

LARGER COUNCILS COMMITTEE | AGENDA

19 JANUARY 2021

By Zoom – Logins to be e-mailed separately

From 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Any member wishing to submit an apology for this meeting please contact NALC at NALCcommittees@nalc.gov.uk or call on 020 7290 0303.

1. Welcome & apologies [11:00 a.m. – 11:25 a.m.]

- 1.1 Welcome to the session and to receive any apologies.
- 1.2 Welcome and update from Mark Davies, CCLA.

2. Minutes and matters arising from previous committee Zoom call on 22 September 2020 [11:25 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.]

Appendices
2.1-2.2

- 2.1. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2020 and to note any matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda – appendix 2.1.
- 2.2. To note the actions completed since the 22 September 2020 session of the Committee, in the action log – appendix 2.2.

3. COVID 19 – Larger councils' update [11:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.]

- 3.1 To receive a verbal update on NALC's engagement with government on the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement.
- 3.2 Round robin update from committee members on engagement between their councils and MPs / principal authorities on local government finance and CSR related matters since the September 2020 committee session.

4. Membership services update [11:45 a.m. – Noon]

- 4.1 To receive a verbal update from the head of member services including advice and guidance and other project

matters.

5. Super Councils' Network update [Noon – 12:10 p.m.]

Appendix
3.1

5.1 To receive a verbal update from the two current SCN representatives to the committee – on recent engagement with the national Super Councils' Network.

5.2 To receive a short written report and to discuss current arrangements for larger councils taking out associate membership of the LGA: do we now need to broaden this out? – appendix 3.1

6. Sharing good practice [12:10 p.m. – 12:30 p.m.]

Appendix
4.1

6.1 Regional / county groupings of larger councils – to receive local updates from regional or county groupings of larger councils since the previous committee meeting.

6.2 To receive a short written report promoting NALC's online events to March 2021; and to receive ideas for online events from the committee for the 2021-22 financial year which will be of interest to super and member larger councils – appendix 4.1.

7. Date and time of next committee meeting [12:30 p.m.]

7.1 To note that the next meeting of the Larger Councils' Committee will take place by Zoom on Tuesday 20 April 2021 .

Appendix 2.1

LARGER COUNCILS' COMMITTEE | MINUTES

Zoom meeting of the Larger Councils Committee on 22 September 2020 at 11:00 a.m.

Present:

Councillors Peter Astell (committee vice chairman), Mike Drew (national vice chairman), Paul Harvey (committee chairman), Richard Parry, Peter Quinn, Sandie Webb, and elected clerks Jane Biscombe, Leah Coney, Carl Hearn and Shar Roselman were in attendance.

Also in attendance: Chris Borg (policy manager, NALC); Justin Griggs (head of policy and communications, NALC); Charlotte Eisenhart (head of member services, NALC), Linda Hammond (member services intern, NALC), and Mark Davies (CCLA)

1. Welcome & apologies

1.1 Apologies had been received from Cllrs Sue Baxter (national chairman), elected clerk Mark Smith, Cllrs. Mark Harris, Dave Fleming, Isabel Roberts, Phil Barnett, Sue Smith, and Donna Fuller.

1.2 Mark Davies from CCLA provided a very helpful short update on CCLA's ongoing excellent engagement with the sector and larger councils during and since lockdown. CCLA looked forward to hosting committee meetings at CCLA's offices as appropriate in 2021. CCLA had stopped accepting cheques from councils for a while. CCLA staff were undergoing a phased return to the office. Principal authority funds at CCLA were now valued at £1.3 billion. Local councils were now making their CCLA deposits after some early delays – presumably due to precept collection delays.

CCLA are very client focussed and funds are subject to a 0.1187% interest rate. CCLA would be interested in larger council views on a longer term cash fund. The suspension to the CCLA property fund has been lifted. 75% receipts were forecast; 87% were received. Only 1 client went into administration. Travelodges are prime category A assets. Mark recently attended a hybrid

SLCC meeting. CCLA want to avoid negative rates. Beverley Town Council will likely be investing in CCLA soon.

2. Notes and matters arising from previous committee Zoom call on 21 April 2020

2.1 Notes of 21 April 2020 Committee meeting – these were agreed by the Committee chairman as a correct record of the session.

Resolved: That the notes from the 21 April 2020 committee Zoom call be accepted.

2.2 Action Log – There was a brief discussion but it was agreed that the action log of actions from the 21 April Committee session was up to date and all actions had been completed.

Resolved: That the action log for the period since 21 April 2020 be noted.

3. COVID 19 – Larger councils' update

3.1 NALC engagement update on COVID 19

The policy manager provided a short update on NALC's engagement with government, MPs and local government stakeholders since the 21 April 2020 committee meeting on COVID 19 funding and related matters.

Resolved: That the written report be noted.

3.2 Round robin committee update on member council COVID 19 engagement

The committee chairman asked committee members to provide short updates on engagement undertaken by their larger councils on COVID 19 funding and related issues since 21 April 2020 committee session. Updates are as below:

- Newport Pagnell Town Council – the lack of ability for local councils to be able to apply for certain MHCLG grants was causing a problem for NPTC. The majority of MHCLG grant pots actively prevented parish councils for applying for a share of these, and even those that legally

allowed parish councils to make application for part of this grant funding limited this to a maximum of £25,000 from all grant pots which is completely inadequate when facing losses of £350,000 for borough wide services such as leisure centres and museums.

- Tavistock Town Council – had seen a 25% drop in its annual budget this financial year. The support Cornwall Council had given its local councils from its own reserves was commendable. Piloting work was being undertaken. It would be useful to know how many SCN councils are in the same level of financial difficulty.
- Weymouth Town Council – situation not quite as critical as first imagined earlier in spring. Savings have been identified. Dorset council are not paying any monies on to local councils in their area. Smaller councils in Dorset who have virtually entirely relied on commercial income in their areas and who do not precept – will be lucky to financially survive. The workload for officers on WTC is very heavy but all including the clerk are doing an excellent job.
- Yate Town Council – is bearing up financially. It is aware that much MHCLG money has been given to principal authorities and very little to local councils. Larger councils were encouraged to continue to lobby their local MPs and NALC was encouraged to continue the fight for mandated funding for local councils via billing authorities.
- Sevenoaks Town Council – was aware that there was a continual dismissal of lobbying efforts by government – to approaches for local councils to receive direct funding. Only two principal authorities had actually given local councils any monies direct. MHCLG needed to continue to be lobbied for billing authorities to be required to passport a set percentage of their support monies to local councils.
- Chippenham Town Council – has engaged with the “Super Eights” in Wiltshire but found further engagement with Wiltshire Council on the subject of support funding very difficult. It is very clear to CTC that central government simply does not understand local councils.

Resolved: That the round robin updates be noted.

4. Membership services update

4.1 Membership recruitment and retention matters

The head of member services provided a very helpful update on the services NALC had provided to county associations and member councils since the previous committee session. NALC had done a tremendous job of COVID-proofing its services. It had created a COVID web page and mailings to member councils were regularly issued. Subjects and government guidance councils had been updated on were varied and included test and trace and remote meetings. Relationships had never been better with county associations and response work was aligned between county and national level.

There was a glowing endorsement of NALC in the upcoming LCR issue. A very accurate pay awards update had been issued by NALC recently. NALC continued to work closely with HRSP. Some recently organised one day online events NALC had organised had sold out.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted and NALC congratulated for the excellent job it had done delivering relevant services to larger councils during the lockdown period.

4.2 LCAS review

The Project Officer (Member Services) provided a very helpful overview on the latest developments with the LCAS review. It was an excellent chance to review the criteria for the award scheme at all levels. A healthy number of responses had been received to the initial survey. A focus group comprised of councillors and clerks was being framed. Proposed changes would be considered by the Improvement and Development Board. The review will complete in January 2021. Councils will need a transition period.

Resolved: That the Project Officer (Member Services) be congratulated for doing an excellent job undertaking the LCAS review – and that the Committee be kept updated.

4.3 Online learning

NALC is currently investigating how to help county associations improve the national online learning offer. Courses are currently offered out to county associations. Nimble e-learning was selected as the best and easiest new platform to use. It was important that NALC selected a platform which would work for the sector. A pilot was launched in August and the model would be finalised after that.

Resolved: That member services be congratulated for their excellent work collaborating with county associations to overhaul the national e-learning offer and that the committee be kept updated.

5. Super Councils' Network update

5.1 SCN representative update – Cllr Webb updated the committee that there had been two recent meetings of the Wiltshire “Super Eights” including the newly welcomed Devizes Town Council to SCN. There were concerns about neighbourhood plans. The group had been aware that Swindon Borough Council giving grant monies to its local councils was an anomaly nationally, with the exception of Cornwall. There was now a chance that devolution may not happen at all in Wiltshire.

Cllr Parry provided a brief update on his helpful engagement with 7 SCN councils. Income generation had been hard for them, as well as home-working. There would be a need in future to try to hold hybrid meetings.

Resolved: That Cllrs Webb and Parry be thanked for their updates.

6. Good practice & events update

6.1 Online events – Officers provided a short update on the recent suite of online events which had sold out. These and future events were being recorded. Training support and financial resilience were considered useful topics for future online events.

Resolved (1): That the verbal update be noted.

6.2 Campaigns update

Resolved (2): That the brief verbal update be noted.

6.3 Regional / county groupings of larger councils

Resolved (3): That the brief verbal update be noted.

7. Update - Direct elections to the committee - 2021-22

7.1 Management Board update

The policy manager provided a brief verbal update that Management Board has agreed at its session on 15 September that due to resources and the need to bring the committee's direct elections in line with all other National Assembly committee elections – there would be no direct elections in 2020 to this committee. The terms of office of all those on the committee which were originally due to end in December 2020 (the below) would be extended to October 2021 when there would be direct elections for those seats and all other committee seats due for re-election to the committee in 2021 anyway.

This would create a huge efficiency, would create more time for NALC officers to focus on urgent policy work, and would most importantly bring the committee's elections completely in line with all other committee direct elections at NALC:

Cllr. Richard Parry Super Council (2019-20)

Cllr Sandie Webb Super Council (2019-20)

Mrs Leah Coney Elected Clerk (2019-2020)

Mrs Shar Roselman Elected Clerk (2019-2020)

Mr Mark Smith Elected Clerk (2019-2020)

Cllr Dave Fleming Directly Elected (2019-2020)

Cllr Isabel Roberts Directly Elected (2019-2020)

Cllr Peter Quinn Directly Elected (2019-2020)

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted and that the Committee await the impending message from the Executive Officer to confirm the update.

8. Vexatious members of the public

8.1 Beverley Town Council – the committee vice chairman provided an update on the situation with Beverley Town Council following a recent case of a member of the public (and one other councillor on Beverley Town Council) bringing the

council to a standstill following accusations against the clerk. This recent experience had cost the council £10,000. It was considered unethical and very unfair that a member of the public or any councillor could cause stress to council officers like this and there were again calls for the code of conduct to have sharper teeth.

Wider discussion revealed this type of issue to be widespread across many local councils in England. The committee vice chair asked that if any committee members had had similar experiences they contact him direct as to how their councils had resolved the issue. There was also a request for NALC to raise this matter with MHCLG – or at least the recurring nature of it.

Resolved: That the verbal update be noted.

9. Date and time of next meeting

To note that the next meeting of the Larger Councils' Committee will take place by Zoom on Tuesday 19 January 2021.

Councillor Paul Harvey,
Chairman © NALC 2020

Appendix 2.2

LARGER COUNCILS COMMITTEE ACTION LOG

Date	Activity	Item number	Action Complete (Y / N)
22 September 2020	Member Services Update ACTION: NALC congratulated for the excellent job it had done delivering relevant services to larger councils during the lockdown period.	4.1	Y
22 September 2020	LCAS Review ACTION: That the Project Officer (Member Services) be congratulated for doing an excellent job undertaking the LCAS review - and that the Committee be kept updated.	4.2	Y
22 September 2020	Online learning ACTION: That member services be congratulated for their excellent work collaborating with county associations to overhaul the national e-learning offer and that the committee be kept updated.	4.3	Y
22 September 2020	SCN Update ACTION: That Cllrs Webb and Parry be thanked for their updates.	5	Y
22 September 2020	Update - Direct elections to the committee - 2021-22 ACTION: That the Committee await the impending message from the Executive Officer to confirm the update.	7	Y

Appendix 3.1

Associate Membership of the Local Government Association

1. Summary

Since the creation of the Super Councils' Network in 2015 associate membership of the Local Government Association has only been open to Super Councils. There are now just two Super Councils who have taken out current associate membership of the LGA for the 2020-21 financial year. That is from a total of 64 Super Councils currently on the Network. The question has now been asked at NALC as to whether we should now be opening up this associate membership offer to member larger councils outside the network to broaden this membership base and offer up the benefits of this membership to other large councils who wish to take it out.

2. Context

The reason that the offer of associate membership of the LGA has for some years only been only open to SCN councils is that this was considered a sound benefit of membership of SCN itself. NALC originally paid for all SCN councils to have such associate membership for the first two of so financial years after SCN was created. Then about three years ago NALC ceased this payment and said that SCN councils themselves on an optional basis would be able to take out such associate membership – if they paid for it themselves. The highest total of SCN councils this has reached was 7 during the last financial year.

We are interested in the Committee's views on the below:

1. do you think that associate membership of the LGA should stay as a benefit of SCN membership?; or
2. do you think this offer of LGA associate membership should now be opened up to other larger member councils not on SCN?

3. Recommendation

That the report be noted and that the committee express a view as to whether this associate membership for the 2021-22 financial year should be opened up or not.

Contact officer: Chris Borg, policy manager e. chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk T. 07714 771049

Appendix 4.1

Sharing good practice – NALC online events update

1. Summary

Since lockdown started in March 2020 NALC has adapted to the way it organises events and shares good practice with England's 10,000 larger councils, including larger councils. There has been a necessary shift away from physical events towards purely online events to the end of the current financial year and beyond.

2. Context

NALC has organised the below online events during the lockdown period which have almost all sold out, demonstrating the effectiveness of these online events to share good practice:

- Leaders' Talk – 28 July 2020;
- Leaders' Talk – 25 August 2020;
- Tree Charter event – 8 September 2020;
- Climate Change event – 28 September 2020;
- Health and Wellbeing Week – 28 – 30 October 2020; &
- Frome – youth first event – 17 November 2020.

Other online events which will also be of interest to larger councils being planned for the rest of the 2020-21 financial year are as below:

- Play event – 9 December 2020;
- Biggleswade – strategic planning for larger projects – 26 January 2021;
- Inclusive elections event – February 2021; &
- Building Back Communities single event – 25 March 2021 (to be confirmed).

NALC officers are currently scoping out themes for monthly online events for the 2021-22 financial year so please promote the above events (at <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-events/rebuilding-communities-online-events>) and e-mail policycomms@nalc.gov.uk if you have any ideas for themes for monthly NALC online events in 2021-22.

3. Recommendation

That the report be noted.

Contact officer: Chris Borg, policy manager: e. chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk T. 07714 771049