

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

17 March 2022

### **Present:**

Jonathan Owen, NALC chief executive; Cllr Keith Stevens, NALC national Chair; Helen Quick, SLCC head of conferences, training & education; Wendy Amis, Derbyshire county officer; Cllr Richard Parry, Kent Association of Local Councils; Rob Smith, SLCC chief executive; Sally Longmate, Suffolk county officer; Lusi Manukyan, LGA Senior Advisor - Improvement & Policy and Albert Joyce, DLUHC.

### **Also present:**

Jane Moore, NALC senior solicitor and head of member services; Justin Griggs, NALC head of policy and communications; Anders Hanson, NALC project manager and Lisa Etchell, NALC project officer.

### **1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Elisabeth Skinner MBE, SLCC academic leader; Pauline Whitehead, SLCC; Sue Hobbs, SLCC; Adam Keppel-Green, SLCC branch rep and Alison Robinson, Gloucestershire county officer (Wendy standing in for Alison)

### **2. Minutes from previous meeting and matters arising**

Correction to minutes: Wendy Amis stood in for Sally Longmate (not Alison Robinson)

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2021 were approved.

No matters arising.

### **3. Discussion Item: Implications of Levelling Up White Paper (formally known as Devolution)**

- 3.1 Board was invited to discuss and give views on the implications for the sector's improvement strategy following the publication of the Government's Levelling Up White Paper (NALC's summary circulated with the agenda).

Justin Griggs reported that overall, there had been a positive reaction to the white paper. He highlighted the review of neighbourhood governance and the role/function of councils within this; including opportunities to extend the current model and be provided with beyond sector support.

He reported there was an appetite amongst government and ministers for sector improvement and support, with detail on various strands of work currently being worked up in association with NALC. There was also scope to recast the National Improvement Strategy with a link to government support and a focus on process/structure change, networking and funding simplification. Concerning community empowerment, he suggested it was important to ready the sector in anticipation of playing a bigger role; so there needed to be thinking around the devolution strand, such as framework and county deals.

Albert Joyce added that there was currently government work around timetables, community spaces/empowerment, business planning, internal resources and the process of engagement. He reported that the process of finalising the bidding in Round 2 of the Community Ownership fund was ongoing. The situation in Ukraine had also meant a shift in focus for the government.

Sally Longmate raised the issue of tight timescales around developing and finalising county deals – in Suffolk, the deal was expected to be finalized by the autumn. She highlighted the need for additional support for county associations to be able to work efficiently with principal councils to ensure parish interests were addressed. Councils also needed time and resource to address asset management issues and do due diligence where services were transferred. There might also be the need for some additional support from NALC.

Wendy Amiss supported the importance of helping county associations to engage with the process at a local level.

Cllr Keith Stevens suggested setting up a shared experience network for CALC's involved in county deals.

Cllr Richard Parry flagged up the potential of the 72 largest councils to support this work.

Lusi Manukyan added that the LGA was looking to support and collaborate with councils at the start of the journey, especially concerning capacity/capability issues and that they would be working with NALC to address this for next year. She stressed there was no political barrier to support and it would be provided to LGA members/non-members alike. She noted that £19.2 million had been pledged to support the sector as a whole and an element would be available to support levelling up.

Jonathan Owen highlighted the need for DLUHC to consider how to support capacity limitations and financial resourcing. Albert advised current conversations concerning this were ongoing with the LGA team and he would report back to the Board once concluded. In the final analysis, the distribution of funding was a matter for Ministers to decide.

**Resolved: The Board noted the government's Levelling Up white paper, NALC's summary response and the implications for the sector's improvement strategy. The resourcing point would be picked up in the submission to government and LGA for sector support.**

#### **4. IDB Forward work programme**

- 4.1 The board agreed the work programme for 2022/23 (Appendix 4.1 attached).

Jonathan Owen stressed the importance of restraint, as the Board still did not have an independent chair and SLCC/NALC were prioritising work on the Civility and Respect project.

Wendy Amis requested that the '3 pronged' approach previously discussed by the Board in relation to the promotion of professionalism/qualifications for clerks/councils/councillors be added to the work programme. As well as the new model contract and a refresh of the job evaluation scheme.

Rob Smith also suggested the Board have discussions around apprenticeships.

ACTION: That the '3 pronged' approach to professionalism in the sector and new model contract/refresh of the job evaluation scheme be added to the work programme.

**Resolved: That these items be added to the work programme which would be the focus for the Board's agenda.**

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

### **Peer Challenge**

- 5.1 The Board received an update on the Peer Review/Challenge from Anders Hanson. He reported that discussions had taken place with the LGA regarding undertaking 2 peer challenges later in the year. NALC were currently trying to identify councils to work with and he highlighted the importance of having a geographical spread, as only those in the Southwest had come forward. He welcomed interest from larger councils, in particular LCAS Quality Gold holders. Full funding would be provided by the LGA and he thanked them for working collaboratively with NALC. Further information highlighting the benefits of taking part was being put together.

Lusi Manukyan added that the LGA were happy to help as the peer challenge was an effective tool and she encouraged Board members to help identify interested councils. She noted it was helpful to look at lessons learnt from the pilots and how to better tailor to meet each council's needs. A specific peer challenge manager would be allocated to take each council through the process, once on board. Internal LGA next steps were also being identified and included scoping discussions with NALC and councils.

Cllr Keith Stevens suggested it may be helpful to involve District Associations.

- 5.2 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: 11 applications in current round (x 5 Quality Gold, x 2 Quality and x 4 Foundation). Panel assessments commencing early April.
  - Improvements to streamline internal admin process: Centralising information and development of scheme criteria grid.
  - Promotional events: Most recent took place in Northamptonshire on 2 March.

He also reported that an advert/leaflet marketing LCAS and CiLCA had now been produced. This aimed to promote both professional clerks and professional councils. In due course, a professional councillors strand would

be added once the best route to achieving this had been identified. The advert would be circulated with the minutes of the meeting.

A further report concluding the On-line learning pilot scheme, with recommendations for the future was being worked on. The aim was to allow all county associations to be able to sign up learners for courses by the end of March.

**ACTION:** LCAS/CiLCA advertising leaflet to be circulated with minutes of the meeting.

The Board welcomed the improvements to streamline the Local Council Award Scheme administration, progression of marketing for LCAS/CiLCA and looked forward to receiving the On-line learning report.

## **6. Officers: professional development**

- 6.1 The board received a verbal update from Helen Quick on CiLCA and FiLCA statistics and improvements. She reported that:

CiLCA Opps – Sue Hobbs and Pauline Whitehead had now taken over the role previously held by Elisabeth Skinner MBE. In relation to the issue of the student who had registered for CiLCA three times, as previously reported to the Board; SLCC had written to the student to advise that a fourth registration would not be accepted. The Board supported Helen's request to allow the CiLCA opps team to make the final decision over any future registrations regarding this student.

CiLCA Stats - 2015 stats reporting was expected to conclude by the end of this year. To date, CiLCA passes were as follows: Pre-2015 - 2378 passes; 2015 onwards – 819 passes (71% pass rate); CiLCA 2021 – 381 registrations and 35 passes (73% pass rate). A total of 3232 certificates had been awarded. SLCC were also undertaking work with its CRM provider to ascertain how many of these were still live.

A new process for reporting had been agreed with the CiLCA ops group

Wendy Amis suggested SLCC could work with county associations to determine the percentage of CiLCA clerks still actively working in each county.

FILCA Stats – Now extended to Wales and so far, feedback had been good with increased uptake.

Community Governance – The first solo celebration day had recently taken place in Wiltshire. The event was well received and would be replicated annually. The 2022 intake so far had 68 students.

Jonathan Owen added that stats on councils who hold the General Power of Competence would be helpful. Justin reported this information was being sought from county associations.

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

- 7.1 A CALC update and county association workstream from Sally Longmate was circulated with the agenda. She outlined the key themes as follows:

Support for new county officers (Buddy Scheme): The process for promotion/alignment was underway, with some new officers already offered buddies. She thanked NALC for funding the mentoring training.

Support for experienced county officers: Clerk biographies had been collected with specialisms embedded into resources/support. A bid for funding would be further developed for 2022/23.

Communication Strategy: County officers were being updated regularly, and action plan circulated.

Smarter Working: The legal network group were looking at processes, in addition to a Task & Finish Group, set up to look at themes such as duplication and impact.

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

### **8.1 LGA**

The Board received a verbal update from Lusi Manukyan on LGA matters. She outlined the various support packages that the LGA offered to local councils including support for: Peer Challenges; Climate Change, including case studies/resources available on the website and the LGA Disability Strategy, including on-line learning tools/resources. The Innovation Zone 2022 programme was being agreed, but currently no local council

applications had been received. She highlighted the opportunity for councils to showcase their ideas and encouraged uptake.

She also advised that the LGA were working with the DLUHC in relation to the current war in Ukraine. Information and support packages were available on the website and included amongst other things, guidance around cyber security/targeted attacks and procurement.

## 8.2 **DLUHC**

The Board received a verbal update from Albert Joyce on DLUHC matters. Levelling Up and priorities were discussed in Item 3 above. In addition to this, he reported that the continuation of remote meetings was currently under consideration by ministers and that he would provide a further update to the Board in due course. He was happy to take away all comments raised by members at the meeting.

## 8.3 **AOB**

Jonathan Owen agreed to circulate this year's AGAR forms, (currently with external auditors).

## 9. **Dates of future meetings**

The next meeting of the Improvement and Development Board will be on 22 June 2022.



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## **APPENDIX 4.1 IDB 2022/23 WORK PROGRAMME | IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

Recruit chair	
Q1	Specify role etc and agree at IDB
Q2	Advertise role and interviews
Q3	Appointment of chair
Q4	

Devolution/ levelling up	
Q1	Assess and agree I@D requirements emerging from white-paper
Q2	DLUHC funding bid
Q3	
Q4	Initiate improvement strategy refresh with new chair

Peer review and support	
Q1	Recruit peers and identify peer councils
Q2	Feedback from Notts pilot Train peers, prep for
Q3	Peer review 1
Q4	Peer review 2

Workforce strategy	
Q1	
Q2	Strategy workshop
Q3	Commission strategy development
Q4	Consult on strategy

Promoting CiLCA, LCAS and GPC	
Q1	Establish base-lines and develop marketing strategy which should include the 'three-pronged approach' developing clerks, councils and councillors
Q2	Marketing/ publicising phase
Q3	
Q4	Evaluate and measure take-up

Review and update of IDB "training material" (LCE, Good councillor guides, CiLCA training guides etc	
Q1	
Q2	Mapping: Identify and prioritise review schedules/ identify gaps etc
Q3	Commission priority reviews



Q4	Publish updated material
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#### Other items

- New national contract/refresh of job evaluation scheme

Future agenda item suggestions	Author /Originator	Target date	Board meeting dates 2022
Communications – How we can better work together	?		- 17 March - 22 June - 14 Sept - 17 Nov
Knowledge bank	?		
Civility and Respect project	NALC/SLCC	Last update: 6/9/21 Further updates and clarification of relationships required Next update 22 June	
Apprenticeships	?		
County association development	CALCS	Will feature in other projects above including funding bid Standing item	
Board members are invited to identify other matters			



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