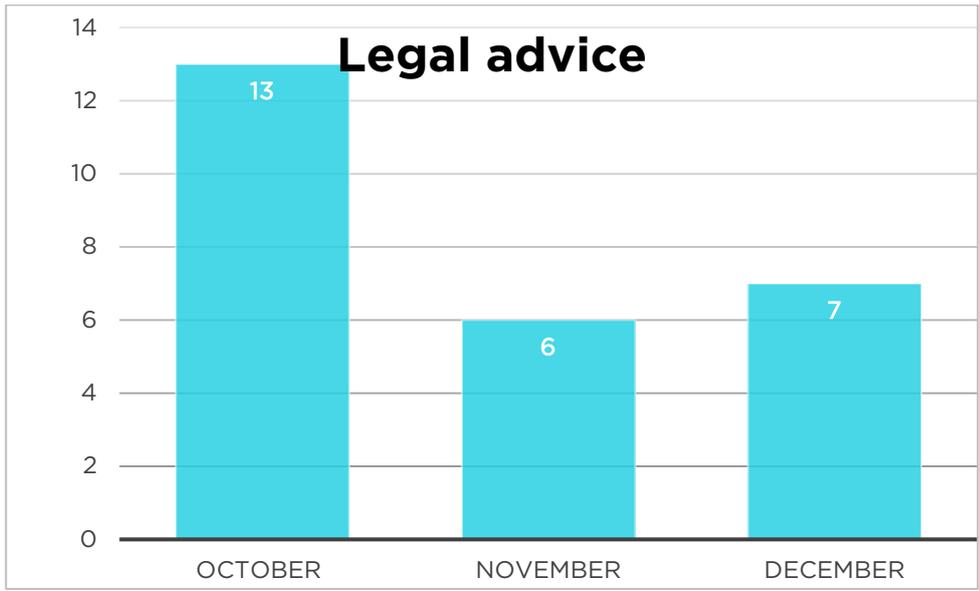
- **Microsoft Teams** - We continue to use Microsoft Teams for internal communications and have recently used it for the county association meetings, which is working well. We plan to give further consideration of its use for Committee meetings in the spring.
- **Telephone systems** Our NALC mainline telephone system and numbers have been migrated to Microsoft Business Voice (using Teams) and we no longer require fixed handsets at the NALC office.
- **Cyber Essentials** - We are working towards our certification, which is due to be submitted next month, alongside this we are completing a data protection review in the coming quarter.
- **HR support** - Continuation to ensure that all HR policies are up to date and compliant with HR legislation.
- **HR Staff Handbook** - Commence work with WorkNest to update the NALC staff handbook which is made available to all members of staff.
- **HR Staff appraisals** - Work with WorkNest to review and roll out appraisals for 2023.
- **Policies and procedures** - Ensuring all internal documents are up-to-date and easily accessible to NALC staff. Ensure that policies such as the NALC constitution, standing orders are up to date.

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI)

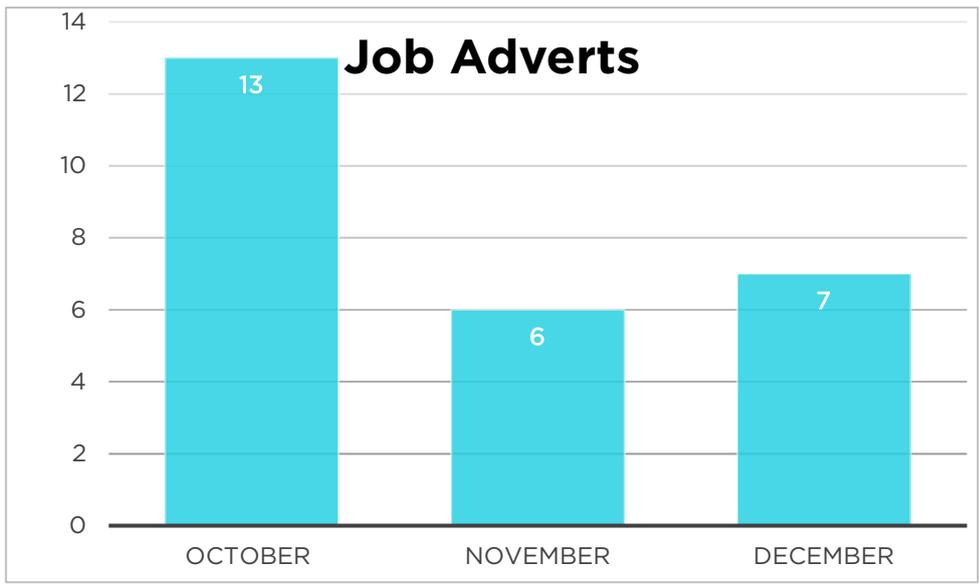
### Policy and Communications



### Member services



**Finance and Administration**



If you would like to see the full set of data, they are available on request.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

For more details and updates on NALC’s activity, please read the chief executive’s bulletin, which is circulated every Friday. If you are not subscribed to the bulletin, you can do so at [www.nalc.gov.uk/newsletter](http://www.nalc.gov.uk/newsletter).