

## **DRAFT MINUTES | IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

18 November 2021

### **Present:**

Jonathan Owen, NALC chief executive; Helen Quick, SLCC head of conferences, training & education; Pauline Whitehead, SLCC; Sue Hobbs, SLCC; Wendy Amis, Derbyshire county officer; Cllr Richard Parry, Kent Association of Local Councils; Adam Keppel-Green, SLCC branch rep; Rob Smith, SLCC chief executive and Elisabeth Skinner MBE, SLCC academic leader; Alison Robinson, Gloucestershire county officer.

### **Also present:**

Jane Moore, NALC senior solicitor and head of member services; Anders Hanson, NALC project manager, Lisa Etchell, NALC project officer, Jon Sutcliffe, LGA, senior advisor, workforce team and Helen Reeves, LGA, programme manager – leadership.

### **1. Apologies for absence and introductions**

Apologies were received from Cllr Sue Baxter, NALC national chairman; Sally Longmate, Suffolk county Officer (Alison Robinson in attendance for Sally), Lusi Manukyan, LGA Senior Advisor - Improvement & Policy (Helen Reeves in attendance for Lusi)

Board members were also provided the opportunity to introduce themselves.

Board noted Lusi Manukyan had replaced Helen Jenkins as LGA representative.

### **2. Minutes from previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2021 were approved.

### **3. Matters arising**

#### **Devolution update:**

- 3.1 The Onward think tank report promoting the sector had been published last week and welcomed by the Board. (Link to report:

<https://www.ukonward.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/double-devolution-council.pdf>).

Jonathan Owen reported that following the board's last meeting an updated proposal, with scaled back funding figures, had been submitted to DLUHC following their initial feedback to NALC's original proposal (circulated to the Board prior to the meeting). NALC were currently awaiting the bid feedback.

An article in the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) reported on a meeting between NALC and the LGA's People and Places Board. It showed concerns from upper tier councils over proposals to devolve powers down to town and parish councils. Cllr Sue Baxter had addressed some of these issues at the meeting with the LGA, but it reflected the need to raise the standard of the sector and its reputation.

The board noted that the government's devolution white paper was still yet to be published.

Action: LGC article to be circulated with the minutes of the meeting.

**Resolved: The Board noted NALC's updated funding proposal to DLUHC.**

#### **4. Discussion item: Workforce Strategy**

- 4.1 Jon Sutcliffe gave a presentation on LGA's 'Observations on developing a national workforce strategy'. This included 5 key priority areas: Leadership, Organisational Change & Development, Skills Development, Recruitment & Retention and Pay & Reward systems. He invited the Board to focus on questions such as developing actions/priorities, creating a shared vision, the availability of sufficient information and promoting ownership and agreement.

He suggested the LGA were willing to offer assistance with arranging a workshop around workforce planning; and welcomed the use of LGA's style and framework in developing a strategy for the sector. He emphasised that a sense of shared ownership was critical, highlighting the need to understand data capacity/capability in its development. The LGA were also available to help with materials or commissioning surveys, through the usual tender process.

Cllr Parry mentioned that due to the diverse size, scale and expertise in town and parish councils that any strategy would need to be sectionalized to accommodate differences.

Wendy Amis raised the issue of how a workforce was defined and whether the LGA strategy worked across both national and local levels. Jon added that nationally it aimed to show vision/priorities across all areas, but noted the challenges involved in mapping and keeping track at regional level due to some workforce visions being more devolved than others with differing plans. He urged the Board to get in touch with any ideas.

Rob Smith mentioned that many councils and the SLCC were already holding large amounts of data that could help supplement any information.

Jonathan Owen suggested that each organization look at the questions on the first slide of the presentation and be prepared to answer them at the next board meeting. In parallel NALC would identify options for developing a national survey.

Action: Presentation slides and LGA workforce document to be circulated with minutes of the meeting.

**Resolved:**

**That the Board reflect on key questions from the Workforce Planning presentation, and NALC explore survey options including commissioning. To be further discussed at the next meeting of the Board.**

**5. Discussion item: Promoting take up of CiLCA, LCAS and General Power of Competence**

- 5.1 Elisabeth Skinner mentioned there was scope to promote the value and benefits of CiLCA training to councillors. enabling clerks to get the support and encouragement needed. She advised that the SLCC has a brief 2-sided CiLCA publicity document, a copy of which she can provide to members.

Adam Keppel-Green suggested the SLCC document could be turned into a template report to use in promotion. He also mentioned that some clerks were daunted by the volume of work required for CiLCA and that cost was often an issue. Smaller parishes were interested in investing in training, but the overall package was deemed expensive. He believed there was a lack of incentives/personal benefits to both councillors/clerks from LCAS.

Discussions also took place around streamlining the LCAS guidance and application form process, a video 'journey through the process' and getting principal councils on board offering incentives to councils, such as discount/access to courses.

Anders Hanson suggested that better promotion on the NALC website of the benefits of LCAS/CiLCA would help and could be sold as ways to improve both the council and the clerk. Promotion on social media and providing case studies were also good ways to humanise the experience.

Wendy Amis put forward the idea of taking a coherent 3-pronged objective approach to include: professional clerk qualification (CILCA), professional council qualification (LCAS) and a professional councillor qualification.

Further discussions also took place around consistency of guides/documents on various websites and the importance of Community Governance.

**Resolved:**

**That the Board agreed to take forward the 3-pronged approach suggestion of: a professional clerk qualification (CILCA), a professional council qualification (LCAS) and a professional councillor qualification; and to ensure consistent information is presented across all platforms.**

Action: Anders Hanson and Helen Quick to take forward and commence marketing. Progress to be reported back at the next meeting of the Board

## **6. Councils: raising the standard**

### **IDB National Intervention Panel**

- 6.1 Draft Terms of Reference (TOR's) from the current pilot for the IDB National Intervention Panel were circulated to the Board prior to the meeting.

Jonathan Owen reported that NALC had been working with a principal council on the improvement strategy and that the TOR's had proved useful. Keighley Town Council was also cited as an example. The start date was 9<sup>th</sup>

December after which he would report back with further progress to the Board.

- 6.2 The board received a report from Anders Hanson on various project areas and improvement matters as outlined in the report. Key points included: Local Council Award Scheme statistics, promotional events; an update of the on-line learning pilot scheme and an outline of the website redevelopment.

He reported that now the on-line learning pilot scheme had concluded, further development of courses and materials would take place. In addition, 3 new courses on communications and data protection would soon be added; and he welcomed any ideas for new subject courses from members. A further update of on-line learning will be given at the next meeting of the Board. Plans for the new website were also still in progress, of which further updates will be given once a timeline had been established.

Wendy Amis requested feedback on County Associations that hadn't taken up the pilot scheme; ideally in January, ahead of the end of the financial year in 2022.

The Board welcomed the addition of new on-line learning courses and looked forward to the improvement of the LCAS application process.

- 6.3 A CALC update and county association workstream from Sally Longmate was circulated prior to the meeting.

Wendy Amis reported that there had been some enthusiasm amongst county officers for the 'buddy system', but there was lots of work involved trying to get it off the ground. Capacity was also an issue.

She mentioned currently working with NALC to get central government funds for additional resources and thanked Jonathan for his support so far. Sally was continuing to push the agenda on this.

It was agreed that this should be a standing item on future agendas.

## **7. Officers: professional development**

- 7.1 The board received a verbal update from Elisabeth Skinner on CiLCA statistics and improvements. She reported that CiLCA 2021 was going well, with two discussion forums recently taken place. The new training guide

had been well received and registrations had been good, with a hybrid of both virtual/in-person attendance.

She highlighted the issue of encouraging councils that the qualification should be achieved in the first 2 years of a clerk starting, rather than within the first year. There was also a challenge over reporting statistics, with new statistics for CiLCA 2021 to be set up once 2015 had been signed off.

Elisabeth also advised that Sue and Pauline would be taking over the operations side of CiLCA at the end of the year, but that she would be staying as co-course leader for Community Governance. She suggested that members encourage applications to this important advanced clerk qualification.

Jonathan Owen requested sight of any promotional materials and information on who had been awarded degrees once determined. Helen Quick would action this request.

Helen Quick reported that new qualification FiLCA had so far received 150 registrations with good initial feedback. FiLCA Wales was also due to be launched soon. 2022 dates had now been published and included an in-person/virtual/hybrid mix of events.

- 7.2 Helen Quick advised that higher level course promotion commenced at the point of achieving ILCA. Once passed, clerks were advised of the next stages of qualifications and information given on how to work towards achieving them.

County associations were reminded to contact Helen with details of CiLCA courses they offered so that SLCC could publicise them on their website.

## **8. Updates on improvement and development initiatives**

### **8.1 LGA**

The Board received a verbal update from Helen Reeves on LGA matters. She reported that LGA representatives had attended the recent COP26 and that their Net Zero Innovation Programme received a 'Highly Commended' award in the final of the Climate Challenge Cup. Attendance at the conference had also helped raise the profile of what climate change means for the local government community.

Helen also mentioned that as part of the LGA's civility in public life programme, there was an event on 'Personal Safety for Councillors' taking place on 8<sup>th</sup> December. Further events/packages were also planned with a focus on disability, women and young people. The LGA were also seeking feedback from councillors on their experience, which had included parish and town councillors.

Jonathan Owen suggested that NALC would help to promote the 8<sup>th</sup> December event and would share the results of the LGA survey to town and parish councils with the Board when available.

The Board congratulated the LGA on their COP26 award.

## 8.2 **DLUHC**

No report was received.

## 9. IDB forward work programme

- 9.1 The board noted the items already submitted for the forward work programme.

Workforce Strategy and promotion of CiLCA and LCAS to be added to the work programme.

Wendy Amis requested that professional development of CALC officers be added to future agendas as a regular item.

**Resolved: That these items be added to the forward plan and Board members identify any future items and the IDB secretariat will use to inform future agendas.**

## 10. Dates of future meetings

Draft meeting dates for 2022 to be circulated to the Board.

Cllr Parry suggested that an in-person meeting of the Board would be useful to members.



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